

Senate Finance and Public Administration Standing Committee

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES – 20 October 2009 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Human Services Portfolio

Topic: Disability Pension

Question reference number: HS28 (a-o)

Senator: Fifield

Type of question: *Written*

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 4 December 2009

Number of pages: 4

Question:

- a) How many people have received (granted) Disability Support Pension each month since start of the new financial year?
- b) How many people applied (claimed) for Disability Support Pension each month since the start of the new financial year?
- c) How many were transferred to the Disability Support Pension from other income support payments since the start of the financial year?
- d) How many people were suspended from Disability Support Pension each month since the start of the new financial year?
- e) How many people left the Disability Support Pension each month since the start of the new financial year?
- f) How many of those who left the Disability Support Pension went on to other payments, since the start of the new financial year?
- g) Do Centrelink officers have discretion to put someone on Disability Support Pension without going through the normal application process?
- h) Are there any situations when Centrelink will temporarily put someone on Disability Support Pension without completing the normal application process?
- i) What sort of timeframe do you put on fast-tracking – a day, a week, two weeks?
- j) How many enquiries has Centrelink received regarding the Pension Supplement following its implementation?
- k) What has been the nature of the enquiries?
- l) Has Centrelink begun making preparations for the new health professional advice units?
- m) What consultation with stakeholders and professionals has been undertaken so far?
- n) How many staff will be employed in the units?
- o) What will their roles be?

Answer:

- a) July 2009 – 8,528
August 2009 – 6,389
September 2009 – 6,518

Information sourced from Centrelink Administrative data. Information represents a weekly count of grants within each calendar month reported.

Note: Data is extracted on a weekly basis each Friday. The monthly data provided is the sum of the weekly data and may include some data from the end of the previous month.

- b) July 2009 – 13,398
August 2009 – 9,976
September 2009 – 10,115

Information sourced from Centrelink Administrative data. Claims information represents a weekly count of grants and rejections within each calendar month reported.

Note: Data is extracted on a weekly basis each Friday. The monthly data provided is the sum of the weekly data and may include some data from the end of the previous month.

- c) July 2009 – 5,436
August 2009 – 4,053
September 2009 – 4,250

Information sourced from Centrelink Administrative data. Transfer information is based on point in time views.

Note: This is a subset of the response to part (a).

- d) July 2009 – 5,184
August 2009 – 5,237
September 2009 – 5,553

Information sourced from Centrelink Administrative data. Suspension information is a count of events in the calendar month. The figures provided do not represent instances where a subsequent restoration or cancellation has taken place.

- e) July 2009 – 5,271
August 2009 – 3,924
September 2009 – 3,952

Information sourced from Centrelink Administrative data. Exit information is based on two points in time views. For example, June 2009 to July 2009.

Note: This count includes recipients who are deceased; no longer on income support; and who are in receipt of another income support payment.

- f) July 2009 – 2,656
August 2009 – 1,767
September 2009 – 1,814

Information sourced from Centrelink Administrative data. Exit information is based on point in time views.

Note: This is a subset of the response to part (e).

- g) Yes, section 12 of the *Social Security (Administration) Act 1999*, gives delegated Centrelink officers the discretion to transfer a customer from another income support payment to Disability Support Pension without the customer needing to lodge a claim. This discretion can only be used where the delegate has sufficient information to determine that the customer is qualified for the Disability Support Pension and that this pension is payable. This discretion is very rarely used. In limited situations Disability Support Pension may also be granted to claimants without the need for a Job Capacity Assessment. These are known as manifest grants.

Manifest grants may only be made to a person with:

- a terminal illness (life expectancy of less than two years with significantly reduced work capacity during this period);
- permanent blindness (meets the test for permanent blindness for social security purposes);
- an intellectual disability where supporting documentation clearly indicates an impairment rating of 20 points or more under the impairment tables;
- an assessment indicating that they require nursing home level care; and
- category four HIV/AIDS.

- h) No.

- i) The timeliness standard for the determination of Disability Support Pension claims is 70 per cent within 49 days of lodgement. There is no separate timeliness standard for manifest grants, but these would usually be granted well within 49 days.

- j) Over the period 7 September 2009 to 20 October 2009, Centrelink received approximately 11,000 enquiries to the Disability and Carers phone line (132717) regarding the Pension Supplement.

- k) Centrelink does not have data on the nature of these queries.

- l) Yes.

m) Stakeholder consultation has taken place between Centrelink and partner agencies, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. This concerns the administrative and policy arrangements to establish the roles and internal workflows and the technology to support the units.

Centrelink is currently developing plans for consultation with professional groups and will implement consultation strategies early in 2010.

n) 24.

o) There are three distinct roles:

- medical and health professionals will be engaged to provide advice to all Job Capacity Assessors, Senior Customer Service Advisors and Authorised Review Officers on medical evidence collected in support of a claim or review;
- a further group of medical and health professionals will be engaged to undertake outreach activities with the medical community to enhance relationships between government and the medical sector; and
- there will also be administrative staff engaged to support the activities of the medical and health professionals.