

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION

Question No. 170

Senator Siewert asked the following question at the hearing on 31 October 2006:

- (a) Are you reviewing the implementation of the Welfare to Work changes as they impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders?
- (b) If so, are you aware of how many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been breached since implementation?
- (c) What percentage of all those breached are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?
- (d) Has this percentage increased or decreased since the changes were introduced?
- (e) Please provide a breakdown of figures on a state, area and regional basis?

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

- (a) To date, the Commission has not reviewed the implementation of the Welfare to Work changes to determine the actual impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Commission did, however, make a submission to the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee in November 2005 for its inquiry into the *Employment and Workplace Relations Legislation Amendment (Welfare to Work and Other Measures) Bill 2005* and *Family and Community Services Legislation Amendment (Welfare to Work) Bill 2005*.

The submission noted the concern 'that an approach which does not respond to the specific cultural context of Indigenous peoples may result in these proposed reforms impacted harshly on Indigenous communities and exacerbating rates of poverty and social exclusion that are already far too high' (paragraph 31).

- (b) – (e) The Commission has not conducted the research which would enable it to answer these questions.