

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee Inquiry into
the *Human Services (Enhanced Service Delivery) Bill 2007***

**Answers to questions raised during AFP witness appearance –
Tuesday 6 March 2007**

QoN 4 – How often does the AFP access DHS agency databases?

“Senator NETTLE—We were having some discussion before about data matching. This is a tricky one as to working out how exactly to ask the question, because you were being asked about the database and what possibilities that opened up. Perhaps one way I could ask the question is this: could both of your agencies provide for us, on notice or now, an indication of how often you currently access the Department of Human Services or Centrelink information?

...

Mr O’Sullivan—The answer is that obviously we can already access data from a whole range of sources and, as I have said, the creation of this particular database does not affect that current arrangement.

Senator NETTLE—Is there anything from the AFP on that point?

Federal Agent Drennan— I do not have those details with me. I would need to take that on notice.”

Answer 4

Under the proposed access card legislation, the AFP would continue to operate in accordance with current legislation and procedures governing access and disclosure of information. The AFP currently has the ability to obtain and use information, subject to restrictive or secrecy provisions contained in legislation relevant to ‘participating agencies’. For instance, Centrelink information is governed by the *Social Security (Administration) Act 1999* which contains restrictive disclosure provisions.

The precise number of times the AFP has sought information from the various participating agencies is data that is very difficult and time consuming to gather. The AFP understands that DHS does hold broad statistical data relevant to the human services agencies, and that information related to this has been provided to the Committee in response to a Question on Notice.

QoN 5 – Can the AFP provide details of the research organisations leading to the Commissioner’s statement that identity theft in Australia costs between \$1 billion and \$4 billion annually?

“**CHAIR**—...Federal Agent Drennan...I refer to a question that I asked earlier that I now ask you to take on notice. Can the AFP provide to the committee details of the research organisations and their research leading to the commissioner’s statement that identity theft in Australia costs between \$1 billion and \$4 billion annually?”

Federal Agent Drennan—We will, Chair.

Senator NETTLE—One of mine questions on notice relates to that, because there was a statement, in a media release issued by the Attorney-General and the minister for customs last week, saying \$1 billion, and we have another one from them earlier saying \$1 billion as well. I will provide those references to you to assist you in providing that answer to us on notice.”

Answer 5

Research has been undertaken in an attempt to quantify the cost of identity fraud in Australia. Figures relied on by the AFP include those estimated by various research bodies including:

1. the Securities Industry Research Centre of Asia-Pacific (SIRCA) (including: SIRCA's 2003 report for AUSTRAC *Identity Fraud in Australia*);
2. PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) and the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC), including the following publications:
 - AIC and PWC 2003, *Serious Fraud in Australia & New Zealand*, Research and Public Policy Series No.48; and
 - Smith R.G, 1997, *Measuring the Extent of Fraud in Australia*, Trends & Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice No.74.
3. The Attorney-General’s Department (AGD) (AGD paper available on the AGD website www.ag.gov.au , September 2001, ‘*Scoping Identity Fraud – An abridged version of a report on identity fraud risks in Commonwealth agencies*’ by Geoff Main PSM and Brett Robson)