

2017-18 BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARINGS – MAY 2017

Budget Measure – Tackling substance abuse by Welfare Recipients

Data on drug and alcohol use in Australia

- The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's 2013 National Drug Strategy Household Survey shows that:
 - 24.5 per cent of those who were unemployed had used an illicit substance in the last 12 months, compared with 16.8 per cent of people who were employed and 15 per cent for the total population; and
 - those who were unemployed were 1.6 times more likely to use cannabis, 1.8 times more likely to use ecstasy and 2.4 times more likely to use meth/amphetamines, such as ice, than employed people.
- Data on job seekers from the Department of Human Services (DHS) system shows that:
 - in 2016, there were 4,325 occasions where job seekers provided drug or alcohol abuse as an excuse for not meeting their mutual obligations.
 - the number of people granted a temporary exemption from mutual obligations due to drug and alcohol dependency has nearly doubled over the last five years, from 2,920 in September 2011 to 5,256 in September 2016.

If asked: how many job seekers are expected to test positive (and what is the basis for this assumption)?

- Under the trial, 5,000 job seekers will be drug tested across the three trial locations.
- It is estimated that approximately 8.5 per cent (or 425 job seekers) will test positive to their first drug test and will be placed on welfare quarantining.
- This estimate is based on the data on drug use from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's 2013 National Drug Strategy Household Survey, which was the latest data available when developing the policy.
 - This data showed that 5.2 per cent of Australians had used drugs within the last week.
 - This figure was adjusted proportionately to reflect the higher rate of drug use among unemployed Australians compared to all Australians in the previous 12 month period (24.5 per cent compared to 15 per cent).
- It is further estimated that up to around 120 job seekers will test positive to a second drug test and will be referred to a medical assessment.
 - This is an estimate based on data from the DHS system of those with known substance abuse issues – that is, the proportion of recipients with a drug medical condition recorded, exemption due to drug dependency, or drug or alcohol vulnerability indicator.
 - The exact numbers will depend on the trial site locations selected as this proportion can vary depending on the area.

If asked: what data is being used to inform the selection of trial site locations?

- A range of available evidence and data about drug use in Australia is being considered to inform selection of the sites, including:
 - the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission's National Wastewater Drug Monitoring Program Report 2017,

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- the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's 2013 National Drug Strategy Household Survey,
- state/territory government crime statistics in relation to drug use and possession, and
- administrative data from the Department of Human Services on job seekers with identified drug dependency issues.

If asked: AIHW 2016 National Drug Strategy Household Survey / more recent data

- DSS understands that results from the 2016 National Drug Strategy Household Survey are expected to be released in mid-late 2017.
- Depending on the timing of the release, and the information that is available, this data will be taken into consideration when finalising the design of, and implementing, the trial as appropriate.