

HOUSING AUTHORITY — TENANTS — RENT ASSESSMENT

354. Hon SUE ELLERY to the Minister for Housing:

- (1) Which allowances will temporarily not be treated as assessable income by the Department of Housing for the purpose of calculating rent for department tenants?
- (2) Has the department advised any tenants of the temporary reprieve or the review; and, if not, why not?
- (3) If the department has advised any tenants of the temporary reprieve or the review, how was that advice communicated?

I think the minister answered part (2) in his answer to the first question.

Hon COL HOLT replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question. The Housing Authority advises —

- (1) The Housing Authority has excluded a number of income supports, Department of Veterans' Affairs payments, and training, education and employment payments, for the purpose of calculating public housing rent, including the regular additional assistance that is a component of Abstudy; attendant allowance; bereavement payment; English war disability pension; farm family restart payment; farm household support; flexible support payment; incentive allowance for disability support pension recipients; language, literacy and numeracy supplement; local government elected allowance, the component of which is not used for related expenses but the remainder is still assessable as per the policy before 28 March 2016; mobility allowance; overseas add-on payment for a child, which is a component of various payments such as the age pension, disability support pension et cetera; relocation scholarship payment; remote jobs and communities program supplement; training and learning bonus; textbook and resource allocation; and voluntary income management incentive payment.

In relation to DVA payments, the original, existing policy for the purpose of rent calculation will be maintained without change. Those payments that have always been assessable, such as the war widow pension and income support supplement, will remain assessable. Payments such as the war disability pension, including the general rate, extreme disablement adjustment, intermediate rate and special rate—formerly known as TPI, or totally and permanently incapacitated—are not assessable, and recipients are deemed to be receiving the Centrelink statutory benefit to which they would otherwise be entitled.

These exclusions were entered into the Housing Authority's system as soon as the review commenced and therefore no tenants have been charged rent based on these excluded payments.

- (2)–(3) Yes. The Housing Authority wrote to all tenants who would experience a change to their rent charge based on the decision to exclude some payments. Information is also available on the Housing Authority website, including a fact sheet and list of newly assessable incomes. In addition to the answers to this question and question without notice 339 asked yesterday by Hon Samantha Rowe, I table a list of current assessable government payments.

[See paper 4017.]