



Social Security (Administration) (Public Interest Certificate Guidelines) (DEEWR) Determination 2010

Social Security (Administration) Act 1999

I, CHRIS EVANS, Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Jobs and Workplace Relations, make this Determination under subparagraph 209 (a) (i) and paragraph 209 (b) of the *Social Security (Administration) Act 1999*.

Dated 12th December 2010

CHRIS EVANS

Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Jobs and Workplace Relations

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Part 1 Preliminary**1 Name of Determination**

This Determination is the *Social Security (Administration) (Public Interest Certificate Guidelines) (DEEWR) Determination 2010*.

2 Commencement

This Determination commences on the day after it is registered.

3 Revocation

The *Social Security (Public Interest Certificate Guidelines) (DEEWR) Determination 2008* is revoked.

4 Purpose

The purpose of this Determination is to set out guidelines for the exercise of the Secretary's power to give certificates for the purposes of paragraph 208 (1) (a) of the Act.

5 Definitions

In this Determination:

Act means the *Social Security (Administration) Act 1999*.

Centrelink means the Agency established under section 6 of the *Commonwealth Services Delivery Agency Act 1997*.

Chief Executive Officer of Medicare Australia means the Chief Executive Officer appointed under section 8AG of the *Medicare Australia Act 1973*.

Department means a Department administered by a Minister.

Minister means:

- (a) a Minister of State administering any part of:
 - (i) the social security law;
 - (ii) the family assistance law; or
 - (iii) the *Commonwealth Services Delivery Agency Act 1997*; or
- (b) the Prime Minister.

public interest certificate means a certificate, under paragraph 208 (1) (a) of the Act, for the disclosure of relevant information.

relevant information means information about a person (including protected information) acquired by an officer in the performance of his or her functions or duties, or in the exercise of his or her powers, under the social security law or the *Farm Household Support Act 1992*.

service organisation has the meaning given in subsection 202 (2D) of the Act.

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Note 1 The following expressions are defined in the Act:

- 1991 Act
- social security law.

Note 2 The following expressions are defined in the 1991 Act and have the same meaning in the Act (see subsection 3 (2) of the Act):

- family member
- officer
- protected information
- relationship parent
- Secretary
- social security payment.

6 Matters to which Secretary must have regard

In giving a public interest certificate, the Secretary must have regard to:

- (a) any situation in which the person to whom the information relates is, or may be, subject to physical, psychological or emotional abuse; and
- (b) whether the person in such a situation may be unable to give notice of his or her circumstances because of:
 - (i) age; or
 - (ii) disability; or
 - (iii) social, cultural, family or other reasons.

Part 2 Guidelines — public interest certificate (general)

7 When public interest certificate may be given

- (1) The Secretary may give a public interest certificate for the disclosure of relevant information under this Part if:
 - (a) the information cannot reasonably be obtained from a source other than a Department or Centrelink; and
 - (b) the person to whom the information will be disclosed has sufficient interest in the information; and
 - (c) the Secretary is satisfied that the disclosure is for at least one of the purposes mentioned in a provision in this Part.
- (2) A person has *sufficient interest* in the relevant information if:
 - (a) the Secretary is satisfied that, in relation to the purpose of the disclosure, the person has a genuine and legitimate interest in the information; or
 - (b) the person is a Minister.

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8 Threat to life, health or welfare

Relevant information may be disclosed for the purpose of this section if the disclosure is necessary to prevent, or lessen, a threat to the life, health or welfare of a person.

9 Enforcement of laws

- (1) Relevant information may be disclosed for the purpose of this section if:
- (a) the disclosure is necessary:
 - (i) for the enforcement of a criminal law that relates to an indictable offence punishable by imprisonment of 2 years or more; or
 - (ii) for the enforcement of a law imposing a pecuniary penalty equivalent to 40 penalty units or more; or
 - (iii) to prevent an act that may have a significant adverse effect on the public revenue; or
 - (b) the disclosure relates to an offence or threatened offence:
 - (i) against an officer; or
 - (ii) against Commonwealth property; or
 - (iii) in premises occupied by a service organisation.

- (2) In this section:

criminal law means:

- (a) for Australia — a criminal law of the Commonwealth or of a State or Territory; and
- (b) for a place outside Australia — a criminal law that may be recognised under an extradition arrangement to which Australia is a party.

penalty unit has the same meaning as in section 4AA of the *Crimes Act 1914*.

Note Subsection 4AA (1) of the *Crimes Act 1914* provides:

‘In a law of the Commonwealth or a Territory Ordinance, unless the contrary intention appears:

penalty unit means \$110.’

10 Mistake of fact

Relevant information may be disclosed for the purpose of this section if:

- (a) the disclosure is necessary to correct a mistake of fact in relation to the administration of a program of a Department; and
- (b) either:
 - (i) the integrity of the program will be at risk if the mistake of fact is not corrected; or
 - (ii) the mistake of fact relates to a matter that was, or will be, published (whether by, or with or without the consent of, the person to whom the information relates).

Section 11**11 Ministerial briefing**

Relevant information may be disclosed for the purpose of this section if the disclosure is necessary:

- (a) to brief a Minister so that the Minister can consider complaints or issues raised by or on behalf of a person with the Minister (in writing or orally), and respond to that person in relation to the complaints or issues; or
- (b) to brief a Minister for a meeting or forum that the Minister is to attend; or
- (c) to brief a Minister in relation to issues raised or proposed to be raised publicly by or on behalf of the person to whom the relevant information relates so that the Minister can respond by correcting a mistake of fact, a misleading perception or impression, or a misleading statement; or
- (d) to brief a Minister about an error or delay on the part of a service organisation; or
- (e) to brief a Minister about an instance of an anomalous or unusual operation of the social security law.

12 Missing and deceased persons

Relevant information may be disclosed for the purpose of this section if:

- (a) the information is about a person who is, or has been reported to be, missing or dead; and
- (b) there is no reasonable ground to believe that the person would not want the information disclosed; and
- (c) the disclosure is necessary:
 - (i) to locate a person (including the missing or dead person him- or herself, or a relative or beneficiary of the person); or
 - (ii) to assist a court, coronial enquiry, Royal Commission, department or other authority of a State or Territory, or authority responsible for administering the social security system in another country, in relation to its inquiries about the person; or
 - (iii) in relation to a dead person — to assist a person responsible for the administration of the estate of the dead person in relation to the administration of the estate of the dead person.

13 School enrolment and attendance

Relevant information may be disclosed for the purpose of this section if the disclosure is necessary to ensure a child who:

- (a) is required to be enrolled in a school under a law of a State or Territory is enrolled; or
- (b) is required to be attending a school under a law of a State or Territory is attending.

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14 School infrastructure

Relevant information may be disclosed for the purpose of this section if the disclosure is necessary to plan for, meet or monitor infrastructure and resource needs in one or more schools.

15 Administration of public housing

Relevant information may be disclosed for the purpose of this section if:

- (a) the information is about a resident or tenant of public housing or other State- or Territory-managed housing; and
- (b) either:
 - (i) the disclosure is necessary to facilitate the rent calculation or rent deduction in relation to public housing or State- or Territory-managed housing; or
 - (ii) the disclosure is necessary to facilitate the administration of an income confirmation service in relation to public housing or State- or Territory-managed housing.

16 Establishment and operation of the Family Responsibilities Commission

- (1) Relevant information may be disclosed for the purpose of this section if the disclosure is necessary:
 - (a) for the establishment of the Family Responsibilities Commission; or
 - (b) to assist in the performance of the functions, or the exercise of the powers, of the Family Responsibilities Commission.
- (2) In this section, *Family Responsibilities Commission* means the Commission established by section 9 of the *Family Responsibilities Act 2008 (Qld)*.

17 Reparations

Relevant information may be disclosed for the purpose of this section if the disclosure is necessary to contact a person in respect of compensation or other form of recompense that may be made to that person in a reparation process.

18 Child protection agencies

Relevant information may be disclosed for the purpose of this section if the disclosure is necessary to assist a child protection agency contact a parent or relative in relation to a child.

19 Matters of relevance to a Department

- (1) Relevant information may be disclosed for the purpose of this section if the disclosure is necessary to facilitate the progress or resolution of matters of relevance within the portfolio responsibilities of a Department.

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- (2) For subsection (1), a matter of relevance to a Department is a matter that falls within the portfolio responsibilities of that department and that provides assistance or services to a class of people that is wholly or partly comprised of people receiving payments or entitlements under the social security law or the family assistance law.

Part 3 Guidelines — public interest certificate (homeless young person)

20 Application

- (1) This Part applies if the relevant information for disclosure relates to a homeless young person.

- (2) In this Part:

homeless young person means a person:

- (a) who is less than 18 years old; and
- (b) who has sought a social security payment on the ground of being a homeless person.

parent, in relation to a homeless young person, means:

- (a) a natural parent, adoptive parent or relationship parent of the homeless young person with whom the homeless young person normally lived before becoming a homeless young person; or
- (b) if a parent referred to in paragraph (a) is a member of a couple and normally lives with the other member of the couple — the other member of the couple; or
- (c) any other person (other than the homeless young person's partner) on whom the homeless young person was wholly or substantially dependent before becoming a homeless young person.

21 When public interest certificate may be given

- (1) The Secretary may give a public interest certificate for the disclosure of relevant information under this Part if:
- (a) the information cannot reasonably be obtained from a source other than a Department or Centrelink; and
 - (b) the Secretary is satisfied that the disclosure will not result in harm to the homeless young person; and
 - (c) the Secretary is satisfied that the disclosure is for at least one of the purposes mentioned in a provision in this Part.
- (2) The Secretary may also give a public interest certificate for the disclosure of relevant information under this Part if:
- (a) the information cannot reasonably be obtained from a source other than a Department or Centrelink; and
 - (b) the disclosure will be made to a welfare authority of a State or Territory; and

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- (c) the homeless young person to whom the relevant information relates is:
 - (i) in the care of a welfare authority of a State or Territory in accordance with the law of the State or Territory; or
 - (ii) less than 15 years old; and
- (d) the Secretary is satisfied that the disclosure will not result in harm to the homeless young person.

22 Abuse or violence

Relevant information may be disclosed for the purpose of this section if:

- (a) the information is about a family member of a homeless young person; and
- (b) the Secretary is satisfied that the homeless young person or a family member of the homeless young person has been subjected to abuse or violence.

23 Verification for payment

Relevant information may be disclosed for the purpose of this section if:

- (a) the disclosure is necessary to verify a circumstance by which a homeless young person who is under 15 years may qualify for a social security payment on the ground of being a homeless person; and
- (b) in order to verify the circumstance, a parent, or the parents, of the homeless young person must be asked whether the homeless young person is able to live at the home of his or her parent or parents.

Note Social security payments, appropriated for the purpose, are made by Centrelink on behalf of the Secretary under service arrangements entered into under section 7 of the *Commonwealth Services Delivery Agency Act 1997*.

24 Reconciliation

Relevant information may be disclosed for the purpose of this section if the disclosure will facilitate reconciliation, or possible reconciliation, between a homeless young person and his or her parent or parents.

25 Assurance

Relevant information may be disclosed for the purpose of this section if:

- (a) a parent, or the parents, of a homeless young person has sought assurance that the homeless young person has been in contact with a Department or with Centrelink; and
- (b) the disclosure is necessary to inform the parent or parents whether the homeless young person has been in contact with a Department or with Centrelink.