

CEO OPENING STATEMENT

Staffing and service delivery performance

- At the last Estimates hearing I outlined resourcing pressures that had led to the Agency's performance falling well below the desired levels.
- I am pleased to be able to advise the Committee today that we have turned the corner. We are on track to get claims volumes down to usual levels by mid-year, largely as a result of the increase in funded staffing numbers since last November.
- I am also pleased to say that with the ongoing resourcing announced by the government in the Federal Budget, I am confident that these improvements will continue.
- As I said in February, our first priority has been to clear the Agency's claims on hand.
- At that time, I outlined that Social Security and Health claims on-hand, the backlog, had reached 1.1 million. It went on to peak at 1.35 million in February.
- Since then, with the onboarding, training and now contribution, of more than 5000 staff, we have been able to cut the backlog by more than half.
- As requested, we have tabled detailed information on claims processing from 1 January.
- I can add today that we begin this week with the headline total of the backlog being 607,000, a reduction of 55% or 743,000 claims since the peak.

- More granular examples include, from 27 November 2023 to 15 May this year include:
 - Jobseeker claims on hand reducing by 67 per cent and over-standard claims by 86 per cent.
 - Carer Allowance claims on hand reducing by 20 per cent and over-standard claims by 75 per cent.
 - Parenting Payment claims on hand down 72 per cent and over-standard claims by 81 per cent.
- Across Health we have seen major reductions in Medicare Online Accounts, Medicare Entitlement Statements, and Provider Registration Application claims on hand, with over-standard claims wiped out.
- And lastly, Low Income Card claims on hand have reduced by 85% with over-standard claims reduced by 97%.
 - In practice, this means we've reduced the waiting time for a Low Income Card from 86 days in November 2023 to 11 days in May 2024.
- As expected, we have also been able to improve the experience for people calling us.
 - Overall call wait times for Social Security and Welfare have reduced from an Average Speed of Answer which peaked at around 33 minutes in February to around 25 minutes in May depending on the daily demand.
 - Importantly, our use of congestion messaging has halved since January.

Staff Safety

- Another important focus for the Agency is staff safety. We are continuing to implement the 44 recommendations of last year's Security Risk Management Review by Graham Ashton.

- The Budget provides \$314 million over 2 years to improve safety for those staff who work at our service centres, as well as the millions of customers who visit us in person. This is on top of the \$47 million previously provided by the government and will allow us to extend and maintain the improvements to security already commenced.

Digital service delivery

- Funding in the Budget will also enable the Agency to continue to develop world-class digital services.
- A central component of our digital services is of course myGov.
- myGov continues to be a preferred option for digital self-service for Australians, allowing them to access services at the time and place of their choosing.
 - As at 21 May 2024, over 4.8 million people have downloaded and are using the myGov app.
 - There has been a growth in active myGov accounts from 11.7 million in June 2017 to over 26.5 million as at 21 May 2024.
 - On average nearly 870,000 people sign in daily to myGov. However, daily sign-on often exceeds 2 million during peak usage periods, such as the yearly tax peak, and when supporting access to emergency payments.
- The 2024-25 Budget provides forward funding of \$630 million over 4 years, and \$145 million per year ongoing, to enhance and sustain myGov.
- Improvements will include better messaging, clearer inbox notifications, stronger fraud prevention controls, and better security features – including a personalised security dashboard to help people keep their accounts secure.
 - We will also continue to add services to myGov. For example, the next Census will be able to be accessed through myGov. And in the

coming weeks we expect to introduce passkeys to myGov, keeping our customers safe online.

Transparency

- As the Agency works to return to the expected levels of service delivery, we are committed to transparency around our performance.
- For the Financial Year to Date, the Agency has responded to 792 Questions on Notice and 181 Parliamentary Questions.
- Today we are tabling 366 pages of documents in response to requests for information from Senators Hollie Hughes, Maria Kovacic and Penny Allman-Payne.

Conclusion

- In conclusion, we have turned the corner, but we're far from declaring victory.
- We know we have more to do on processing and call waiting times.
- And, more to do building safe, easy to use digital services.
- We will do so with deep collaboration and consultation with customers, peak bodies and other stakeholders.
- Performance and openness will be the foundations for us building public trust and confidence in Services Australia.