

Services Australia

- Over the past 6 months Services Australia has continued to play a critical role in delivering Government support to Australians affected by disasters and emergencies.
- The continuing flood events and other natural disasters across Australia have emphasised the Agency's responsiveness in supporting communities when they need it most.
- I would like to take this opportunity to thank and commend officers in the Agency for working closely

with the community to ensure people get access to the right payments as quickly and easily as possible.

- As at 7 February 2023, the agency has made disaster support payments of over \$94.4 million to more than 93,000 individuals in Victoria, Tasmania and New South Wales affected by flooding since September last year.
- And since emergency assistance was authorised on 8 January it has also paid over \$2.6 million to almost 3,300 people affected by Ex-Tropical Cyclone Ellie in Western Australia and the Northern Territory.
- Events such as natural disasters highlight the importance of customers being able to connect online

quickly and easily with government services they need.

- But Australians have a right to expect state-of-the-art, secure and easy-to-use online services all the time.

That is why the Government has prioritised improving myGov.

- myGov is Australia's largest authenticated digital platform, with 25.6 million linked accounts and more than 800,000 sign-ins every day. This means myGov is not just an app or a hub for government services – it is national critical infrastructure.

- Services Australia has recently transitioned to a new technology platform as well as releasing the myGov app in December 2022.
- The Government aims to make accessing government services online as much a part of every Australian's life as online banking or shopping – from renewing passports to enrolling to vote or even completing the Census.
- myGov will keep evolving as we build a world-class citizen-centric platform that genuinely unifies government digital services to make life easier for Australians.

- The Agency recognises that at times phone line wait times can be longer than they would like, and recognise the inconvenience this causes.
- These wait times are the unfortunate reality of the former government's carving out of staff numbers at Services Australia
- From Financial years 2016-17 through to 2019-20, the opposition reduced the average staffing level by 3,515.
- That is the equivalent to 13% of the 2019-20 workforce.
- During this time the requirements on the agency have significantly increased.

- Since July 2022 the agency has taken 2.3 million disaster related calls.
- Child Care Subsidy claims have increased by 49%, when compared to the same period in 2021-22;
- Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) Safety Net claims have increased 35%; and
- Commonwealth Seniors Health Card claims have increased or 127%.
- So it is little surprise, when you reduce the workforce as the former government chose to do, and requirements increase at the same time, extreme pressure on telephony will occur.

- Minister Shorten continues to receive a very large number of enquiries at his office from individuals in need of assistance, in addition to referrals from the offices of Federal MPs and Senators and State and Territory MPs. The number of enquiries exceeds 15,000 across his two portfolios, with 4,200 in the Government Services portfolio. Services Australia has been working to resolve each enquiry as quickly as possible and I would like to take this opportunity to thank and officers in the Agency – not only those working closely with the Minister and his office - but each and every Agency officer.
- Minister Shorten continues to invite Senators and MPs to interact directly with Services Australia through various methods - by hosting Parliament House drop in sessions,

virtual drop ins and phone and email contacts to local service centres - to ensure parliamentarians can easily and readily support their constituents.