

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

PUBLIC HEARING 30 September 2021

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

**Social Services Portfolio
Services Australia**

Topic: Breakdown of phone calls related to COVID

Question reference number: IQ21-000130

Member: Kimberley Kitching

Type of question: Spoken. Hansard Page/s:

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 15 October 2021

Question:

Senator KITCHING: On that, are you keeping records from the phone calls in relation to what people are actually asking for—if they're asking just for a hard copy certificate or for advice on other matters? Do you have data on that?

Ms Lees: We certainly do keep a record of which calls are coming to which particular lines, as well as in the insights that we derive. I'd have to take it on notice, if you wanted a breakdown, to see whether there is reportable data to that extent, but we certainly monitor the flow of calls, because that's how we then know how many staff

need to be on the different phone lines and the nature of the calls that are coming through.

Senator KITCHING: I'm not sure whether someone has already asked this, but could I get the number of calls to the lines on, say, a per-month basis if that's possible?

Ms Lees: You certainly can. I have a few details there already if it's helpful. In terms of what we call our customer lines, in July this year we answered over 380,000 calls on the customer lines.

In August we answered over 530,000 calls. In September, as at 26 September, we had already answered over 850,000 calls. As you can see, that is quite a significant increase, and therefore we have been deploying more staff into those lines and, as the CEO mentioned earlier, examining what calls are coming in and looking at how we can use our interactive voice response technology to deliver personalised messages and/or direct the calls to the right staff—so, for example, if someone is calling about something more complex, as opposed to phoning just to get a printed copy, they go through to the staff who can answer that call.

Senator KITCHING: If you've got any breakdown of that data, I'd be very interested in that, on notice. Thank you very much, Ms Lees.

Answer:

Total calls received across the Health lines by month for the 2021-22 financial year:

July 2021: 384,133

August 2021: 531,965

September 2021: 950,109