

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

INQUIRY INTO THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Services Australia

Topic: Call Wait Times – Weekly breakdown

Question reference number: IQ20-000073

Member: Katy Gallagher

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 5 June 2020

Number of pages: 7

Question:

I refer to the agency's answer to the Question on Notice from Senator Siewert (ref IQ20-000035) which provides detail on telephony for the main Social Security and Welfare business lines for the period 1 July 2019 to 27 April 2020.

Can a weekly breakdown of these figures be provided for the COVID-19 period (from 20 Jan 2020).

Answer:

The tables below provide the weekly breakdown for the Social Security and Welfare main business lines for the COVID-19 period from 20 January 2020.

Telephony Report - Weekly Breakdown (from 20 January 2020 to week ending 3 May 2020)

Successful Calls (Week ending data)	26-Jan-20	02-Feb-20	09-Feb-20	16-Feb-20	23-Feb-20	01-Mar-20	08-Mar-20	15-Mar-20	22-Mar-20	29-Mar-20	05-Apr-20	12-Apr-20	19-Apr-20	26-Apr-20	03-May-20
Centrelink (Social Security and Welfare)	780,234	663,227	733,284	685,335	652,060	646,834	637,233	655,288	868,541	2,578,578	2,481,193	1,723,369	1,624,300	1,683,883	1,683,883
Disabilities, Sickness and Carers															
<i>Calls are associated with Disability Support Pension, Mobility Allowance and Sickness Allowance.</i>	42,302	37,077	42,722	41,136	40,177	40,202	41,196	44,017	50,452	67,584	86,984	50,066	47,058	46,108	44,404
Employment Services															
<i>Calls are associated with Newstart Allowance, JobSeeker Payment, Exceptional Circumstances Relief Help, Special Benefit and Employment Services Providers.</i>	124,472	92,949	105,445	97,248	90,040	93,784	96,639	111,360	196,926	961,906	503,658	401,486	382,251	367,328	380,886
Families and Parenting															
<i>Calls are associated with Child Care Benefit, Dad and Partner Pay, Double Orphan Pension, Family Tax Benefit, Parental Leave Pay and Parenting Payment.</i>	110,277	97,857	112,388	106,607	104,251	102,854	100,159	98,035	104,307	183,391	169,636	107,581	116,046	121,146	102,003
Older Australians															
<i>Calls are associated with Age Pension, Bereavement assistance, Commonwealth Seniors Health Card, Pensioner Concession Card, Widow B Pension and Wife Pension.</i>	30,950	30,708	34,248	29,761	28,459	28,194	28,689	27,335	30,393	42,654	49,714	37,412	37,091	38,945	32,893
Youth and Students															
<i>Calls are associated with Austudy, Low Income Health Care Card, Pensioner Education, Supplement and Youth Allowance.</i>	33,766	31,250	36,778	35,595	35,948	37,227	37,261	36,583	42,049	109,444	84,927	57,382	64,308	62,262	56,369
Participation															
<i>Calls are associated with activity tested recipients who may not have met obligations. Primarily recipients are required to actively participate in approved activities. This line differs from the Employment Services line as its purpose is for compliance discussions with recipients.</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	438,467	373,386	401,703	374,988	353,185	344,573	333,289	337,958	444,414	1,213,599	1,586,274	1,069,442	977,546	1,048,094	1,067,328
- Income Management															
<i>Calls are associated with Income Management enquiries.</i>	78,039	74,783	77,735	72,144	71,683	71,380	72,328	70,600	83,623	136,546	208,873	93,247	91,347	78,544	78,545
- BasicsCard enquiry, BasicsCard balance enquiry															
<i>Calls are associated with BasicsCard enquiries.</i>															
- Balance enquiry															
<i>Calls are associated with BasicsCard enquiries and BasicsCard balance enquiries.</i>	31,148	27,694	30,099	29,398	29,097	29,087	30,212	29,737	31,522	47,105	129,270	61,272	53,359	45,494	55,385

NOTE:

- Successful calls are calls that have reached the Agency. Successful calls include calls that completed self-service in the Integrated Voice Response (IVR), abandoned calls and answered calls. Traditionally the number of successful calls reported for Social Security and Welfare were based on traditional Centrelink programmes such as Older Australians or Employment Services. The Participation queues were previously considered to be a compliance function and hence were excluded from the Successful Calls measure, as were Debt Recovery and other business integrity lines.
- The 'Other' queue is made up of several telephone lines including: Australian Victim of Terrorism Overseas Payment, Income Management (including Basics Card), myGov, Emergency response, APIS (Australian Passport Information Service), International Services and Multilingual services.

Answered Calls (Week ending data)	26-Jan-20	02-Feb-20	09-Feb-20	16-Feb-20	23-Feb-20	01-Mar-20	08-Mar-20	15-Mar-20	22-Mar-20	29-Mar-20	05-Apr-20	12-Apr-20	19-Apr-20	26-Apr-20	03-May-20
Centrelink (Social Security and Welfare)	313,566	270,275	332,494	326,842	314,779	313,317	314,530	302,183	305,008	351,706	347,466	334,846	395,077	578,727	536,370
Disabilities, Sickness and Carers <i>Calls are associated with Disability Support Pension, Mobility Allowance and Sickness Allowance.</i>	21,413	18,267	25,098	25,411	24,509	25,486	26,208	25,384	26,244	24,817	26,331	17,637	15,552	18,614	20,451
Employment Services <i>Calls are associated with Newstart Allowance, JobSeeker Payment, Exceptional Circumstances Relief Help, Special Benefit and Employment Services Providers.</i>	22,664	25,745	27,600	26,467	28,487	29,611	28,211	27,218	24,540	75,289	67,905	65,472	125,759	163,425	136,160
Families and Parenting <i>Calls are associated with Child Care Benefit, Dad and Partner Pay, Double Orphan Pension, Family Tax Benefit, Parental Leave Pay and Parenting Payment.</i>	62,510	52,146	67,298	69,014	65,930	66,476	64,497	60,057	55,289	55,880	57,099	42,780	37,184	45,010	32,800
Older Australians <i>Calls are associated with Age Pension, Bereavement assistance, Commonwealth Seniors Health Card, Pensioner Concession Card, Widow B Pension and Wife Pension.</i>	14,881	12,833	16,262	15,854	15,345	15,160	15,974	15,538	15,403	21,743	15,968	12,475	10,339	14,764	13,447
Youth and Students <i>Calls are associated with Austudy, Low Income Health Care Card, Pensioner Education, Supplement and Youth Allowance.</i>	17,826	15,819	21,766	21,852	21,459	21,313	22,311	20,745	18,298	20,472	20,382	17,225	13,725	18,974	18,346
Participation <i>Calls are associated with activity tested recipients who may not have met obligations. Primarily recipients are required to actively participate in approved activities. This line differs from the Employment Services line as its purpose is for compliance discussions with recipients.</i>	3,050	3,961	6,152	6,348	6,354	6,274	6,191	5,928	3,965	3,430	2,296	1,006	1,083	1,546	1,020
Other	171,222	141,504	168,318	161,896	152,695	148,997	151,138	147,313	161,269	150,075	157,485	178,251	191,435	316,394	314,146
- Income Management <i>Calls are associated with Income Management enquiries.</i>	407	545	782	806	731	647	589	600	432	539	542	457	290	510	1,960
- BasicsCard enquiry, BasicsCard balance enquiry <i>Calls are associated with BasicsCard enquiries.</i>	36,917	34,251	37,241	36,533	34,035	33,758	37,044	35,803	34,921	15,004	21,011	18,659	25,481	38,767	51,299

NOTE:

- Answered calls are calls answered by a Service Officer
- The 'Other' queue is made up of several telephone lines including: Australian Victim of Terrorism Overseas Payment, Income Management (including Basics Card), myGov, Emergency response, APIS (Australian Passport Information Service), International Services and Multilingual services.

Abandoned Calls (Week ending data)	26-Jan-20	02-Feb-20	09-Feb-20	16-Feb-20	23-Feb-20	01-Mar-20	08-Mar-20	15-Mar-20	22-Mar-20	29-Mar-20	05-Apr-20	12-Apr-20	19-Apr-20	26-Apr-20	03-May-20
Centrelink (Social Security and Welfare)	73,820	66,500	77,930	68,996	71,034	72,333	59,134	62,187	97,251	458,814	356,212	187,524	153,922	84,567	78,010
Disabilities, Sickness and Carers															
<i>Calls are associated with Disability Support Pension, Mobility Allowance and Sickness Allowance.</i>	5,741	4,748	7,322	6,490	5,938	6,063	6,010	7,572	7,197	7,104	6,927	3,718	3,460	4,553	5,308
Employment Services															
<i>Calls are associated with Newstart Allowance, JobSeeker Payment, Exceptional Circumstances Relief Help, Special Benefit and Employment Services Providers.</i>	5,109	5,766	6,134	6,290	6,762	7,539	7,160	6,568	5,902	30,482	23,473	26,046	41,514	41,926	34,093
Families and Parenting															
<i>Calls are associated with Child Care Benefit, Dad and Partner Pay, Double Orphan Pension, Family Tax Benefit, Parental Leave Pay and Parenting Payment.</i>	16,256	13,348	17,584	18,779	18,276	18,488	17,479	16,849	14,037	14,309	11,350	8,344	10,301	7,876	7,396
Older Australians															
<i>Calls are associated with Age Pension, Bereavement assistance, Commonwealth Seniors Health Card, Pensioner Concession Card, Widow B Pension and Wife Pension.</i>	5,670	4,464	5,050	5,707	4,829	4,755	4,210	3,335	4,315	6,064	4,384	2,938	2,698	4,725	3,648
Youth and Students															
<i>Calls are associated with Austudy, Low Income Health Care Card, Pensioner Education, Supplement and Youth Allowance.</i>	3,732	3,142	4,521	4,743	4,459	4,373	4,378	4,147	3,733	5,252	4,032	3,110	3,478	3,568	3,386
Participation															
<i>Calls are associated with activity tested recipients who may not have met obligations. Primarily recipients are required to actively participate in approved activities. This line differs from the Employment Services line as its purpose is for compliance discussions with recipients.</i>	709	1,338	1,555	1,646	1,624	1,867	1,714	1,533	1,164	962	825	664	442	225	452
Other	36,603	33,694	35,764	25,341	29,146	29,248	18,183	22,183	60,903	394,641	305,221	142,704	92,029	21,694	23,727
- Income Management															
<i>Calls are associated with Income Management enquiries.</i>	8	8	10	17	12	12	4	8	14	23	31	20	22	15	27
- BasicsCard enquiry, BasicsCard balance enquiry															
<i>Calls are associated with BasicsCard enquiries.</i>	9,964	9,883	8,873	6,414	8,840	8,686	5,740	6,605	16,985	64,423	76,169	24,910	20,574	3,832	6,048

NOTE:

- Abandoned calls are calls that have progressed through the IVR, entered a queue waiting to be answered and the call is ended, (hung up), before it is answered by a Service Officer
- The 'Other' queue is made up of several telephone lines including: Australian Victim of Terrorism Overseas Payment, Income Management (including Basics Card), myGov, Emergency response, APIS (Australian Passport Information Service), International Services and Multilingual services.

Average Speed of Answer (Week ending data) h:mm:ss	26-Jan-20	02-Feb-20	09-Feb-20	16-Feb-20	23-Feb-20	01-Mar-20	08-Mar-20	15-Mar-20	22-Mar-20	29-Mar-20	05-Apr-20	12-Apr-20	19-Apr-20	26-Apr-20	03-May-20
Centrelink (Social Security and Welfare)	0:15:02	0:15:16	0:15:11	0:14:10	0:14:28	0:14:35	0:13:08	0:13:48	0:17:44	0:42:03	0:38:59	0:30:11	0:20:22	0:09:46	0:11:14
Disabilities, Sickness and Carers															
<i>Calls are associated with Disability Support Pension, Mobility Allowance and Sickness Allowance.</i>	0:27:16	0:26:08	0:25:59	0:22:08	0:21:24	0:19:45	0:18:49	0:25:44	0:26:33	0:24:41	0:24:15	0:24:28	0:23:38	0:26:18	0:26:20
Employment Services															
<i>Calls are associated with Newstart Allowance, JobSeeker Payment, Exceptional Circumstances Relief Help, Special Benefit and Employment Services Providers.</i>	0:22:29	0:22:08	0:22:31	0:22:59	0:22:15	0:23:54	0:24:07	0:23:35	0:25:15	0:32:20	0:25:08	0:32:25	0:18:51	0:16:25	0:22:02
Families and Parenting															
<i>Calls are associated with Child Care Benefit, Dad and Partner Pay, Double Orphan Pension, Family Tax Benefit, Parental Leave Pay and Parenting Payment.</i>	0:25:03	0:25:00	0:24:54	0:23:39	0:24:12	0:23:41	0:22:57	0:23:38	0:26:44	0:27:21	0:26:57	0:27:59	0:30:20	0:17:30	0:21:52
Older Australians															
<i>Calls are associated with Age Pension, Bereavement assistance, Commonwealth Seniors Health Card, Pensioner Concession Card, Widow B Pension and Wife Pension.</i>	0:28:07	0:25:37	0:24:16	0:22:42	0:20:05	0:19:37	0:16:39	0:14:59	0:21:14	0:15:19	0:22:31	0:24:14	0:24:36	0:23:37	0:24:49
Youth and Students															
<i>Calls are associated with Austudy, Low Income Health Care Card, Pensioner Education, Supplement and Youth Allowance.</i>	0:21:11	0:20:52	0:20:49	0:21:29	0:20:49	0:20:49	0:19:15	0:19:39	0:23:40	0:29:15	0:27:15	0:25:33	0:33:00	0:23:53	0:23:42
Participation															
<i>Calls are associated with activity tested recipients who may not have met obligations. Primarily recipients are required to actively participate in approved activities. This line differs from the Employment Services line as its purpose is for compliance discussions with recipients.</i>	0:08:55	0:17:28	0:12:47	0:14:57	0:15:17	0:19:49	0:19:02	0:15:15	0:13:26	0:10:10	0:15:45	0:31:04	0:12:08	0:04:20	0:16:07
Other	0:07:13	0:07:24	0:06:59	0:05:36	0:06:13	0:06:10	0:04:23	0:04:55	0:11:10	1:01:37	0:55:18	0:31:20	0:18:04	0:02:48	0:03:09
- Income Management															
<i>Calls are associated with Income Management enquiries.</i>	0:00:32	0:00:29	0:00:26	0:00:19	0:00:21	0:00:24	0:00:16	0:00:21	0:00:53	0:02:09	0:01:49	0:00:53	0:01:34	0:00:26	0:00:12
- BasicsCard enquiry, BasicsCard balance enquiry															
<i>Calls are associated with BasicsCard enquiries.</i>	0:07:29	0:06:57	0:06:27	0:04:27	0:07:03	0:06:29	0:03:55	0:03:55	0:12:03	1:09:06	1:23:29	0:47:22	0:24:34	0:01:40	0:02:49

NOTE:

- Average Speed of Answer is the average time it takes for a call waiting in the queue to be answered. The speed of answer is measured from when a call leaves the IVR menu (ie joins the queue to be answered) to when it is answered by a Service Officer.
- The 'Other' queue is made up of several telephone lines including: Australian Victim of Terrorism Overseas Payment, Income Management (including Basics Card), myGov, Emergency response, APIS (Australian Passport Information Service), International Services and Multilingual services.

Busy Signals (Week ending data)	26-Jan-20	02-Feb-20	09-Feb-20	16-Feb-20	23-Feb-20	01-Mar-20	08-Mar-20	15-Mar-20	22-Mar-20	29-Mar-20	05-Apr-20	12-Apr-20	19-Apr-20	26-Apr-20	03-May-20
Centrelink (Social Security and Welfare)	823,091	788,670	604,218	294,193	326,048	324,810	253,519	366,039	966,512	3,551,557	2,558,441	1,560,844	1,611,371	894,808	1,120,570
Disabilities, Sickness and Carers															
<i>Calls are associated with Disability Support Pension, Mobility Allowance and Sickness Allowance.</i>	162,225	152,731	75,008	37,390	44,774	27,648	18,775	49,333	140,880	223,725	388,762	234,834	261,749	298,311	173,242
Employment Services															
<i>Calls are associated with Newstart Allowance, JobSeeker Payment, Exceptional Circumstances Relief Help, Special Benefit and Employment Services Providers.</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	754,019	206,023	88,901	80,725	60,791	69,204
Families and Parenting															
<i>Calls are associated with Child Care Benefit, Dad and Partner Pay, Double Orphan Pension, Family Tax Benefit, Parental Leave Pay and Parenting Payment.</i>	325,347	327,782	276,853	138,398	137,492	104,513	97,117	148,095	442,769	1,276,351	1,030,926	568,485	485,513	48,983	385,131
Older Australians															
<i>Calls are associated with Age Pension, Bereavement assistance, Commonwealth Seniors Health Card, Pensioner Concession Card, Widow B Pension and Wife Pension.</i>	115,508	89,509	75,433	8,947	8,977	12,172	12,771	30,525	82,417	74,249	226,204	215,911	257,962	253,318	227,848
Youth and Students															
<i>Calls are associated with Austudy, Low Income Health Care Card, Pensioner Education, Supplement and Youth Allowance.</i>	123,704	112,343	88,763	63,538	67,634	89,941	56,756	62,730	199,899	922,224	511,561	340,752	344,783	109,498	207,342
Participation															
<i>Calls are associated with activity tested recipients who may not have met obligations. Primarily recipients are required to actively participate in approved activities. This line differs from the Employment Services line as its purpose is for compliance discussions with recipients.</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	96,307	106,305	88,161	45,920	67,171	90,536	68,100	75,356	100,547	300,989	194,965	111,961	180,639	123,907	57,803
- Income Management															
<i>Calls are associated with Income Management enquiries.</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
- BasicsCard enquiry, BasicsCard balance enquiry															
<i>Calls are associated with BasicsCard enquiries.</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

NOTE:

- *Busy Signals are calls that receive a busy signal, (engaged tone), when they attempt to contact the Agency.*
- *The 'Other' queue is made up of several telephone lines including: Australian Victim of Terrorism Overseas Payment, Income Management (including Basics Card), myGov, Emergency response, APIS (Australian Passport Information Service), International Services and Multilingual services.*

Congestion Messages (Week ending data)	26-Jan-20	02-Feb-20	09-Feb-20	16-Feb-20	23-Feb-20	01-Mar-20	08-Mar-20	15-Mar-20	22-Mar-20	29-Mar-20	05-Apr-20	12-Apr-20	19-Apr-20	26-Apr-20	03-May-20
Centrelink (Social Security and Welfare)	80,442	46,941	58,562	52,818	42,912	43,775	48,978	61,061	136,495	1,342,385	586,920	323,074	283,034	316,266	335,097
Disabilities, Sickness and Carers <i>Calls are associated with Disability Support Pension, Mobility Allowance and Sickness Allowance.</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Employment Services <i>Calls are associated with Newstart Allowance, JobSeeker Payment, Exceptional Circumstances Relief Help, Special Benefit and Employment Services Providers.</i>	80,442	46,941	58,562	52,818	42,912	43,775	48,978	61,061	136,495	1,342,385	586,920	323,074	283,034	316,266	335,097
Families and Parenting <i>Calls are associated with Child Care Benefit, Dad and Partner Pay, Double Orphan Pension, Family Tax Benefit, Parental Leave Pay and Parenting Payment.</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Older Australians <i>Calls are associated with Age Pension, Bereavement assistance, Commonwealth Seniors Health Card, Pensioner Concession Card, Widow B Pension and Wife Pension.</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Youth and Students <i>Calls are associated with Austudy, Low Income Health Care Card, Pensioner Education, Supplement and Youth Allowance.</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Participation <i>Calls are associated with activity tested recipients who may not have met obligations. Primarily recipients are required to actively participate in approved activities. This line differs from the Employment Services line as its purpose is for compliance discussions with recipients.</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
- Income Management <i>Calls are associated with Income Management enquiries.</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
- BasicsCard enquiry, BasicsCard balance enquiry <i>Calls are associated with BasicsCard enquiries.</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

NOTE:

- Congestion messages are activated in periods of high demand and provide an alternative service option for customers when their call cannot be answered.
- The 'Other' queue is made up of several telephone lines including: Australian Victim of Terrorism Overseas Payment, Income Management (including Basics Card), myGov, Emergency response, APIS (Australian Passport Information Service), International Services and Multilingual services.