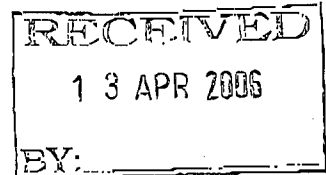


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Submission No. 1



3 April 2006



Australian Government

Mr Tony Smith MP  
Chair  
Joint Statutory Committee on Public Accounts and Audit  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Mr Smith

I am writing in relation to Centrelink's appearance at the Committee hearing of 13 February 2006 into the review of the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) Audit Report No 43 (2004-05) on Drought assistance.

At the hearing, Centrelink took one question on notice. The response to this question is attached.

I trust this information is helpful to the Committee. If you require more information please contact Ms Jo Gaha, National Manager, Rural and Cross Payments Services Branch, on (02) 6244 8548.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J Whalan".

Jeff Whalan  
Chief Executive Officer

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RESPONSE TO QUESTION AT HEARING

**Question from Senator Watson: When did you first feed that information up the line to ensure that there could have been a better criterion than self-selection.**

We have been unable to identify an exact date.

When take up numbers were not as large as expected, Centrelink and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) worked together to understand what was happening.

Centrelink staff in rural areas reported that some farmers were not applying for assistance, as they believed they would not be eligible. This observation was shared with relevant officers in the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF).

A strategy was put in place early in the delivery of the drought package to discourage this self-selecting out of potential assistance. A communication campaign was organised using local radio and press to address this issue directly and encourage farmers to test their eligibility. Seminars were also organised for farmers to receive more detailed information and again they were encouraged to test their eligibility.

# FACSIMILE



**Tony Smith MP**  
Federal Member for Casey

Suite 1, 16-18 Croydon Road  
CROYDON, VIC. 3136

Date: 21/	Total Pages (including this sheet) 3
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TO:	RUSSELL CHAFER
Fax Number:	(02) 6277 2220
Regarding:	Centrelink : Q on Notice

FROM:	Brent CROCKFORD
Phone Number:	9724 9222
Fax Number:	9724 9220

**MESSAGE:**

Russell,

A copy of a letter  
Tony asked I forward on to  
you.

Brent