

## Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

### ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES – 11 FEBRUARY 2016 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

#### Department of Human Services

**Topic:** Centrelink/DHS offices

**Question reference number:** HS 34

**Senator:** Siewert

**Type of question:** Written

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 4 April 2016

**Number of pages:** 1

#### **Question:**

- a) Does the Department have guidelines about privacy for individuals completing their forms in a crowded open space? What steps is DHS undertaking to ensure clients have adequate privacy?
- b) Are Centrelink staff able to manually process applications when the front-end website, or the back-end system, are unavailable? What is the DHS policy for front-line staff when the system is unavailable?
- c) Do Centrelink staff ever refer clients visiting an office to a phone line service?

#### **Answer:**

- a) The Department uses office design principles in its service centres, with particular attention given to the personal space needs of individuals. This includes delineation between functions, attention to the positioning of seating in wait areas and, where required, a dedicated table to complete forms away from the general traffic area.  
The Department also has a strong privacy culture with processes and procedures in place to ensure the privacy of individuals is protected when visiting a service centre. All service centre staff receive induction and refresher training in privacy and confidentiality. All staff must also sign a Privacy and Confidentiality/Secrecy responsibilities document each year that details and acknowledges obligations to safeguard and appropriately handle information under the *Privacy Act 1988*.
- b) Service centre staff are able to provide customers with alternate servicing options depending upon the nature of the business disruption. In appropriate cases, this will include processing by a front-line staff member.
- c) Yes.