

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES – 2 MARCH 2017 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Telephony lines

Question reference number: 18 (HS 18)

Senator: Siewert

Type of question: Hansard pages 36-37

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 21 April 2017

Number of pages: 3

Question:

a) Ms Brill: I can report that, as of 31 January 2017 for this financial year, we had approximately 28 million busy signals.

Senator SIEWERT: How many did not get through to the busy signal?

Mr Jackson: Abandoned calls?

Senator SIEWERT: What people are saying is that sometimes they are not even getting a busy signal.

Ms Campbell: What do they get then?

Senator SIEWERT: It just does not get through. It just does not engage.

Ms Brill: Don't they all get the busy signal?

Senator SIEWERT: No, there are some people who are saying they do not even get the busy signal.

Ms Campbell: So what do they hear? I am just trying to understand.

Senator SIEWERT: Nothing.

Senator Ryan: I asked these questions yesterday. I have not heard of examples of people not getting the noise that says they cannot get through. I appreciate there is that. Then there are the abandoned calls waiting in the queue. I have not heard of substantial examples of that. Off the top of my head, that would be a network issue.

Ms Campbell: Yes. Mr Jackson just alerted me to the fact that maybe that is when we have the multiple redial and so we might just have to find out whether that might be the denial.

Senator SIEWERT: Okay. If you could check that—

Ms Campbell: We will check that, because this is evolving.

Mr Jackson: That is my understanding, but we will take it on notice.

b) Senator SIEWERT: In that case, just to clarify: do the 28 million calls not include those denied service attacks?

Ms Campbell: I do not know. I think we will have to check. I suspect the 450,000 Mr Sterrenberg just talked about may be in that 28 million.

Senator SIEWERT: Could you clarify that? I understand the issue around the denial-of-service attack, but there are people who are hitting redial and hitting redial, and, in fact, probably using the apps, because they are just so frustrated they cannot get through. I would like clarification.

Ms Campbell: We will clarify that.

Senator SIEWERT: So you are saying that if nothing is happening it could be because the system is thinking that they are doing that—could you clarify that?

Ms Campbell: We will check that.

Senator SIEWERT: Thank you.

- c) Senator SIEWERT: I am going to run out of time, so could you provide on notice the same details for the child support lines and the Medicare lines? Were abandoned calls on all the Centrelink calls the 4 million figure you just mentioned?

Mr Jackson: Yes, that was 4,118,686.

Senator SIEWERT: Do you have a list you could table now that actually breaks that down into the individual lines?

Mr Jackson: It has all my scrawl all over it, so unfortunately not. But we can break it up on a per line basis for you.

Ms Campbell: Are you looking for the families line and those for older Australians and job seekers and those sorts of things?

Mr Jackson: We can do that.

- d) Senator SIEWERT: Yes. Because we know there are differences in busy times. And what is the average?

Ms Campbell: I think we do have the average wait times for those.

Mr Jackson: The average speed of answer across the Centrelink lines at the moment—

Senator SIEWERT: Is that the same as wait times?

Mr Jackson: Yes. It is 14 minutes and 10 seconds, against the target of 16 minutes.

Senator SIEWERT: Can you give me the breakdown for each of these against the target?

Mr Jackson: Yes, we can do that.

- e) Senator SIEWERT: What was the wait time on the debt line?

Ms Campbell: There is more than one debt line. The debt line we have been talking about this morning is a few seconds. I am just looking for someone who has a more up-to-date figure, but the last time I looked it was about 5 to 10 seconds.

Senator SIEWERT: What are the other debt lines?

Ms Campbell: We do not seem to have that readily available.

Senator SIEWERT: Could you provide that on notice against the other debt lines?

Ms Campbell: Yes.

Answer:

- a) Normally a caller will receive an engaged signal if the line is congested, even when using an auto-redialling app. In cases where the caller hears no sound, it is likely there is a problem with their telecommunications provider not being able to connect their mobile call.
- b) The 28 million number supplied was for the number of busy signals received, not the number of abandoned calls. The 28 million busy signals does include call attempts from auto-redialling apps where the caller receives an engaged signal.

c) Abandoned Calls:

Child Support: 142,987 out of 1,284,652

Medicare: 839,467 out of 6,747,298

Period: 1 July 2016 to 31 January 2017

d) Average Speed of Answer for period beginning July 2016 – end January 2017:

	Average Speed of Answer
Centrelink	14:10 ¹
Disabilities, Sickness and Carers	26:11
Employment Services	27:56
Families and Parenting	13:22
Older Australians	16:53
Youth and Students	28:54
Participation	33:55
Medicare	
Customer	6:36
Provider	2:03
Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme Authorities	0:46
Child Support	
Child Support	3:35

¹ The Average Speed of Answer for all Centrelink queues combined is 14 minutes 10 seconds.

e) Average Speed of Answer for the debt lines for the period beginning July 2016 to end January 2017:

Debt and Compliance	Average Speed of Answer
1800 Compliance	0:40
Debt Recovery and Raising	2:04