

Dear Media Contact,

I write a column for the Canberra Times. I am currently looking into the problems people seem to have in contacting Centrelink.

You will be well aware of the laughter at Senator Brandis' suggestion that people with Centrelink problems can simply contact Centrelink.

The Canberra Times recently published an article where a woman tried to do just that. See <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/lifestyle/life-and-relationships/real-life/as-a-struggling-single-mother-centrelink-terrorised-me-over-expartners-debt-20170205-gu61nu.html>

I ask: How long does it take, on average, for a telephone caller with a debt query to get through to someone at Centrelink? In recent months, what is the longest time a caller has had to wait?

Is it true that if a person goes to a Centrelink office, they will be redirected to a terminal and asked to try to solve the problem themselves? What if there is no specific box that relates to the client's complaint?

Why is a de-facto being chased for her partner's debt in the first place? Surely Centrelink should be chasing the man himself? Isn't this a case of gross incompetence on Centrelink's part?

Is it true that people have a three-minute window when they get to the Centrelink window, as stated by _____ ?

Is anything being done to make Centrelink more responsive to its clients' needs?

Please do not hide behind the screen of privacy in relation to this matter. You can answer these questions in relation to a general inquiry.

I would appreciate an answer by mid-day Wednesday 22 Feb. Please do not hold up your response because you have a problem with a particular question. Please give me what you can.

Paul Malone

Note: the recipient's name has been removed.