

**COMMUNITY AFFAIRS LEGISLATION COMMITTEE
QUESTIONS ON NOTICE – BUDGET ESTIMATES – 2 JUNE 2011
HUMAN SERVICES PORTFOLIO**

| No | Broad Topic | Senator | Question | Hansard | Responsible Group and Division | Date Answer Received | Date Tabled |
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| HS 1 | Medicare Australia Access Points | Adams | <p>Senator ADAMS: The actual question was going to be: will the agency reconsider their decision?</p> <p>Mr Bridge: I am aware of the 49 locations that you are talking about and I can tell you that, at this point in time, 36 of those locations have a Centrelink agent. We have made arrangements so that the Medicare claiming can still be done in those community services through the Centrelink agent. I am also aware that those centres have phone access, and they are also providing web services for their customers. So, in those community centres they can make a phone call and/or use the web service to do their online claiming. They can use the services without this booth.</p> <p>Senator ADAMS: Did you say 36?</p> <p>Mr Bridge: Yes, 36.</p> <p>Senator ADAMS: Can we have a list of those?</p> <p>Mr Bridge: I will take that on notice. I do not have the exact 36 with me.</p> | Page 65 | Customer Service Delivery Indigenous, Regional and Remote Servicing | | |
| HS 2 | Medicare Australia Access Points | Furner | <p>Senator FURNER: I would like to jump in and ask for a full listing of all those alternative spots that you have indicated?</p> <p>CHAIR: Can we get that on notice?</p> <p>Mr Bridge: Yes, we can do that.</p> | Page 65 | Customer Service Delivery Indigenous, Regional and Remote Servicing | | |
| HS 3 | Medicare Australia Access Points | Fierravanti-Wells | <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: Clearly, there is an issue. I would appreciate it if you could give us the list of all 840 sites, including the time line and what you propose to do. Can you tell me the consultation process that you have undertaken?</p> <p>....</p> <p>Mr Bridge: We will take the list on notice.</p> | Page 66 | Customer Service Delivery Indigenous, Regional and Remote Servicing | | |
| HS 4 | Paid Parental Leave | Fifield | <p>Senator FIFIELD: How many DHS staff accessed paid parental leave in 2010-11?</p> <p>Ms Campbell: I will ask Ms Chapman to provide that detail.</p> <p>Ms Chapman: We have those numbers, but we will need to take it on notice.</p> | Page 68 | Families, Employment and People People Services | | |
| HS 5 | Research | Fifield | <p>Senator FIFIELD: What about the amount of money that DHS spends on research in 2010-11? Are you able to separately identify the money that is spent on research?</p> <p>Ms Campbell: We probably do not have an actual figure for 2010-11, given the financial year is not over.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: Yes, we are not quite done yet.</p> <p>Ms Campbell: I do not have that. We can take on notice how much we have</p> | Pages 68-69 | Customer Service Design Research | | |

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| | | | <p>spent to date.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: Thank you. Can you supply 2008-09 and 2009-10 as well?</p> <p>Ms Campbell: Given that from 1 July DHS will include Centrelink and Medicare will you be looking for the entire portfolio or just the Department of Human Services?</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: I was just thinking of the core department, but can you also provide it for those other entities?</p> <p>Ms Campbell: Yes.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: Also, can you advise the nature of the research that has been undertaken, who conducted it and who requested it?</p> <p>Ms Campbell: Yes.</p> | | | | |
| HS 6 | Legal Costs | Fifield | <p>Senator FIFIELD: Are you able to indicate how much DHS has spent on legal costs for the year to date?</p> <p>Ms Campbell: Mr Popple will be able to answer that.</p> <p>Mr Popple: Are you after 2010-11?</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: Yes. Firstly, on external legal counsel.</p> <p>Ms Campbell: We may not have 2010-11. Can we start with 2009-10?</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: Yes.</p> <p>Mr Popple: For the 2009-10 the portfolio spent \$15,200,000 on external legal services.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: Do you also have it for 2008-09?</p> <p>Mr Popple: No.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: Can you take that on notice?</p> <p>Mr Popple: Yes.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: So, you do not have 2010-11, for the year to date?</p> <p>Ms Campbell: No, but we can take that on notice.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: Are you able to indicate—although you cannot advise the figure for the year to date—the nature of the legal work?</p> <p>Mr Popple: It covers a wide range of matters, including advice on policy matters or on service reform through to advice on procurement matters and also litigation, where we get involved in particular cases.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: Can you take on notice the nature of the work and the purpose for which external counsel is sought?</p> <p>Mr Popple: Yes.</p> | Page 69 | Executive Support and Legal Legal | | |
| HS 7 | Advertising Costs | Fifield | <p>Senator FIFIELD: What is DHS's advertising expenditure year to date?</p> <p>Ms Campbell: We will ask Ms Bennett to come to the table for advertising expenditure.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: I guess in posing the question now that Medicare and Centrelink are becoming part of DHS I should really ask for that to be divided according to your main entities.</p> | Pages 69-70 | Enabling Services Communication | | |

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| | | | <p>Ms Bennett: The information that I have at the moment is split between the two agencies that expended funding on advertising. I will approach Centrelink first. There was a range of business-as-usual non-campaign advertising, such as recruitment advertising, which they did across the portfolio. Centrelink advertising included financial information services, Indigenous services, mobile offices, public notices and tenders. The total expenditure for this financial year to 30 November through the Australian government master advertising agency, Adcorp, was \$1,254,088.</p> <p>Medicare Australia advertising, also business-as-usual and non-campaign, includes advising Medicare, office openings and relocations, information to providers, industry publications and also recruitment advertising. To date, Medicare has spent \$529,447 inclusive of GST.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: Do you have the figures for the previous financial year as well?</p> <p>Ms Bennett: I do not have them with me.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: Can you take those on notice, and for the year before that as well?</p> <p>Ms Bennett: Can I clarify that? Is that for 2008-09 and 2009-10?</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: That is correct. You have just given me 2010-11.</p> <p>Ms Bennett: Up to date?</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: Yes, to today. Does the DHS itself, as opposed to those entities, have any advertising expenditure?</p> <p>Ms Bennett: My understanding is—and I can confirm this—that for this financial year DHS did not conduct any of those activities, but I did explain that the advertising of recruitment was covered within Centrelink for this transition year to date.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: Can you also take on notice a breakdown of those costs that you gave me for the different elements of the program?</p> <p>Ms Bennett: The nature of them?</p> <p>Ms Campbell: Such as recruitment?</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: Yes.</p> | | | | |
| HS 8 | Single Portfolio Website and Telephone Number | Fifield | <p>Senator FIFIELD: Are you monitoring clients? How do you describe the people who interact with your unit?</p> <p>Mr Tidswell: Customers.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: The terminology is always changing.</p> <p>Ms Campbell: We are standardising across portfolios.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: Are you undertaking surveys of—</p> <p>Mr Tidswell: We have good information from the last two budgets, and the feedback about how people have used the service and like the service, particularly how many people have been satisfied with getting their information</p> | Page 71 | Customer Service Design Future Service Design | | |

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| | | | <p>either through the telephone number and hearing the information or through finding their way to the website and getting their information needs met. We can provide on notice how successful that has been.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: Thank you. If you could also provide on notice a breakdown of how the funds, the \$38.7 million, are being spent on this project, including any subcontractors and so on, that would be great.</p> | | | | |
| HS 9 | Right of Entry Requests by Unions | Fifield | <p>Senator FIFIELD: Could you take on notice the details year-to-date of the right of entry requests that have been made?</p> <p>Ms Chapman: I can take it on notice, but I guess what I would be saying is that the stuff that comes centrally we certainly have a record of; the requests that go locally are just dealt with locally.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: A right of entry is a formal legal request, is it not?</p> <p>Ms Chapman: Yes.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: So, what happens locally? Is that a formal legal request or is it more just, 'Hey, do you mind if I pop around for a tick?'</p> <p>Ms Chapman: They do it both ways, and if it is a formal request it goes to the local manager formally and they deal with it at that level. I can certainly get you the central requests.</p> | Page 72 | Families, Employment and People People Services | | |
| HS 10 | Social Media | Fifield | <p>Senator FIFIELD: DHS staff would, as a matter of course, I guess, be issued with guidelines in relation to the appropriate use of social media at the workplace?</p> <p>Ms Campbell: Yes.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: Have any staff been disciplined as a result of inappropriate use of social media such as Facebook or Twitter?</p> <p>Ms Briggs: Not that I am aware of, no.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: If you could take on notice if there have been.</p> <p>Ms Briggs: Of course. I will let the committee know within the week.</p> | Page 72 | Families, Employment and People People Services | | |
| HS 11 | Access to Personal Information | Fifield | <p>Senator FIFIELD: Do you have any flags against the records of some people who you keep information on; because of their profile they may be more of a temptation for people to access their details?</p> <p>Mr Wadeson: There are various reasons we flag records and limit access. Some of them are because we protect records. There may be a particular reason. So, there are various reasons we do that. I do not think it is so much because they are a celebrity as such in one way or another.</p> <p>Mr Box: We might take it on notice to give you a complete answer, but the short answer is Medicare Australia does monitor celebrities. As to access to well-known celebrities, politicians, people of note, even people in the media—there are flags on them and if their records are accessed inappropriately that is detected and action is appropriately taken.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: Have there been any instances where flags have gone up or</p> | Page 73 | Audit and Assurance | | |

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| | | | <p>you might consider that there had been privacy breaches in the year to date? Mr Box: The year to date I would have to take it on notice for you. There are briefs around I think that might answer the question. Historically there have been; in the year to date I will have to take on notice. Ms Campbell: There have been some instances which are referred for investigation and those officers who have breached privacy are considered under the code of conduct, and determinations under the code of conduct on how those officers are dealt with. Senator FIFIELD: Have there been any this financial year? Ms Campbell: There have been this financial year, yes. I do not have the details with me and there may be things about the privacy of individuals we would have to consider. We do monitor this very closely and constantly remind staff of the privacy of those individuals and the records they deal with. Senator FIFIELD: Obviously we would not want to compromise the privacy of individuals, but if you could take on notice the number of instances and the nature of those instances for the year to date that would be good. Ms Campbell: We can do that, yes. Senator FIFIELD: And also for the previous financial year.</p> | | | | |
| HS 12 | Staff Misconduct | Fifield | <p>Senator FIFIELD: Have any staff been formally disciplined in the year to date? Ms Campbell: I do not have the details. Ms Chapman may have those details with us on those who have been investigated. Ms Chapman: I have the details for the misconduct investigations during this financial year to date. This is not just specifically around privacy breaches; it is under the code of conduct, which can cover a range of things. This is across Centrelink, Medicare and DHS. We have had a total of 84 investigations in browsing, that is, where you suspect that someone is looking at records that they should not need to look at; that there is no business need for. Senator FIFIELD: ‘Browsing’ is an interesting euphemism. Ms Chapman: It is the term that is used in these matters. The other one is the improper use of the internet or email, which can involve a range of things— sending off spam email and that kind of thing. We have had 25 cases of that across Centrelink, DHS and Medicare to 31 March. Senator FIFIELD: That is emails and internet use. Any other categories? Ms Chapman: There is a range of categories to do with misconduct more generally, but not relating to the use of the internet or access to records. Senator FIFIELD: What are the other categories of misconduct? Ms Chapman: The other categories are improper use of resources; inappropriate behaviour, which excludes harassment and bullying as they are a separate category; unauthorised disclosure of information; theft; the behaviour of an employee outside of work; misuse of drugs or alcohol; conflict of interest;</p> | Pages 73-74 | Families, Employment and People People Services | | |

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| | | | <p>improper use of position or status of the individual public servant.</p> <p>Ms Campbell: It is worth noting that they are investigations—they are not proven—and that we have a portfolio of over 38,000 staff throughout Australia.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: It is a large organisations containing people with all the human foibles. So, 84 investigations for browsing. How many of those investigations have been concluded?</p> <p>Ms Chapman: I cannot give you that number. I have a total number of investigations across the code of conduct that have been finalised this financial year, but it is not broken down into the specific categories.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: Could you take that on notice and break it down by the specific categories, what the result was, and if it was concluded and everything was clear or there was disciplinary action, that would be useful.</p> | | | | |
| HS 13 | Child Support Program – Over-payments | Fifield | <p>Senator FIFIELD: Going now to more core CSA responsibilities, how many clients may have received overpayments in 2010-11?</p> <p>Ms Godwin: What is your definition of an overpayment in that context?</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: I guess someone who is a payee rather than a payer who may have received more money than they should have according to what has been agreed?</p> <p>Ms Godwin: I will just check my notes here. I am not sure that I have actually got numbers on the number of overpayments which can occur in a variety of circumstances. I am sorry, I do not have actual statistics. Can we take it on notice? I am not sure if we are able to answer it because of course an overpayment can appear and disappear as a result of a reassessment. An assessment that reduces the paying parent's liability may result in an overpayment. If the receiving parent then challenges that reassessment and the assessment reverts back to—</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: It can get netted out.</p> <p>Ms Godwin: As I say, if I could take it on notice, but I am not sure precisely what we might be able to give you in that respect.</p> | Page 76 | Child Support | | |
| HS 14 | Child Support Program – Debt Enforcement | Fifield | <p>Senator FIFIELD: How many complaints has the CSA received in the year to date relating to debt enforcement issues?</p> <p>Ms Godwin: I would have to take on notice the number relating to debt enforcement issues, although I should note that we are seeing a steady decline in escalated complaints and that would cover both paying parents and receiving parents. We are making a concerted effort to try to improve our service at the front end so people do not have to complain.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: Could you also take that on notice the previous two financial years? Do you break that down by categories of complaint?</p> <p>Ms Godwin: We do break it down by categories of complaint but I would need to see whether we can break it into the categories that you talk about. People</p> | Page 77 | Child Support | | |

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| | | | commonly complain for example if we have not taken what they regard as sufficient action to get their child support. We used to see complaints about service officer behaviour, although pleasingly that has dropped right down the list of the sources of complaint. We would need to see whether we could break it into specific complaints about enforcement action. | | | | |
| HS 15 | Professional Services Review | Back | <p>Senator BACK: Could you tell me or take on notice how many cases Medicare has investigated and how many cases—is ‘investigate’ the word?</p> <p>Mr Bridge: We have a range of—</p> <p>Senator BACK: you have passed onto the PSR in each year? If you could provide that on notice I would appreciate it.</p> <p>Mr Bridge: We can do that.</p> | Page 78 | Medicare, Rehabilitation and Compliance Recovery, Health and Business Compliance | | |
| HS 16 | Medicare – Fraud Prevention / Protection | Fifield | <p>Senator FIFIELD: How much did Medicare spend on fraud prevention and fraud detection in the financial year to date?</p> <p>Mr Bridge: I do not have the exact figure with me, so I will take it on notice. Medicare spends around \$30 million per annum on its compliance program, which includes fraud investigations, our reviews for the PSR and our general audit programs. That has been fairly consistent for a number of years.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: Similar amounts in previous years. How many staff are directly deployed on those roles at the moment in Medicare?</p> <p>Mr Bridge: Again, that is around 300.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: How many cases of fraud have been detected in the year to date?</p> <p>Mr Bridge: By way of explanation, there is fraud in the criminal sense and more directly in incorrect claims. By far the majority of the work that we do is around the incorrect claims rather than outright criminal fraud. In the programs we undertake we tend to find very small instances of outright criminal fraud, which is largely due to the nature of the programs and how they work together. On average, we would take on board around 3,500 cases per annum. That is the both the professional services review beforehand and general audit cases.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: How many of those would you deem to be fraud as opposed to errors?</p> <p>Mr Bridge: The number varies dramatically all the time. I can take on notice the actual number of cases out of the work to date and our actual audits. For example, I can give you the 2009-10 figure.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: Thank you.</p> <p>Mr Bridge: It was 3,594 across all of our programs. That includes health professionals, pharmacists and members of the public. That is the number audited. In those different groups there are different levels of the number of cases where we have found incorrect claims. I can give you a detailed breakdown of that on notice.</p> | Page 81 | Medicare, Rehabilitation and Compliance Recovery, Health and Business Compliance | | |

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| | | | <p>Senator FIFIELD: On notice is fine. How many successful prosecutions of fraud have there been?</p> <p>Mr Bridge: Again, it is a very small number. For the 2010-11 year to date it is 10, of which nine were members of the public and one was a medical professional.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: How many tip-offs has Medicare received year to date in relation to fraud?</p> <p>Mr Bridge: It is around 2,500. Again, that number is reasonably steady over the years.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: Can you break those up between medical professionals and customers?</p> <p>Mr Bridge: I will take that on notice.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: Of those 2,500 tip-offs, how many ended up being substantiated?</p> <p>Mr Bridge: Again, that 2,500 is all forms of tip-offs that we might get, so it could be potential PSR cases, as we said before, and fraud investigations. I will take that on notice to give you actual detailed data around the numbers.</p> | | | | |
| HS 17 | National Mental Health Reform | Fierravanti-Wells | <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: Is the reason that you will not need to do that work because of the fact that the government is cutting back on the Better Access initiative and therefore there will not be as many claims to process?</p> <p>Ms Golightly: I will check into that for you, but most of the money that we get is to put items on to the MBS or take items off the MBS. From memory, I think this one is taking items off, but I will check on that and get back to you.</p> <p>Ms Thomson: With regard to that measure, you are correct. There is a reduction in the number of allied mental health services available under this particular item. There has been a reduction.</p> <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: So to come to that figure, which is almost \$1 million over the forward estimates, how have you assessed that \$1 million? Do you work out that there are X-number less claims that you will need to process? Do you work it on a per claims basis or do you work it out as a global fee?</p> <p>Ms Thomson: Some of those assumptions around that particular budget measure have been developed with our colleagues at the Department of Health and Ageing. There is a number of individual services that are offered underneath the initiative, as well as group therapy sessions. Under this particular measure, the number of individual sessions, which is currently up to 18, will be reduced to 10 and the number of group sessions are currently at 12 and they will be reduced to 10, so there has been a slight reduction.</p> <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: That is my point. To get to the \$1 million you must have worked out how many fewer claims you are going to process, so</p> | Page 83 | Health and Older Australians Health Programs and Disability, Carers and Older Australians | | |

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| | | | <p>my question to you is: how many fewer claims will you be processing? Ms Golightly: We will have to take that on notice. It is all part of the methodology behind it. Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: I appreciate that. I also appreciate the assumptions and the basis upon which it is done. I understand that is done primarily with DoHA as the lead and you are executing instructions. Ms Golightly: Yes. We will get you that detail.</p> | | | | |
| HS 18 | Medical Benefits Scheme | Fierravanti-Wells | <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: So, therefore, any reductions to GP services and the number of claims that you may process in relation to the reduction of GP claims is contained in that calculation? Ms Golightly: As part of the calculation, yes. There are a lot of ons and offs in their simplest form. It is not just relating to that measure. Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: I appreciate that. Could you take on notice the ons and offs in relation to GP related Better Access items? Ms Golightly: Certainly.</p> | Page 83 | Health and Older Australians Health Programs | | |
| HS 19 | Private Health Insurance Changes | Fierravanti-Wells | <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: I just have one further question. In relation to the proposed changes to the private health insurance and the changes to the rebates, as part of your budget will that affect you in any way and are there any calculations that are inserted in your budget over the forward estimates similar to the Better Access where there will possibly be an increase? Do you understand what I am getting at? Ms Golightly: Yes, I do. I just need to check something because the legislation has not gone through. I will take your question on notice. Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: Is it the same methodology that you used for the Better Access? Ms Golightly: Yes. Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: Could you also provide me with the assumptions that underlie that? Ms Golightly: Yes. Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: Where would that be if it was in this table? I would have thought it would be under Health and Ageing. Ms Campbell: It may not have been in this table because this has been a government proposal for some time and would have been inserted in the budget documents the first time the government put it forward. Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: So it will be in the one where it was first proposed as the \$1.9 billion package? Ms Campbell: It is 2008-09. That is likely, yes. I do not have that with me, but we would have updated our estimates as the legislation did not pass. We will take those questions on notice. Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: I understand from questions that I asked in</p> | Page 84 | Health and Older Australians Health Programs | | |

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| | | | <p>DoHA that figures are being revised.</p> <p>Ms Campbell: They are.</p> <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: I assume that your figures will be revised so if you could provide me with both sets?</p> <p>Ms Golightly: Yes.</p> | | | | |
| HS 20 | Public Hospital Services | Fierravanti-Wells | <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: Do you have any data on the number of services that are billed by practitioners in public hospitals, such as outpatient services?</p> <p>Ms Golightly: I do not have it here.</p> <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: No. Probably most of what I will ask you now is to be taken on notice.</p> <p>Ms Golightly: Okay.</p> <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: Could you provide me with the latest data on the number of services and the value of the benefits provided?</p> <p>Ms Golightly: Yes.</p> <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: I would assume that you probably have data on services that have been billed to Medicare by private providers, but on referral from a practitioner located in a public hospital or outpatient setting?</p> <p>Ms Golightly: I would think so. If there is a billing to Medicare, we will have data on it.</p> | Page 86 | Health and Older Australians Health Programs | | |
| HS 21 | Medicare Australia Fraud – Improper Billing in Public Hospitals | Fierravanti-Wells | <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: Has there been any investigation of practitioners for improper billing located in a public hospital or outpatients' service?</p> <p>Ms Golightly: Yes.</p> <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: Is that the sort of investigation you undertake?</p> <p>Ms Golightly: We do get complaints from time to time on the tip-off or other lines that Mr Bridge was talking about earlier. Where we get those complaints, we do look into them.</p> <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: Do you have some statistics on the numbers of practitioners that have been investigated and how many have been directed to make a repayment, say, over recent years? I will leave that to whatever statistics you have.</p> <p>Ms Golightly: Sure.</p> | Page 86 | Medicare, Rehabilitation and Compliance Recovery, Health and Business Compliance | | |
| HS 22 | Medicare Australia Fraud – <i>The Age</i> Article | Fierravanti-Wells | <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: I will provide you with some copies of an article in the <i>Age</i> from the end of 2009 in relation to two Melbourne hospitals, Northern Hospital and Ballarat Health Service. The article states, 'Sources within those hospitals say public outpatients are being sent to private clinics for scans or pathology tests.' The article is about the investigation, and obviously the Commonwealth spokesperson has made a comment, the inference being that</p> | Pages 86-87 | Medicare, Rehabilitation and Compliance Recovery, Health and Business Compliance | | |

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| | | | <p>there would be some investigation of the matter. Could you take this question on notice? I would appreciate it if you did undertake an investigation and provide details of the outcome of that investigation in relation to any reported action as opposed to what may be referred to in the article?</p> <p>Ms Golightly: Yes.</p> | | | | |
| HS 23 | Medicare Compliance | Fierravanti-Wells | <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: I have some questions in relation to Medicare compliance. How many medical practitioners have been audited in relation to Medicare billing in the previous 12 months?</p> <p>Mr Bridge: I can give you a breakdown for the 2009-10 year. This actually provides some more detail that was raised earlier. Some 2,365 audits of health professionals, which includes allied health professionals, specialist and GPs, were conducted in the 2009-10 financial year. That would be fraud investigations, practice reviews, possible PSR audits, the whole gamut.</p> <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: Was that figure for GPs and allied health?</p> <p>Mr Bridge: All health professionals.</p> <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: Could you take on notice and provide me with a breakdown of the various categories, if you do not mind?</p> <p>Mr Bridge: Yes.</p> <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: How many have been found to have billed improperly or made repayments? It is basically just looking at the nature of those audits. If any of them do relate to billing issues, could you provide whether those moneys were paid? Please take that on notice.</p> <p>Ms Golightly: Yes.</p> | Page 87 | <p>Medicare, Rehabilitation and Compliance</p> <p>Recovery, Health and Business Compliance</p> | | |
| HS 24 | Chronic Disease Dental Scheme – Practitioner Audits | Fierravanti-Wells | <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: You have \$20 million. I take it that some of those will repay and on some you might have to take recovery action?</p> <p>Mr Bridge: Correct.</p> <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: Again, are they actions that DoHA takes?</p> <p>Mr Bridge: No, we do that. We will be pursuing all of that \$20 million in relation to those particular cases, and further cases as we complete them.</p> <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: When will that audit be completed?</p> <p>Mr Bridge: We have actually just recently increased the size of our audit activity in this territory. We currently have I think 156 active cases, and potentially several hundred more that may be subject to audit. I would anticipate that that work will continue for some period of time.</p> <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: Perhaps if you could take that on notice and give me a time frame? With respect to this audit you are doing in relation to the dental scheme, when do you anticipate that that will be completed?</p> <p>Ms Golightly: As Mr Bridge has mentioned, as we get more knowledge about it we are actually finding more cases. At the moment there is no end date. We know there are quite a few that we need to finish, and they are complex cases.</p> | Page 88 | <p>Medicare, Rehabilitation and Compliance</p> <p>Recovery, Health and Business Compliance</p> | | |

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| | | | <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: All right, but you will provide me some more information on notice?</p> <p>Ms Golightly: Yes.</p> | | | | |
| HS 25 | Centrelink Customer Complaints | Fifield | <p>Senator FIFIELD: July to March, okay. In that case, do you have July to March for the previous period as well?</p> <p>Ms Hogg: Not here, no. We will take that on notice.</p> <p>Mr Tidswell: But they have been dropping.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: Yes. I was just after the same period to see if that was a spike, but it is dropping. Have any staff been formally disciplined this financial year to date as a result of complaints relating to customer service?</p> <p>Ms Hogg: I can tell you the procedure that we go through while we are getting that figure. If there is a complain that specifically refers to the way a staff member has handled either a phone call or any general service, that complaint is immediately referred to a senior officer, either in the area who manages the officers and/or the call centre, and the senior officer then contacts the customer, particularly if there is a complaint about the attitude of the staff, and apologise, no matter what the perception is, take the details and if there is validity in the complaint, that senior officer contacts and deals with the staff member directly.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: Okay, thanks for that.</p> <p>Mr Tidswell: We do not have the figure here with us. What we can say out of those figures that we have provided to you up to 31 March 2011 is that 24 per cent of those complaints were about employee knowledge and practice, 20 per cent were about access to a call centre, so that explains the very busy time that we had over the floods and emergencies, and 11 per cent, which is probably the figure you are looking at, is the employee attitude. That is more likely to be the situation where employee attitudes are the sort of thing you are after, 11 per cent of those 35,000 complaints.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: They were about employee attitudes and service. Have any staff been formally counselled?</p> <p>Mr Tidswell: I do not have those figures.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: If you could take that on notice, that would be great.</p> <p>Mr Tidswell: Okay, yes.</p> | Page 91 | Customer Service Delivery Network Capability | | |
| HS 26 | Centrelink Customer Hotline | Fifield | <p>Senator FIFIELD: Have there been any disruptions to Centrelink's hotline within the last 12 months?</p> <p>Mr Tidswell: The Customer Relation Unit hotline?</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: Yes?</p> <p>Mr Tidswell: Not that I am aware of, other than problems maybe with outages, telecommunications that go down from time to time, as happens. I do not have any specific details of outages.</p> <p>Ms Lewin: I have a hazy recollection of a short-term outage some months ago.</p> | Pages 91-92 | Customer Service Delivery Access Services | | |

| No | Broad Topic | Senator | Question | Hansard | Responsible Group and Division | Date Answer Received | Date Tabled |
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| | | | <p>Senator FIFIELD: What constitutes a short-term outage—half an hour, an hour, a day?</p> <p>Ms Lewin: Probably a couple of hours.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: Could you take on notice if there have been others, and what the duration was?</p> | | | | |
| HS 27 | Centrelink Incorrect Payments | Fifield | <p>Senator FIFIELD: Could you advise the committee how many incorrect or duplicate payments have been made in the year to date?</p> <p>Ms Hogg: The best information I could probably give you is the quality assurance program that we run. This is one where we review on a random basis the decisions that we have made. We have a performance target around this, which is a 95 per cent accuracy rate. We do the first line of checking on that, and there is a second line of checking where a sample of those cases is then checked by officers not in the area that made the first decision. There is a third line of checking where a sample of those cases goes back to the policy department who owns the policy, and they check the cases. The best figure I could give you would be that accuracy figure.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: So it is sort of 95 per cent?</p> <p>Ms Hogg: It is about 96 per cent accuracy at the moment.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: Of those incorrect payments which have been identified through that approach, how many of them have been rectified through repayment?</p> <p>Ms Hogg: I would have to take that on notice.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: If you could.</p> <p>Mr Withnell: I might be able to help you with that one. Through our review program that we do annually, as you may recall we do about 3.5 million reviews of various types. For the year 2009-10, of that review program, there were 575,715 reductions of payments. In a number of instances people may have had several reductions of payments, particularly in the fortnightly reporting arrangements where income can vary.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: So a reduction of payments in a circumstance where someone had been overpaid, their subsequent payments were reduced to net that out?</p> <p>Mr Withnell: Correct.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: Would that 575,000 people or instances comprise both those who had been overpaid through an error of Centrelink and also those who had been overpaid because of changed circumstances or incorrect information which they have provided to Centrelink?</p> <p>Mr Withnell: That is correct.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: Is it possible to break that figure down to those that are because of Centrelink error and those because of customer error or</p> | Pages 92-93 | Medicare, Rehabilitation and Compliance Customer Compliance | | |

| No | Broad Topic | Senator | Question | Hansard | Responsible Group and Division | Date Answer Received | Date Tabled |
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| | | | <p>misinformation? Mr Withnell: Probably not. I am happy to have a look at it, but I think the way we actually characterise the reviews, it probably does not capture that level of detail in these particular activities.</p> | | | | |
| HS 28 | Centrelink Fraud | Fifield | <p>Senator FIFIELD: How much has Centrelink spent on fraud prevention and fraud detection in the financial year to date? Mr Withnell: I do not have that figure for year to date. I will take that on notice.</p> | Page 94 | Medicare, Rehabilitation and Compliance Customer Compliance | | |
| HS 29 | Grandparent Advisers | Fierravanti-Wells | <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: I want to follow up on my questioning this morning about grandparents advisers. I was told that I would have to come here to ask questions. In Budget Paper No. 2, page 197, there is provision for grandparents peer support groups, \$1.2 million over four years to establish 25 MyTime for Grandparents, and also it says 'establish dedicated grandparents advisers in selected Centrelink offices'. Can you provide for me the definition and job description of what a grandparent adviser is, and what they do at the moment? Will that vary with the establishment of the 25 MyTime for Grandparents peer groups and will there be interaction between the two of them? Mr Tidswell: Since November 2010 we have been trialling this approach. This is something we have been doing in an ad hoc way across the country for many years. It is a very tricky issue for grandparents who are carers for children. I think you know the issue well. Since November 2010, we have had staff doing work out of Caboolture, Caringbah, Penrith, Oakley and in Perth, and we also have an existing service operating out of Adelaide. Generally, these are staff working with individuals and groups of grandparents assisting them with the sorts of services we are able to provide. Often this is a tricky issue. The natural parent may not be in good shape—drugs, alcohol, what have you—and so by default the grandparents become the carers but not the custodians. It is a tricky issue for us to work with. It is largely working with grandparents in that area and looking at other ways of connecting them to services and provision and support, so it is a good initiative. What I am not aware of is how it connects in with the, as I understand it, FaHCSIA funded initiative mentioned in the budget papers, but we would be happy to take that on notice to work through how that particular initiative was going to work. Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: They do work with community support groups now. There was some evidence given this morning which led me to think there might be some interaction between the two. Perhaps if you might look at that evidence and I am happy for you to elaborate, if you want, on notice. Mr Tidswell: Yes. Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: Are these six grandparent advisers full time</p> | Pages 97-98 | Customer Service Delivery Smart Centres | | |

| No | Broad Topic | Senator | Question | Hansard | Responsible Group and Division | Date Answer Received | Date Tabled |
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| | | | <p>or part time?</p> <p>Mr Tidswell: Most of them are full time and some are part time. We have been trialling this as an approach and we would like to do more of it, but there is a limited amount of resources that we can provide.</p> <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: Could you just take on notice which ones are part time and which are full time?</p> <p>Mr Tidswell: Absolutely.</p> <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: Do they have defined areas that they cover or they are just located in that Centrelink office and whoever can access them from around does so?</p> <p>Mr Tidswell: Generally how we operate our service model is that, whilst they might be located in an office, as I have outlined in those particular offices, they generally try to provide a footprint across a regional area, and that would be the norm when we have specialist staff doing this work. So, they might do outreach to places where—</p> <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: Like Penrith might do outreach out past the Blue Mountains and those sorts of surrounding areas?</p> <p>Mr Tidswell: Correct, yes. I will get some further information to give a sense of the extent of where they go.</p> <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: This morning we had evidence that we are working off ABS 2006 statistics.</p> <p>Mr Tidswell: That is my understanding of where we located the workers.</p> <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: So, you use that data to decide where you put the officers?</p> <p>Mr Tidswell: That is my understanding, but I will take that on notice for you and confirm that.</p> | | | | |
| HS 30 | Staff – Marketing, Publications, Communications, Events | Fifield | <p>Senator FIFIELD: What is the total number of staff engaged in marketing, publications, communications, events—basically the public affairs staff?</p> <p>Ms Bennett: I do not have the staff numbers. I have the breakdown of staff costs so I will need to take that on notice.</p> | Page 100-101 | Enabling Services Communication | | |
| HS 31 | General Manager Communication | Fifield | <p>Senator FIFIELD: The framework would include those whom he follows?</p> <p>...</p> <p>Ms Campbell: We might need to take that one on notice. What we try to achieve through the social media is to look at different methods of communicating with customers, being able to understand where customers are coming from and understanding some of their concerns. Often there will be an issue that is raised using social media that it is important that we are able to clarify very quickly, with respect to payments to customers or a general policy matter.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: Would you be able to hazard a guess as to which of Mr Jongen’s official duties with regard to his Twitter account would necessitate his</p> | | Enabling Services Communication | | |

| No | Broad Topic | Senator | Question | Hansard | Responsible Group and Division | Date Answer Received | Date Tabled |
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| | | | <p>following Marieke Hardy?</p> <p>Ms Campbell: I think we would have to take that on notice.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: Marieke Hardy is often on, was it, the <i>First Tuesday Book Club</i> on ABC hosted by Jennifer Byrne? She is an author and social commentator who came to prominence a little while back over some offensive comments attacking the shadow minister.</p> <p>Ms Bennett: There are three Twitter accounts and three Facebook accounts. The student update account, which is both a Twitter and a Facebook account, is about Centrelink and Medicare support for students and young people with a specific focus. There is Grads for Human Services, which is a portfolio graduate recruitment Facebook and Twitter account sharing information with future employees about application processes and working with us. Then there is the Hank Facebook and Twitter account, which are aimed at sharing announcement and portfolio messages about the business and the connection with customers. As the secretary said, they are very much focused on sharing information in a media that works for the audience or the nature of that customer. There is quite a specific role for them and analysis about how they are the best way to get in touch with that group of customers.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: Could you take on notice what the connection is between Marieke Hardy and the work of Centrelink?</p> <p>Ms Campbell: I do know that Mr Jongen does monitor those social media to see whether there is something out there about Centrelink or Human Services services and payments as a way for us to very quickly determine whether there might be some misinformation in the community that we are able to clarify.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: I will be interested in the advice that comes to hand on that. Is the department aware of the website called hankjongen.com, which is not an official Centrelink website? It is not an official Hank Jongen website. I think it is an unauthorised website by a private organisation that allows people to comment on Centrelink service delivery. Are you aware of that?</p> <p>Ms Campbell: I am not aware of it, but we can check with our communications division and get back to you on that.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: The reason I raise it is because the site uses the Australian coat of arms and also the department's logo in its banner headline. I know there are particular protocols that apply to the use of the coat of arms and also the department's logo. I draw that to your attention. Could you take on notice whether there has been any action to ensure that the logo and the coat of arms are not used inappropriately by another organisation that is not authorised to do so?</p> <p>Ms Campbell: Was it hankjongen.com?</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: It was hankjongen.com apparently.</p> <p>Senator Arbib: It is an offensive site, obviously.</p> | | | | |

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| | | | Senator FIFIELD: I thought I should draw that to the department's attention. As I said, I think it is a site that has the purpose of allowing people to comment on Centrelink services. If you could take on notice whether that is something that Centrelink has monitored that would be appreciated. I do have some other questions, but I will yield to another colleague for the moment. | | | | |
| HS 32 | New Welfare Reform Trial Sites | Siewert | <p>Senator SIEWERT: Over the number of initiatives, how many additional staff will you be putting into those 10 locations to deal with these initiatives?</p> <p>Mr Sandison: I think we would have to take it on notice, because I would not want to bet that they will be in those locations, because they are responding to a range of issues. As you know, everything feeds through. If there is higher engagement there are different reviews, social workers, there might be appeals processes, and so everything is a distribution of resources. It could not be a statement that in each location there would be another 3.3 people just to look after teen parents. If there were that amount of staffing it would be distributed by the organisation in the different areas of effort needed by call centre staff. There would be an effort in call centre to respond to the calls from different groups that are engaged.</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT: I appreciate what you are saying. What I want to know—</p> <p>Mr Sandison: To the extent that we can as to what is in the local area, we can try to find that out for you.</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT: If you could. I am interested to know how many people are going to be frontline people that will be assisting with the particular qualifications that are needed to deal with the sorts of barriers that we are talking about, because we are talking about significant barriers to disadvantage. I want to know about the qualifications, the quality of the people that you are going to be getting to actually make a difference if this is going to work.</p> <p>Mr Sandison: To the level of detail that we have we can take that on notice.</p> | Page 104 | Customer Service Design | | |
| HS 33 | BasicsCard | Siewert | <p>Senator FIFIELD: In this particular situation was the Northern Territory Coordinator-General spoken to?</p> <p>Ms Ramsey: We have regular contact with Mr Beadman around a range of issues, yes.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: Upon discussion was there anything to substantiate what was in the—</p> <p>Ms Ramsey: I cannot confirm. I would have to take on notice to talk to the staff who spoke to him about this particular instance, but I can say that I have regular conversations with Mr Beadman myself, but not on this particular instance.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: But your staff have on this particular instance?</p> <p>Ms Ramsey: Yes. I need to take that on notice and confirm that in this particular instance they have gotten back to him.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: This being the particular instance that I am specifically</p> | Pages 111-112 | Customer Service Delivery Indigenous, Regional and Remote Servicing | | |

| No | Broad Topic | Senator | Question | Hansard | Responsible Group and Division | Date Answer Received | Date Tabled |
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| | | | <p>asking about.</p> <p>Mr Tidswell: In each and every circumstance the CEO and I ask the question virtually as soon as it appears in the media. We are conscious of the public scrutiny and the importance of making sure that this does not occur. We do not sit on our hands. We look into it. What we cannot confirm is that Mr Beadman was directly spoken to and provided further information.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD: Could you take that on notice?</p> <p>Ms Ramsey: Yes.</p> | | | | |
| HS 34 | Anti-social Behaviour near Centrelink Customer Service Centre | Boyce | <p>Senator BOYCE: This specific inquiry comes in relation to the Centrelink office in Nundah Village in Brisbane. The person who has brought this to my attention says that, in fact, the girls from the local girls high school no longer come to Nundah Village or even catch the train. They have to use Toombul station, which is more inconvenient for them but not in the shopping village, because of ‘unwelcome people coming and selling drugs, getting drunk and trying to rob our shops’. Are you or anyone at Centrelink aware of this?</p> <p>Ms Hogg: I am certainly not aware of it. I will check with the officer who works with the area managers.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Senator BOYCE: Would they get involved with the local shopkeepers groups or progress associations?</p> <p>Mr Tidswell: We will often do that. We are obviously part of the community and we want to be a good citizen in that community. If there are things that are going on—people congregating in the car park afterwards—we will get involved with the local council, police and shopkeepers to work with people. Nundah has not been on my radar as a site where we would have concerns. We will take this off line from here, make some inquiries and see what we can do.</p> <p>Senator BOYCE: I would appreciate, when you have made your inquiries, if you could respond to me.</p> <p>Mr Tidswell: Certainly.</p> | Pages 112-113 | Customer Service Delivery Access Services | | |
| HS 35 | Carers Allowance | Boyce | <p>Senator BOYCE: I asked questions yesterday and I think some of them echoed what Senator Siewert was talking about here in terms of people on disability support pensions and how the checking up and so forth is going on. It was pointed out that in the past there had often been, in my experience, a lot of unnecessary inquiries from Centrelink because it was a general inquiry rather than an inquiry that was suited to the specific situation. I gave as an example the fact that people with Down’s syndrome were generally asked once every year or two years if they had recovered from their condition.</p> <p>I wanted to raise with you a particular case in Townsville, which I imagine, like Senator Fifield, you will have to take on notice, of a man who is caring for his wife who has a degenerative condition. She requires full-time nursing care. She is</p> | Page 113 | Health and Older Australians Disability, Carers and Older Australians | | |

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| | | | <p>currently in a nursing home, but she cannot communicate at all except with him. She needs to be fed and no-one at the nursing home has time to do that. He has already been taken off Carers Allowance and put on Unemployment Allowance. He was then told that that would be how it would rest. He was not going to be required to go job hunting because of the fact that she is probably not going to live very long and he is the only person who can communicate with her. He then received a letter saying that he would have to go and have a job interview within the following week. He rang Centrelink and could not get the manager. He spoke to someone else who said that his exemption would be ongoing 'even though the letter says that I have to start job hunting on 14 June'. The Centrelink person on the phone 'told me that I had an interview due even though I had a letter in front of me exempting me until June 14', and that the 'stand-in manager told me to ignore the letter and to go for the interview'. The next day he spoke to the Centrelink manager who said she had 'flagged my file to be exempted time after time' and that 'any forms I was getting are auto generated and not to take them too seriously'.</p> <p>Senator Arbib: I can say that I am sure the officials would be very happy to do this offline. If we could do this privately we might be able to better resolve the issue.</p> <p>Senator BOYCE: I was intending to stop there. I am giving you an example of the sort of thing that continues to happen where the system and the people do not gel or do not sync. I would appreciate your assistance in this particular case. Maybe the police think everybody is a potential criminal because they spend their lives with criminals, but from where I sit Centrelink continues to not be particularly sensitive to the needs of clients.</p> <p>Ms Campbell: We are happy to take this example on notice and determine what the issue is. We are happy on any occasion that we are presented with information like this to look into the case. I am not sure that we consider that this is a systemic problem. We work very hard to make sure that we are sensitive to customer needs and customer circumstances, but we are more than happy to look at this situation and get back to you.</p> | | | | |
| HS 36 | Centrelink Customer Service Centre in Dubbo | Boyce | <p>Senator BOYCE: What is the rent on the new premises in Wingewarra Street going to be and when will you start paying that?</p> <p>Ms Bennett: I will have to take that on notice. To be honest, we obviously would not be paying that until we have occupied the building, but we have entered into a commitment subject to the developers being able to build that building and obtaining council approval for all of the full dimensions of that—the size, the space and all of those issues.</p> <p>Senator BOYCE: That was going to be my question. There must be some sort of precommitment to the develop from Centrelink to occupy the building.</p> | Pages 114-115 | Enabling Services Corporate Operations | | |

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| | | | <p>Ms Bennett: Yes. We have a commitment. We went out to tender, as I explained. It was an open market test for a lease for the premises. That seven-year precommitment lease, subject to those provisions that I have mentioned, is with Stirloch Developments.</p> <p>Senator BOYCE: Stirloch, is it?</p> <p>Ms Bennett: Stirloch Developments Pty Ltd.</p> <p>Senator BOYCE: Presumably that precommitment has at least an indicative rent in it.</p> <p>Ms Bennett: It would.</p> <p>Ms Campbell: We can get back to you on that.</p> <p>Senator BOYCE: Can you give me that and when you would begin to pay that, presuming that they met the other conditions? I imagine that would also be in the precommitment?</p> <p>Ms Campbell: That would normally be the case.</p> <p>Senator BOYCE: What is the rent on the current premises in Wingewarra Street?</p> <p>Ms Campbell: I do not have that material.</p> <p>Ms Bennett: I have the annual rent arrangements. As I explained, the current rent at Dubbo is \$523,753 annually and the rent of the new building will be \$751,328.</p> <p>Ms Campbell: The larger size of the building will allow the capacity for some Medicare services to be provided from there, as well as those that are currently provided in Macquarie Street in Dubbo.</p> <p>Senator BOYCE: So there would be two Medicare offices?</p> <p>Ms Cambell: It is not necessarily an office.</p> <p>Senator BOYCE: Two Medicare operations?</p> <p>Ms Campbell: Yes. It is part of our service delivery reform about providing services in offices to offer flexibility for customers so that they can come in and do their Centrelink and Medicare business at the same place. For those where there may be mobility issues, if they are already in Centrelink it makes it easier for them to be able to transact their Medicare business as well.</p> <p>Senator BOYCE: I thought I heard Ms Campbell or Ms Bennett say that there was no decision yet as to whether Medicare was going to move in.</p> <p>Ms Campbell: I think Ms Bennett said that, and while she has been talking I have been able to read the briefing notes which state that it is proposed that the Medicare facility that is currently in Macquarie Street will remain there whilst allowing Medicare services to be provided as well in this new facility. That is what we are trying to do with many of our new fit-outs. We are having a look at how we can provide a greater range of services to customers in the one location so that they are able to do all their business with government, where possible, in that one location.</p> | | | | |

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| | | | <p>Senator BOYCE: Do you know what the population increase annually in Dubbo would be over the last couple of years?</p> <p>CHAIR: That will need to be taken on notice.</p> <p>Ms Bennett: I will take that on notice.</p> | | | | |
| HS 37 | Co-location of Offices | Adams | <p>Senator ADAMS: I would like to continue on the co-location. Ms Hogg, last time I was talking about the rent in Western Australia with the co-location of Medicare and Centrelink offices. I asked whether you had a list of offices that were going to be co-located and you were going to ask the minister if it was appropriate to provide the list. I do not have it yet.</p> <p>Ms Hogg: I will follow that up immediately.</p> <p>Senator ADAMS: Thank you. Secondly, have you co-located any yet and how are they going?</p> <p>Ms Hogg: In Australia?</p> <p>Senator ADAMS: I suppose you could do Australia.</p> <p>Senator BOYCE: Absolutely Australia; it is far more interesting.</p> <p>Senator ADAMS: I was thinking about regional Western Australia, because I was more interested in those.</p> <p>Mr Tidswell: Since December 2009, when then Minister Bowen and the Department of Human Services announced service delivery reform we have joined up our services in 42 locations across the country. We have another 12 or so planned before the end of this financial year. Over the next three years or so we are well on target to pretty much expand our service offer and footprint across 500 sites across the country.</p> <p>In respect of Western Australia, I do not have any figures here for regional Western Australia. We have St Georges Terrace. As you well know, this is a longstanding policy of joining up services of the previous government. I do not have those figures with me of what we have done. We are moving forward into Kalgoorlie, which is one of the sites, but we will come back to you to give you some specific information about our plans for regional Western Australia.</p> | Page 116 | Customer Service Delivery Indigenous, Regional and Remote Servicing | | |

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS LEGISLATION COMMITTEE
WRITTEN QUESTIONS ON NOTICE – BUDGET ESTIMATES – 2 JUNE 2011
HUMAN SERVICES PORTFOLIO

| No | Broad Topic | Senator | Question | Date Received | Responsible Group and Division | Date Answer Received | Date Tabled |
|-------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|--|---------------|---|----------------------|-------------|
| HSW 1 | Humanitarian Migration - Costs | Cash (transfer from DIAC) | What is the total cost of Centrelink benefits paid to humanitarian entrants in the 2010-11 financial year to date? Provide a breakdown on a State and Territory basis? | 03/06/11 | Medicare, Rehabilitation and Compliance Medicare and Specialist Services | | |
| HSW 2 | Humanitarian Migration - Costs | Cash (transfer from DIAC) | What is the estimated cost of Centrelink payments for the 2011-12 financial year for all humanitarian entrants? Provide a breakdown on a State and Territory basis? | 03/06/11 | Medicare, Rehabilitation and Compliance Medicare and Specialist Services | | |
| HSW 3 | Child Support Agency – Travel Ban | Cash | I refer to an article in the Sydney Morning Herald, of the 4th of September last year, entitled “ <i>Labor MPs helped lift travel ban on Kazal,</i> ” which alleges that in December 2007 then NSW Parliamentary Secretary, Mr Tony Stewart, and the Federal Member for Werriwa, Mr Chris Hayes, lobbied the Child Support Agency, to overturn a travel ban on Mr Charif Kazal, who had been banned from travelling after failing to meet child support payments. The lobbying was to allow Mr Kazal to travel overseas with then NSW Tourism Minister, Matt Brown. 1. According to the <i>SMH</i> , Mr Hayes, the Member for Werriwa, said he would contact Mr Joe Ludwig, the then Minister for Human Services. Was Mr Ludwig or his office contacted by anyone on this matter: if so, by whom? 2. What action, if any, occurred as a result of this contact? Did the Minister or his office, directly or indirectly contact the CSA on this issue: if so can we have the details of this contact? | 06/06/11 | Child Support Agency | | |
| HSW 4 | Funding to Organisations | Birmingham | Has the Department provided any funding to any of the following organisations in the current financial year or in any of the previous three financial years? If so, please detail when it was provided and for what purpose. a. Australian Conservation Foundation b. Australian Council of Trade Unions c. Australian Youth Climate Coalition d. Climate Action Network Australia e. The Climate Institute f. Environment Victoria g. GetUp! h. Greenpeace Australia Pacific | 07/06/11 | Enabling Services CFO Budgets and Financial Strategy | | |

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| | | | i. World Wildlife Fund Australia | | | | |
| HSW 5 | Extension of Rural Mobile Services and Outreach Support for the Homeless | Payne | a) What is the year-by-year appropriation for the measure to extend outreach support for the homeless? (2011-12 Budget Paper no 2, p249) b) Why are the additional workers only being engaged from 2012-13? c) Where will these additional officers and social workers be based and what will their roles be? | 09/06/11 | Medicare, Rehabilitation and Compliance Medicare and Specialist Services | | |
| HSW 6 | Professional Services Reviews | Back | Medicare Australia is capable of referring cases to the Professional Services Review. a) How does it determine which cases should be referred on for further review by this body? b) Does it use a statistical matrix? c) If so, provide a list of issues that trigger a referral? | 15/06/11 | Medicare, Rehabilitation and Compliance Recovery, Health and Business Compliance | | |
| HSW 7 | Professional Services Reviews | Back | Is any consideration or distinction given to difference kinds of practice ie with regard to longer consultation periods with specialists or the high volume of patients seen by metro GPs or consideration of rural practice | 15/06/11 | Medicare, Rehabilitation and Compliance Recovery, Health and Business Compliance | | |
| HSW 8 | Professional Services Reviews | Back | a) Does Medicare Australia accept whistleblower alerts/ complaints from members of the public, other health professionals or patients? b) If so, can Medicare provide detail on how they examine the validity of such allegations or claims? | 15/06/11 | Medicare, Rehabilitation and Compliance Recovery, Health and Business Compliance | | |
| HSW 9 | Professional Services Reviews | Back | How many cases has Medicare Australia referred to the PSR since it was established in each financial year? <i>[The most recent PSR annual report 2009-10 states that in that financial year, Medicare Australia sent 39 requests to PSR to review the provision of practitioners' services. Yet the report also stated that the Director of the PSR also dismissed 18% of cases referred? P14 & 16]</i> | 15/06/11 | Medicare, Rehabilitation and Compliance Recovery, Health and Business Compliance | | |
| HSW 10 | Professional Services Reviews | Back | Medicare's latest National Compliance Program report has revealed that health professionals incorrectly or fraudulently claimed more than \$10 million in MBS and PBS rebates in 2009-10. Is it fair to say that you will be widening the scope of items that will trigger an assessment and possible referral to the PSR? <i>[According to the report GP care plans, compliance incentive payment programs, monitoring or up-coding of procedural items are to be targeted in the coming year & Diagnostic imaging, pathology ordering – highlighted by the PSR as a problem area will also come under scrutiny. REF: Medical Observer, "PSR</i> | 15/06/11 | Medicare, Rehabilitation and Compliance Recovery, Health and Business Compliance | | |

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| | | | <i>panel suspended over error in selection process, 7 Dec 2010]</i> | | | | |
| HSW 11 | Professional Services Reviews | Back | Allegations have been raised with me of instances where doctors, other health professionals and practices appear to have been singled out by Medicare. a) Has Medicare received any complaints of this nature? b) How does it deal with them? | 15/06/11 | Medicare, Rehabilitation and Compliance Recovery, Health and Business Compliance | | |
| HSW 12 | Professional Services Reviews | Back | a) Once you have determined which cases should be referred to the PSR – are the practitioners notified? b) Does this communication state which matter is being investigated? c) If yes, is it specific? d) Does this charge often change once the matter has been referred to the PSR? <i>[allegation that while a problem might be initially flagged once the PSR has access to clinical notes they find other ‘issues’ to investigate]</i> e) If no, why isn’t it detailed? | 15/06/11 | Medicare, Rehabilitation and Compliance Recovery, Health and Business Compliance | | |
| HSW 13 | Professional Services Reviews | Back | Patient privacy – if patients records are sourced and accessed in preparing a case for review: a) Is the patient contacted for permission? b) If not, why not? c) How is patient privilege/confidentiality protected? d) Have there been any breaches in patient confidentiality in the process of review? | 15/06/11 | Medicare, Rehabilitation and Compliance Recovery, Health and Business Compliance | | |
| HSW 14 | Professional Services Reviews | Back | If it’s already been flagged that they are widening the scope of their “statistical matrix” to include more items, won’t this mean that there will be more cases to investigate? | 15/06/11 | Medicare, Rehabilitation and Compliance Recovery, Health and Business Compliance | | |
| HSW 15 | Professional Services Reviews | Back | a) What is currently being done with these cases that have been referred since the PSR panels have been suspended? b) Is Medicare conducting its own investigations instead of referring them to the PSR? | 15/06/11 | Medicare, Rehabilitation and Compliance Recovery, Health and Business Compliance | | |
| HSW 16 | Participation Interviews | Fifield | a) How many participation interviews does Centrelink expect to undertake over the forward estimates as a result of the changes to DSP participation requirements outlined in the 2011-12 Budget? b) What is the expected cost of participation interview? c) What are the ‘usual penalties’ that would apply to people who fail to turn up to a participation interview? d) What is the expected length of time before the ‘usual penalties’ | 16/06/11 | Families, Employment and People Participation | | |

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| | | | apply to some one who fails to turn up to a participation interview? | | | | |
| HSW 17 | Participation Plans | Fifield | a) What constitutes a 'participation plan' to engage in community interaction and potentially employment? b) What measures are in place to ensure that Centrelink clients follow participation plans that are created for them? c) What sort of activities can be included in a participation plan? | 16/06/11 | Families, Employment and People Participation | | |
| HSW 18 | New Participation Requirements - Training | Fifield | What additional training will Centrelink provide its staff to help Centrelink clients meet the new participation requirements? | 16/06/11 | Families, Employment and People Participation | | |
| HSW 19 | Pension Reform - <i>Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Pension Reform and Other 2009 Budget Measures) Act 2009</i> | Fifield | a) Is Centrelink aware of any individual that has been made worse off due to changes introduced by the Act? b) Is Centrelink aware of any individual who has been deemed worse off by either the Administrative Appeals Tribunal or the Social Security Appeals Tribunal as a result of this legislation? c) How many individuals have been deemed worse off by either the Administrative Appeals Tribunal or the Social Security Appeals Tribunal as a result of this legislation? d) How many complaints has Centrelink received from DSP recipients who believe that they have been made worse off due to the Act? | 16/06/11 | Health and Older Australians Disability, Carers and Older Australians | | |
| HSW 20 | Disability Support Pension - Overseas Payments | Fifield | a) How many Disability Support Pension cheques does Centrelink send to overseas addresses? What is their total value? b) How many Disability Support Pension payments does Centrelink send to overseas bank accounts? What is their total value? | 16/06/11 | Health and Older Australians Disability, Carers and Older Australians | | |
| HSW 21 | Grandparent Advisers | Xenophon | a) How many dedicated grandparent advisers is the department planning to place in Centrelink offices? b) Which offices will have these advisers? c) Will these advisers be full or part time? | 16/06/11 | Customer Service Delivery Smart Centres | | |
| HSW 22 | Grandparent Advisers - Accessibility | Xenophon | What measures will be put in place to ensure that grandparents in areas where a dedicated adviser is not available have access to this service? | 16/06/11 | Customer Service Delivery Smart Centres | | |
| HSW 23 | BasicsCard Accounts | Siewert | a) Does the supply of the Basics Card by Indue mean that every card holder has an account at Indue Bank? b) How much is paid into these Basics Card accounts at Indue Ltd on a weekly basis by the government? c) What is the total float, or amount of money, held in these Basics Card accounts at Indue Ltd on the day on which payment is made? | 20/06/11 | Customer Service Delivery Indigenous, Regional and Remote Servicing | | |

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| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> d) What rate of interest does Indue pay to people who are forced to bank with Indue Ltd? e) What is the average float left in these accounts? f) Why aren't Basics Card holders given a regular statement of their account as required under Australian Banking regulations? g) Has Indue Ltd provided its Basics Card customers with standard terms and conditions as required under Australian Banking regulations? | | | | |
| HSW 24 | BasicsCard Manufacturing | Siewert | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) How many Basics Cards are being manufactured each week? b) Where is the Basics Card manufactured? c) What is the name of the company that manufactures the Basics Card? | 20/06/11 | Customer Service Delivery Indigenous, Regional and Remote Servicing | | |
| HSW 25 | BasicsCard Equipment | Siewert | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) What is the cost of installing and maintaining equipment in local commercial centres to enable trial participants to use their Basics Card? b) To which stores will this equipment be made available and is this done via an open/competitive process or via invitation? | 20/06/11 | Customer Service Delivery Indigenous, Regional and Remote Servicing | | |
| HSW 26 | BasicsCard Return to Stores | Siewert | Do the stores who accept Basics Card receive any payment or commercial return from the Government? | 20/06/11 | Customer Service Delivery Indigenous, Regional and Remote Servicing | | |
| HSW 27 | Automatically Generated Notices | Boyce | What mechanisms does the department have in place where a person's record has been flagged to say they are not required to attend interviews or work until such time as a certain event occurs - such as the passing away of a terminally ill family member - to halt the automatically generated notices of the requirement to report to the Centrelink office and/or attend an employment interview? | 20/06/11 | Families, Employment and People Participation | | |
| HSW 28 | Automatically Generated Notices - Exemptions | Boyce | What steps will/can the department take to ensure these automatically generated notices do not go out to customers who are tagged as having exemptions as they can prove very stressful for customers already experiencing considerable stress? | 20/06/11 | Families, Employment and People Participation | | |