

Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs

BUDGET ESTIMATES - 2 JUNE 2011 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Human Services Portfolio

Topic: Centrelink Customer Complaints

Question reference number: HS 25

Senator: Fifield

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Question:

Senator FIFIELD: Could you advise how many complaints have been lodged against Centrelink staff in the year to date?

Ms Hogg: I can tell you how many in general terms. This could involve the information that has been given by the staff. Up to March, we have had 35,459 general complaints. For the same period last year, it was 37,938.

Senator FIFIELD: I was going to ask if 35,000 means it represents a good year, and it would seem to be that it is.

Ms Hogg: Certainly the complaints went up during the flood crisis, because people could not get through on the phone or they had an extraordinarily long wait to get through on the phone. That, of course, immediately impacts the offices, because people then go in. So they had to wait longer in the office. Given that they did spike during that period, I think yes, it has come down well.

Senator FIFIELD: That is 35,000-odd for the year to date, and 37,000-odd for the previous financial year—

Ms Hogg: To March.

Senator FIFIELD: March to March in both cases, and for the previous period, March to March, do you have that figure as well?

Ms Hogg: Yes, exactly the same period.

Senator FIFIELD: I am asking for the previous period, March to March. You have given me March to March for 2010-11; what about March to March for 2009-10?

Ms Hogg: I have given you a point in time.

Senator FIFIELD: Sorry, I am completely confused now. Let us start again.

Ms Hogg: For March 2011, it was 35,459.

Senator FIFIELD: Yes, March 2011, that is year to date, or is that March to March?

Mr Tidswell: That is from July to March.

Senator FIFIELD: So financial year to date, okay.

Ms Hogg: The other figure is the same period for the previous year.

Senator FIFIELD: July to March, okay. In that case, do you have July to March for the previous period as well?

Ms Hogg: Not here, no. We will take that on notice.

Answer:

Centrelink recorded 48,787 general complaints for the period 1 July 2008 to 31 March 2009.