

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

BUDGET ESTIMATES - 4 JUNE 2013 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Human Services Portfolio

Topic: Call Centres

Question reference number: HS 9

Senator: Fifield

Type of question: Hansard pages 71-72

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 July 2013

Number of pages: 2

Question:

- a) Senator FIFIELD: Yes. Are you able to provide what the average wait time was for July through September for 2011-12?

Mr Rimmer: Yes. I do not have it across the three months, I have it month by month.

Senator FIFIELD: When I say 2011-12 I mean for calendar year 2011 and calendar year 2012, July to September.

Mr Rimmer: The average wait for July 2011 was seven minutes 22. In July 2012 the average wait was 16 minutes and 20 seconds.

Senator FIFIELD: Do you have what it was for 2010 as well?

Mr Rimmer: We do not have that figure here. I am sure we can find it quite fast.

- b) Senator FIFIELD: Do you have percentage figures for the percentage of calls that would have received an engaged signal year by year?

Mr Rimmer: I do not have those percentages.

CHAIR: Do you have them somewhere, Mr Rimmer? You do not have them with you but do you have them somewhere?

Mr Rimmer: I am sure we can get them.

Senator FIFIELD: If you could. The relevant period is for July to September in 2011 and 2012, but also for the 2010-11, 2011-12, and 2012-13 financial years as a whole.

Ms Campbell: We can take that question on notice.

Answer:

- a) The average speed of answer data is provided by month and for the July - September quarter of each calendar year.

Average Speed of Answer *

Calendar Year	July	August	September	Quarter 1
2010	3:37	2:01	0:59	2:16
2011	7:22	6:03	7:05	6:50
2012	16:20	7:25	6:15	10:10

* **Average Speed of Answer** (minutes:seconds): the average time a call is in the queue before being answered by a Customer Service Officer.

The average speed of answer is not strictly comparable across years. Prior to late 2011, people could be presented with an engaged signal in order to limit wait times. This practice has since changed and callers now will only receive an engaged signal during periods of very high demand on the network and towards the end of the day (so as to allow the lines to be cleared). As a result of the changed business practice an increasing number of callers who may have previously received an engaged signal are now able to enter the call queue. However, this can have a consequential impact on wait times, particularly during peak demand periods such as the Families peak in July to September.

While the average speed of answer in some instances may have increased, the Department has put in place a number of strategies to improve a caller's experience. For example, the Place in Queue option that is available on nine business lines allows a person to maintain their place in the queue but receive a callback rather than waiting on the telephone to speak to a customer service officer. This allows a person to continue on with their day and also reduces the cost for those people calling from mobile phones.

- b) The percentage of calls receiving a busy signal data is provided by month, for the July - September quarter of each calendar year and for each financial year.

Percentage of Calls Receiving a Busy Signal**

Calendar Year	July	August	September	Quarter 1
2011	55.9%	34.9%	43.1%	46.8%
2012	54.9%	30.3%	19.8%	41.3%

Financial Year	Total
2010-11	51.9%
2011-12	42.9%
2012-13	43.6%

**** Percentage of Calls Receiving Busy Signal** is calculated as follows:

$$\text{Busy Signals} / (\text{Successful Calls} + \text{Busy Signals}) \times 100$$

Busy Signals are the number of calls that do not access the Department of Human Services' Interactive Voice Response Unit and receive an engaged signal. Busy Signal figures do not represent the number of individual callers as some people will make multiple attempts to call and receive a busy signal on more than one occasion.

Successful Calls are the number of calls which access the Department of Human Services Interactive Voice Response Unit