Own Motion - Investigation into service delivery complaints about Centrelink – Recommendation Table

Update As At 30 June 2014

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1	Telephone Services		
1(a) Supports	Provide more affordable and equitable telephone access for customers: Investigate the possibility of extending 'place in queue' to all callers on all enquiry lines.	In considering extending 'Place in Queue' (PiQ) to all enquiry lines there are practical considerations that must be assessed which may affect the department extending it more broadly. PiQ currently operates within a set of criteria. Specifically, when the wait time in the queue is estimated to be at least five minutes, and: • the call is between 8:00am to 3:00pm local times; • the caller is registered for telephone self-service; • the caller has entered their Customer Access Number and PIN (or authenticated through voice authentication) when prompted by the recording at the beginning of the call. Changes have been recently made on the main lines of business which allows callbacks to be offered to customers who enter their Customer Reference Number only. If numbers of callers registering for PiQ increase substantially, then the PiQ service	Place in queue works well on lines where there are a large number of agents to answer calls as there is less chance a customer will wait to be answered on re-entry. It is less suitable on smaller queues as the variables of agent availability and customer estimated wait time are more noticeable in smaller queues. As part of the Managed Telecommunications Services program of work, the PiQ building blocks are being expanded across additional lines to facilitate the service being activated if deemed suitable. This additional capability is expected to be delivered in the second half of 2014-15. Additional functionality in the form of the customers being able to elect a timeframe to be called back is also under investigation. This is unlikely to be available for at least 12 months.

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		offer would need to be reviewed and the times that PiQ is offered would be wound back, to ensure that all calls are answered. Also, callers who do not elect to use PiQ, or who are unable to use PiQ due to privacy reasons (such as nominees), may potentially be disadvantaged and would continue to wait longer as PiQ calls take a priority over standard calls, even if they arrive at exactly the same time.	
1(b) Supports	Review the automated triage arrangements for incoming calls to identify and provide priority assistance to vulnerable callers and customers with urgent enquiries.	The department already provides a triage functionality. The department operates an extensive routing system that prioritises calls based on the 'utterance' from the caller. For example, someone calling about bereavement receives priority over someone calling about income and assets.	The department continues to review its telephony services to provide the correct assistance to callers. This includes identifying the most appropriate priority for calls.
1(c) Partially Supports	In consultation with the Department of Social Services and other stakeholders, develop performance standards for speed to answer calls on each of Centrelink customer enquiry lines.	The department reviews its key performance indicators every year in the context of the development of the Portfolio Budget Statements. Indicators of telephony performance will be considered in that context. The department does not support establishing separate performance standards for each enquiry line as this would potentially lead to rigidity and impede the department's ability to undertake real time management.	As part of developing the 2014–15 Portfolio Budget Statements, the department was required to implement a new functional split across three programmes. Under Programme 1.1 Services to the Community – Social Security and Welfare, a key performance indicator (KPI) for telephony services has been agreed. The KPI is an average speed of answer of ≤16 minutes. **The department proposes this recommendation be closed.**
1(d) Partially Supports	Publicise and regularly report Centrelink's performance against the performance	The department will regularly report on performance to the Ombudsman's Office. The department does not support publicising	As previously agreed at the Ombudsman and Department of Human Services Quarterly Liaison meeting, the department

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	standards developed under recommendation 1(c).	performance more broadly because of the risk of customers' queue surfing' resulting in adverse outcomes for customers.	will provide performance information (including relating to the telephony KPI) to the Ombudsman's Office on a quarterly basis. **The department proposes this recommendation be closed.**
2	Be more responsive to online enquiries via the DHS website		
2(a, b, c, d) Supports	Improve the arrangements for customers to make online enquiries of Centrelink with the following aims: (a) Categorise and prioritise each enquiry. (b) Link the enquiry with the customer's Centrelink record. (c) Acknowledge receipt and respond to each enquiry. (d) Develop a performance standard for responding to online enquiries.	The department continues to seek improvements in its service arrangements for customers who make online enquiries. For instance, the department notifies customers via its webpage not to use the web channel if an urgent answer is required, as response times may vary depending on demand. A general triage is currently undertaken on all incoming Secure Internet Message System (SIMS) enquiries with at least two staff every day actioning the administration and sorting into categories of payment types and online enquiries. Key words which indicate an urgent response is required are searched for manually and the SIMS are addressed as a priority. To further triage each enquiry would divert necessary resources from actually processing the enquiry, potentially leading to longer processing times. While triaging each and every enquiry would be preferable, at this stage, this would be a manual process which is unreasonably resource intensive because each enquiry and customer record would	The webform that customers complete for an enquiry has been updated to include both an email and phone number to maximise contact opportunities. The triage resourcing is considered the best balance to optimising overall response times whilst identifying urgent enquiries. An automated script has been developed for one payment type which searches, actions, records the contact on the customer's record and emails advising of completion. Similar automations are being developed for other payment types.

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		need to be reviewed manually to determine its priority. In response to online enquiries, and consistent with industry standards, the department currently provides an automated acknowledgement to customers. An automated receipt number is provided once the SIMS enquiry has been submitted. The department is investigating a more effective system to support online enquiries and in the future the development of a performance standard will be part of that process.	
3	Written correspondence		
3(a) Partially Supports	Improve written correspondence: Develop a performance standard for responding to customers' enquiries sent by post or email.	Customer enquiry response times are heavily dependent on the volume and type of customer correspondence that is sent to the department. For example, in the Older Australians, Disabilities and Carers space over 60% of all work is for non-new claims. A reasonable proportion of this work does not affect payments and does not require the department to action. Any key performance indicators that are developed would need to take into account the type of work and the impact of the work on the claimant's payment and would need to be developed in consultation with other agencies. The department will consult with stakeholders and will consider the recommendation and its implications as part	Due to the varied nature of incoming customer correspondence, a single performance standard for responding to customer enquiries sent to the department electronically or by post may not be feasible. 'PwC' have been engaged to examine email for the department. Part of this review will be to include recommendations for the development of a performance standard. Recommendations from PwC will be considered by stakeholders who will liaise to discuss the most appropriate way to address this recommendation.

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		of its periodic review of performance standards.	
3(b) Supports	Commit to a process of continual review of correspondence, including by customer testing, to ensure that improvements flowing from the DHS Letters Taskforce are not undermined by consequential changes.	The department already has arrangements in place for the ongoing review of correspondence and has a commitment to engaging with customers, identified peak bodies, community groups and external providers to ensure customer communications are clear, informative, relevant to the target audience and delivered through the most appropriate mechanism(s). The department has formally committed to a broader refresh program for customer communication through the procurement of a new, enterprise strength communication system. The staged transition to this new system will allow the department to more effectively simplify and improve customer communication through improved capability. Underpinning this transition work is a range of communication, service and process design activities that are being undertaken to establish an agreed scalable, flexible and customer centric future state.	The department will continue to make systematic improvements to customer correspondence and messaging consistent with the Letters Taskforce recommendations. This includes an initial transition to the new customer communication system with the release of the departmental desktop capability in selected sites. It also includes constant review of letters across budget measures and master programs.
4	Income processing for customers who receive income support and Family Tax Benefit (FTB)		
4(a) Partially Supports	Improve the accuracy of payments made to customers (or couples) with earnings Revise procedures for administering income reported by customers who receive both an	The different income tests which apply for FTB and income support payments mean that income changes reported for one	A preliminary meeting has been held with internal stakeholders to obtain data to quantify the issue.

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	income support payment and FTB to ensure that both payments are reassessed whenever new income information is received.	payment cannot be automatically applied to the other. Income reporting is a critical component of the notion of mutual obligation around many payments such as Newstart Allowance. The same policy drivers do not necessarily exist for family payments. Whilst it may be possible to align income tests across payments to a greater degree, the differing policy drivers may limit the ability to implement this recommendation. The department has made improvements to the tools used by staff and customers to record and report changes in income to ensure customers are aware of the separate reporting requirements for FTB and other payments. Where customers update their income or earnings with a Customer Service Officer (in person or over the phone), they will be asked to update their income or earnings for the other payment at the same time if appropriate, or will be reminded to include the changed circumstances when reporting their earnings on their next regular reporting day. Where the customer uses self-service channels to update their income or earnings, the self-service tools include warnings and messages to advise the customer of the need to update their income for the other payment	

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		separately, and will provide links and directions where appropriate. Staff training material and e-Reference procedures have also been reviewed and updated to emphasise the importance of reinforcing this message to customers. A copy of these e-Reference procedures will be included in updates regularly provided to the Ombudsman's Office. The department will continue to investigate additional strategies to address the risk of customers being overpaid in this situation. The department's My Profile project which plans enhancements to the family income service will improve accuracy through an updated reasonableness test, support for the customer with a Centrelink Payment Summary feature that provides year to date information on Centrelink payments received and a message for income support payment customers reminding them to also update their reported earnings.	
4(b) Partially Supports	Improve letters sent to those customers to ensure that they clearly state what income is taken into account for each payment	In conjunction with the improvement strategies outlined in response to Recommendation 4 (a), the relevant customer correspondence to Families and Income support customers will also be reviewed. In addition, the department will examine whether the amendments to the correspondence requested by the Ombudsman would require significant system enhancements.	No progress to date, at this stage, however it remains on the department's work plan.

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5	Maintenance Income Test for FTB		
5 (a, b, c, d) Partially Supports	Improve the information provided to FTB recipients whose FTB is (or may be) affected by child support to explain the operation of the maintenance income test, including: (a) the actual amount of child support used to calculate the person's rate of FTB each fortnight; (b) the method that Centrelink uses to project a person's child support income and to reconcile their FTB at the end of the financial year; (c) the different treatment that will (or may) apply if the person changes their child support collection method (from Child Support collect to private collect, and *vice versa*); and (d) the full range of options available if the amount of child support actually received is less than the amount taken into account to calculate FTB.	The department investigated the possibility of including the information noted at recommendation 5 (a) and (b) above, in customer letters. In investigating this option, the department found that the letters would need to be changed extensively; they would be much lengthier and contain information unique to each customer. Including a full breakdown of how the amount of maintenance income received interacts with the FTB calculations is likely to lead to customer confusion. As such, given the complexity of the information involved, and the number of factors that could impact upon the FTB amount being assessed, the department was concerned that it would be unable to adequately or accurately reflect each and every customer's circumstance in such a letter. In light of these factors, the department considered the better approach would be for customers to contact the department for an explanation if and when they required one. The department notes that additional information was published on the department's website in September 2013 to further explain Child Support and Family Tax Benefit (see: http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/	No update for this quarter.

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		enablers/child-support-and-family-tax-benefit-part-a).	
		This additional information specifically highlighted the issues noted at recommendations 5 (c) and (d) above. The information specifically refers to the impact that the different collection methods can have on a person's rate of FTB, as well as advising the importance of contacting the department if customers are not receiving their full amount of child support. Again, given the complexity of the factors involved in these issues, the best course of action is always for the customer to receive individual advice for their specific case – rather than general information which might not be relevant to their particular situation.	
		Further specific information regarding the Income test for Family Tax Benefit A was also published on 20 September 2013. This content includes detailed information about the maintenance income test (see: http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/enablers/centrelink/family-tax-benefit-part-a-part-b/ftb-a-income-test).	
		Generally, all content on the website is reviewed annually at a minimum. Review of content is commissioned when a gap in information is identified or following feedback from customers, staff and stakeholders.	

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6	Online services		
6(a) Supports	Increase support and assistance for customers to use online services. Research and address barriers preventing or limiting customer take up of online services, or causing people to stop using them.	In 2012-13 the department saw significant growth in its online and self-service capabilities, with the launch of self-service mobile apps that give customers using Apple and Android mobile devices and smartphones access to services. These apps contributed to the strong increase in customer use of self service across programmes, including Centrelink, Medicare and Child Support. During 2012-13 the apps were downloaded more than 750,000 times. As part of the development of new digital products, the department will continue with its ongoing research into the barriers preventing or limiting customer take up of online services, or causing people to stop using them. The department is aware that there will be limitations to online take-up for a variety of reasons, but has sought to maximise the take-up rate for customers who do have the ability to self-manage. In developing its digital service offers the department has already commissioned formal research reports, made use of ABS data, analysed the online behaviour of its customers and investigated international e-Government approaches.	Since the introduction of the department's first app in August 2012 there have been over 1.9 million downloads. Customers have used the Express Plus Centrelink Apps to undertake 34.6 million transactions (figures at 31 March 2014). In 2013-14 the department introduced four new online claims for customers. Customers are now able to complete end-to-end claims online for Newstart Allowance, Youth Allowance (jobseekers), Parenting Payment Single and Parenting Payment Partnered. The department has collaborated with the CSIRO as part of the Human Services Delivery Research Alliance (HSDRA), to attain new insights into customers' online behaviour. A series of experiments with various messaging, communication and navigation techniques have helped address barriers limiting customer take up of online services.

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6(b) Supports	Develop training packages and information products to assist customers to take advantage of online services to self manage their business with Centrelink, such as online reporting, capturing and uploading documents, printing a payment summary and how to use the Centrelink statement	The department already provides support products for our customers through the online guides and demonstrations which are available on our website to assist customers to self-manage their business with Centrelink. These include step by step guides and video demonstrations on topics such as: online reporting, capturing and uploading documents, printing a payment summary and how to use the Centrelink statement. Information about how to register for an online account is also translated into Korean, Persian (Farsi), Vietnamese, Arabic and Chinese.	Help text has been developed and is available to customers claiming payments online. Customers can click on highlighted words to read explanations of terminology and processes. Throughout 2013-14 the department has developed a range of communication strategies to assist customer take up of online services. Communication strategies utilised feedback from staff and customers. We have also conducted numerous staff and customer consultations into how to improve and support customer transition to self-management. Specific communication activities have included: • Themed Live Q&A Facebook events delivered at key times of the year. • Postcards/brochures and 'How To' videos for targeted transactions which provide step-by-step instructions for completing the transaction online. • Attendance at relevant events, such as university "o" weeks. • Promotional material in DHS service centres. • Support materials and information for front-line staff.

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			Expertise from CSIRO Behavioural Economists as part of the HSDRA has provided guidance in the development of training packages and customer support material. **The department proposes this recommendation be closed.**
6(c) Supports	Promote the help facility for online services, capture data about the subject matter of enquiries and analyse it for use in ongoing service improvements	Customer materials promoting our digital service offer were provided to 21 service centres before the end of 2013. These resources include Quick Reference codes to encourage access to the humanservices.gov.au self-service page. The products and campaign are currently being evaluated. Social media messages encouraging the use of online services are also placed on Twitter and Facebook. Promotion of the department's online services is contained in several places on our website. Customers can click and logon to customer online services from the top right hand corner of the homepage. There is a link on the homepage under General Subjects to Self Service. If the customer clicks onto each of the Centrelink, Medicare or Child Support icons on the homepage, the page has a further link to online services for each service delivery brand. The department is able to capture and monitor online enquiries data which assists with future service improvements to customers. Where funding permits, we would also support the	No update for this quarter.

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		recommendation to enhance online reporting.	
		The department has online guides and demonstrations available on its website to assist customers to self-manage their business with Centrelink. These include step by step guides and video demonstrations on topics such as registering for an online account, updating personal and study details, requesting cards and documents, managing a BasicsCard and reporting employment income. Information about how to register for an online account is also translated into Korean, Persian (Farsi), Vietnamese, Arabic and Chinese.	
		The department has a network of self service computers and phones in its service centres where customers can undertake their business online. There are also touch screen self service terminals in most service centres and all Agents and Access Points. These are supported by staff who are dedicated to assisting customers in their use.	
7

Partially Supports | Service Centres | | |
| | Introduce a 'form drop' service for paper claims, renewal and reporting forms at Service Centres for use in periods of peak demand | The department is already investigating the feasibility of this recommendation. The department is considering ways to balance the need to provide a quicker service to customers who are dropping in forms and | The department commenced a form drop box trial in February 2014 at two large Service Centres in Eastern Victoria (Fountain Gate and Dandenong) and extended the trial in March 2014 to two |

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		documents, while also ensuring that, by not seeing these customers, there are no risks to their payments and the need to recontact them does not increase.	sites in Western Australia (Cannington and Karratha). The aim of the trial was to: 1. provide an analysis on what documents are coming into the department and determine the drivers for the contact and; 2. ascertain if a drop box concept has any impact on wait times. Findings from the trial are that : 1. New Claims and supporting documentation, medical certificates, rent certificates and proof of Identity (POI) are the most common documentation lodged in the face to face channel. 2. Two dedicated resources in service centres are required to specifically support the drop box trial. These resources ensure that documents that are lodged are processed, any necessary follow-up with the customer is undertaken and proof of identity document details are recorded directly into the customers record avoiding the need to photocopy or scan documents. 3. Some documents, particularly medical certificates, required a follow up contact with the customer after they left the service centre. 4. The Document Lodgement Trial can contribute to a reduction in wait times

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			for customers lodging documents and providing proof of identify documents.
			Next Steps
			• Analysis is underway to determine the effectiveness of the trial with a view to implementing a national document lodgement process in Service Centres.
			• The Front of House tool is being enhanced to enable staff to more easily identify those customers that are attending for the purpose of lodging a document.
			High volume processes are being reviewed to ensure adherence to national processing guidelines as outlined in the Operational Blueprint.
8	Claim processing		
8(a) Supports	Increase transparency and efficiency of claim lodgement and processing. In consultation with the Department of Social Services and other stakeholders, develop realistic performance standards for processing claims for Centrelink payments.	The department proposes to progress the development of performance standards for processing claims for Centrelink payments with relevant agencies. If the aim is to provide customers with an idea about when to expect a decision, then recommendation 8 (c), if adopted, would facilitate this. The department notes it is difficult to estimate the time a claim will take to process at the time of lodgement, as this depends on a wide variety of different factors, including the provision of customer information. Providing processing information would be resource intensive,	Following the publication in the 2014–15 Portfolio Budget Statements of a key performance indicator relating to claims processing, the department is in the early stages of engagement with the Department of Social Services around the underpinning key performance measures for specific payment types.

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		diverting resources from the actual work of determining the claim, potentially leading to longer processing times.	
8(b)\n\nSupports	Publicise and regularly report Centrelink's performance against the standards developed under recommendation 8(a) and actual average processing times.	The department reports on its claims processing target externally through the Portfolio Budget Statements and publishes performance against the target in its Annual Report. These reports and targets are currently being reviewed.	As part of the 2014–15 Portfolio Budget Statements, the department agreed a key performance indicator (KPI) under Programme 1.1 Services to the Community – Social Security and Welfare, relating to claims processing. The KPI is ≥82% of claims processed within standard. The department will continue to report against its KPIs as part of the Annual Report.\n\n**The department proposes this recommendation be closed.**
8(c)\n\nSupports	Investigate ways to provide applicants with a receipt for their claim, details about the information and evidence required to support it and an estimate of the time that the claim will take to process (based on regularly updated and contemporary average processing times).	The department will investigate the feasibility of this recommendation and may consider other strategies which may be more feasible and still achieve a similar outcome.\n\nIt is difficult to estimate the time a claim will take to process at the time of lodgement, as this depends on a wide variety of different factors, including the provision of customer information.\n\nBy way of example, there is a wide variation in complexity of medical and other circumstances for DSP new claims. Providing standard advice may introduce unrealistic expectations and unnecessary confusion for some claimants. However, to complement the recent publication of Video On Demand resources for DSP claimants,	Online Claims provide a number of functions and messaging designed to provide a greater level of assurance to customers, including:\n• Provision of a claim ID number on commencement.\n• A message regarding intent to claim provisions, including the date by which the claim must be submitted.\n• A list of 'what you must do' on submission of the online claim, which includes appointment requirements, additional forms and documents and important messages about what happens next. This page also includes warnings about the consequences of failing to complete the required actions.

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		the department is also working on updates to the website to provide more comprehensive and readily-accessible information about the claim and assessment process. The department's systems do not currently have the functionality to automatically calculate the estimated time to process a claim and this would need to be manually calculated and provided for each claim. There would be a diversion of resources required from inbound telephony or processing to undertake this work. As more claims are actioned online by claimants, this capability may be able to be developed by the department.	• Claim status of submitted (until claim is finalised). • Claim status of completed (once claim has been granted / rejected). They can also access the 'Next Steps' information again to view Forms and documents requested as part of the claim.
9	Service delays and interruptions		
Supports	Proactively provide information through all channels when there are any specific issues that affect customer service with an estimate of the likely timeframe for resolution and alternative means for accessing service in the interim, and special arrangements for urgent matters	The department already provides information of this nature through a number of different channels. For instance, the department provides real time communication across various channels when there is an office closure or disruptions to service delivery. Social media (such as Twitter), the department's web page and telephony IVR updates are all utilised when there is a customer service concern. By way of example, when online accounts are unavailable, the department provides a notification on the department's home page. The duration of the outage is also provided when that information is known. The	The department continues to proactively provide information of this nature through a number of different channels. The department also publishes messaging on the myGov website welcome page advising of any service disruptions to member services. **The department proposes this recommendation be closed.**

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		website notice will normally recommend customers use the most appropriate alternative service channel (for example, Express Plus app). The department also has contingency arrangements with the Reserve Bank of Australia to accept the department's payment file (containing customer payment amounts and delivery details) later than usual in certain circumstances. This ensures staff and customers have more time to complete any business that is payment critical such as reporting income. The department is able to use Real Time Gross Settlement facilities to provide immediate payment directly to customer bank accounts where that is necessary.	
10	Records management		
Supports	Introduce a system for storing copies of documents provided by customers on their record which ensures that the records are not lost and customers are not expected to provide the same documents multiple times.	The department effectively operates scanning technology to store customer documents on their electronic record. The department actively manages its current system to ensure that documents that are provided are uploaded correctly and that all information is present. At times, claimants do not understand what documents are required and need to supply additional documents and the department continues to look at ways of making this easier for customers to understand. In certain circumstances, claimants can be requested to provide original documentation for	The department has a number of projects underway that are focused on ensuring that customers provide information that is required at the correct point in time. The department also has a number of processes such as the Drop box process initiative which aims to reduce overall wait times by enabling customers to lodge documents in a quick and effective manner. Also new enhancements such as the online claim process allow customers to lodge required information online at the same time they claim payment.

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		verification even if they have lodged copies via online services such as proof of identity. The department is also investigating which documents are actually required to be scanned and stored.	
11	Internal merits review		
11(a) Supports	Improve management of requests for internal review of Centrelink decisions. Continue to address the backlog of internal review requests.	The department has already introduced improvements to the management of internal reviews in order to address the number of reviews on hand, resulting in a reduction in the number of cases on hand by 31% from July 2013 to the end of March 2014 (with numbers continuing to trend downwards). Specifically, management improvements introduced in June 2013 include the following: • The Authorised Review Officers are now organised into specialised teams. This specialisation has improved productivity and increased the numbers of cases completed each week from approximately 1,500 to 1,700 per week since July 2013. • A new triage process was trialled to support the new delivery model. Customers were contacted to ensure they understood the reasons for the decision under review, to determine if more information was required to complete the review and to assure the customer the review was in progress.	The department continues to review and improve the existing internal review framework and related processes. The number of internal reviews on hand has reduced by 35.4% from July 2013 to the end of May 2014 (with numbers continuing to trend downwards). Specific improvements include: • Introducing a level of flexibility into the existing program line team structure - allowing the department to better manage pressures in the business and allocate reviews to staff with the relevant experience and skill set. • Revisiting the internal review processes to remove duplication and improve consistency across the business. Enhancing the Branch Support function to remove a layer of administrative work from review officers' roles.

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		• This improved triage process has been adopted and requests for review that can be resolved quickly are completed without the customer waiting. For other customers, the process is more streamlined as the customer has had a fulsome explanation of the decision and has provided all the information required for the review.	
11(b) Supports	Triage all review requests to assess whether payment pending review is available	The department has always had a triage process that identifies potentially vulnerable customers to ensure they are given a high priority for review, and for all customers, whether payment pending review can be offered. With the introduction of Enhanced Internal Review the process has been extended to consider complexity of reviews. The department already considers whether it is appropriate to continue payment pending review for all requests for review where the payment is cancelled or reduced. This is considered by the departmental officer who takes the request for review. When an adverse decision is being reviewed a customer's payment can, and in some cases must, continue as though the decision had not been made. Payment must continue when the decision was to apply a serious failure or unemployment non-payment period. This is made under a disallowable instrument.	The current process is that the department closely examines each customer's specific circumstances to ensure that vulnerable customers have their reviews finalised quickly and that, where appropriate, payment pending review arrangements are put in place.

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11(c) Supports	Review the criteria for priority review of a decision to take account of urgency, vulnerability and the consequences of delay upon the individual applicant	All reviews are triaged to establish the urgency of cases. At the Quarterly Liaison Meeting with the Ombudsman's Office held on 4 March 2013, the department outlined the procedures in place to prioritise the reviews of vulnerable customers. This process has been in place for a number of years, prior to the introduction of the Enhanced Internal Review process. The customer groups eligible for priority reviews are: • Customers with no income - the customer has no income as a result of a decision and no other means of support from any source. For example, employment income, liquid assets, investments. • Customers who are currently homeless - a customer is considered to be homeless when they do not currently have access to stable accommodation. • Customers who are currently in crisis or extremely vulnerable - for example, due to a recent traumatic relationship or recent significant mental health issues. For the 2012-13 financial year, over 93 per cent of cases involving vulnerable customer requests were actioned within 14 days. This ensured that vulnerable customers were not adversely impacted by the number of reviews on hand.	The department is at the initial stage of commencing the review of criteria and is identifying the relevant stakeholders to inform the review. It is expected the review will be completed by the end of September 2014. Please note that the vulnerability indicators are a department wide consideration and not limited to just have effect on appeal and review considerations.

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11(d) Notes	Consult with the Department of Social Services about the possibility of suspending recovery of any debt where a customer has requested a review of the debt on reasonable grounds and the review has not been completed within the performance standard (currently 35 days).	The department will consult with the policy department around the possibility of suspending recovery of any debt where a customer has requested a review of the debt on reasonable grounds including any legislation changes. It should be noted that this is the policy department's decision.	The department will consult with the policy department around the possibility of suspending recovery of any debt where a customer has requested a review of the debt on reasonable grounds including any legislation changes. It should be noted that this is the policy department's decision.
12	Internal complaints service		
12(a) Partially Supports	Increase the profile of, and customer access to, the internal complaints service. Develop standard plain English text promoting the DHS complaints service for use in all written materials (online and in hard copy) which includes all the methods a person can use to make a complaint	The plain English text currently in use for letters which was agreed with the Commonwealth Ombudsman in June 2013 is: "To give us feedback or make a complaint • Go to humanservices.gov.au/feedback to give feedback or call our Customer Relations Team on 1800 132 468 to make a complaint. • If we do not resolve your complaint to your satisfaction, you can contact the Commonwealth Ombudsman by going to ombudsman.gov.au or calling 1300 362 072." Due to the costs associated with changing letters there are no plans to change this text in the foreseeable future.	No update for this quarter
12(b) Supports	Encourage and train Centrelink staff to identify and escalate complaints which they cannot resolve themselves.	The department is progressively implementing a new department wide complaints system. This includes complaints being escalated to a specialist team according to a complexity and priority criteria. Otherwise staff should attempt to	Existing users of the Integrated Customer Feedback Database have completed training in the new Feedback and Complaints tool (FCT) and associated escalation reasons for implementation from 1 July 2014.

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		resolve the complaint at first contact. If the staff member requires technical or other support from a colleague or team leader to resolve the complaint, they will seek that assistance and retain ownership of the complaint until resolved. The department has researched best practice, including the Ombudsman's Better Practice Guides, in developing its new approach.	Remaining Centrelink staff will be able to undertake an online learning module between August and December 2014. This module explains the escalation reasons. Communication to reinforce the training is in development. The implementation of the specialist team for escalated complaints is in the planning stages. Existing CRU staff have implemented first contact resolution and now retain ownership of complaints until resolved or escalated based on complexity and priority. A copy of the research which informed the department's model was previously provided to the Ombudsman.
12(c) Supports	Promote the DHS complaints service to Centrelink staff and customers as the primary means for resolving complaints.	As noted above, staff will be progressively trained in the use of the new complaints and feedback data base and the new business model during 2014.	Communication to reinforce training messages about the new approach to complaints management is in development.
12(d) – Supports	Redesign the online feedback/complaint form on the DHS website to: - include the word "complaint" in the title - capture the nature of the person's complaint - provide more space to describe the complaint - allow supporting documents to be attached.	The wording of the www.humanservices.gov.au site is being reviewed. The department intends to seek feedback from the Ombudsman's Office on the revised wording. Currently, the departmental internet page is titled "Complaints and Feedback – tell us what you think". The online feedback/complaint form is accessed from this page by clicking on "Send us a secure	A new online complaint web form is expected to be implemented by December 2014.

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		online message". This takes the person to a "Contact Us" page which includes a selection titled "Complaints and feedback". When "Complaints and feedback" is selected, the page remains titled "Complaints and feedback" but the Online form is titled "Service feedback details" as the form combines both feedback and complaints. The staff member to whom the feedback is allocated then makes the call on classifying the feedback as either feedback, a complaint or a compliment. A new online complaint form is under development. Input on the design of the form was sought from the Ombudsman's office in January 2014. The new form will capture the nature of a person's complaint and provide more space to describe the complaint. The current design does not provide for supporting documents to be attached but the ability to attach documents will be available to a staff member.	