

Senate Standing Committee on Economics
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Innovation, Industry, Science and Research Portfolio
Additional Estimates Hearing 2009-10
10 February 2010

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: INNOVATION, INDUSTRY SCIENCE AND RESEARCH

TOPIC: Small Business Support Line (SBSL)

REFERENCE: Written Question – Senator Cash

QUESTION No.: AI-113

1. Please provide an overview of the service?
2. What type of information is provided to a caller?
3. When did the service commence?
4. How many staff are employed to work the information line?
5. How many calls have been received by the Support line since it commenced?
6. Please provide a State by State breakdown?
7. Please provide a breakdown of the type of questions being asked by callers to the support line?
8. What is the average duration of the hold period for a caller?
9. Are the callers required to provide their name and identify their business prior to asking questions and being given the answers? If yes – why? What is this information used for?

ANSWER

1. The Small Business Support Line (SBSL) provides small business owners with a single point of contact for access to advisory and referral services to improve their business sustainability and better manage their business during the global recession. The SBSL also includes the Small Business Credit Complaints clearing house, which provides an avenue for small businesses to direct their issues about access to and the cost of bank finance. Issues received at the Clearing House are then referred to the Australian Bankers Association for a response.

Information on the SBSL is available at:

<http://www.innovation.gov.au/Section/SmallBusiness/Pages/SmallBusinessSupportLine.aspx>

2. Callers are provided information and referral services, such as referral to the Australian Taxation Office or other Government agencies. Callers are also often referred into their local Business Enterprise Centre (BEC) for assistance.

3. 3 September 2009.

4. Nine.

5. Up until 31 January 2010 - 6,914 calls.

6. State by State breakdown: NSW 2,178; VIC 1,661; QLD 1,450; WA 570; SA 364; TAS 90; NT 61; ACT 50; International 8. The remaining 482 calls were non-SBSL related.

7. The top 5 questions asked by callers are

- What sorts of registration and licensing information do I need for my small business?

- What types of grants and assistance are available for small business?
- How to start a business
- How to register for an Australian Business Number
- General advice and support on starting a business.

8. Since inception 95 per cent of calls have been answered within ten seconds.

9. Callers are asked to provide their name and postcode, so as to ascertain if the caller has phoned previously, if so, their previous call record is retrieved from the record database, if not, a new call record is established.