

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Human Services Portfolio**

**Department of Human Services**

Additional Estimates February 2005

**Question: HS20**

**Outcome 1 Output 1**

**Topic : Effective delivery of Australian Government services to eligible customers - Queues in Centrelink Offices**

**Hansard/Written Question on Notice: Written**

**Senator Evans** asked on 15 February 2005:

Questions:

- (1) Is Centrelink aware of concerns about lengthy queues at any of its office locations?
- (2) Which offices have a problem with queuing?
- (3) Is Centrelink aware of concerns about queuing at its offices in Dandenong and Cranbourne?
- (4) What is being done to address these concerns?
- (5) Please indicate the total number of office staff at both the Cranbourne and Dandenong Centrelink offices in each of the last five financial years

Answers:

- (1) The total number of complaints about queuing across Australia for the period 1 July 2004 to 31 January 2005 was 383. This represents a fraction of the total face-to-face contacts that would have occurred during this period.
- (2) Queues in Centrelink offices vary from time to time and location to location. In all locations queues are continually monitored and staff assigned to deal with periods of peak demand.
- (3) Centrelink is aware of a small number of complaints (7) for the month of February 2005 regarding the queues in the Dandenong Customer Service Centre. Prior to February 2005, no complaints had been received regarding Dandenong for the 2004-05 financial year. Centrelink is only aware of one complaint about queuing at Cranbourne Customer Service Centre for the 2004-05 financial year.
- (4) Centrelink regularly reviews its processes to ensure that we meet customer expectations. Customer Service Officers at Dandenong and Cranbourne regularly promote self-service to eligible customers so that they can do Centrelink business in a place and time that is convenient to them. Both sites monitor queues on a regular basis throughout each day, and in peak periods provide additional staff to assist in the public contact areas.

(5) The staffing numbers in each of the last five financial years at Cranbourne Customer Service Centre were 61, 50, 57, 54 and 43 respectively.

The staffing numbers in each of the last five financial years at Dandenong Customer Service Centre were 80, 78, 84, 79 and 57 respectively.

While the staff numbers in the above table for Cranbourne and Dandenong Customer Service Centres has decreased in 2004-05, there has been a corresponding reduction in the amount of back office/processing work done within these Customer Service Centres. In earlier years Customer Service Centres did all their own back office/processing work. Much of this work has been centralised to allow Customer Service Centre staff to concentrate their efforts on face-to-face interaction with customers. As a result, the amount of time that individual Customer Service Centre staff spend seeing customers has increased markedly.