

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Human Services Portfolio

Department of Human Services

Additional Estimates February 2005

Question: HS31

Outcome 1, Output 1.1 - Effective delivery of Australian Government services to eligible customers

Topic: Local Liaison Officers

Hansard Page/Written Question on Notice: Written

Senator Evans asked on 15 February 2005:

- (1) How many staff will be needed to resource the Local Liaison Officer program?
- (2) Where will these staff come from?
- (3) How many new staff will need to be recruited to fully resource the program?
- (4) Will they be diverted away from other areas of Centrelink business?
- (5) What will be the impact on staff workload in other areas of Centrelink?
- (6) Will the new program have any cost implications for Centrelink?
- (7) Please indicate the projected additional cost of the program for the next financial year.
- (8) Who will pay the extra costs? Will Centrelink receive additional funding from the Government to resource the new program?
- (9) What additional training will the new Local Liaison Officers undertake?
- (10) Who will pay for the training?
- (11) Will the costs of the training be absorbed by Centrelink, or will the Government provide additional funding to cover the cost?

Answer:

(1) and (2) The Local Liaison Officer programme is performed within existing work roles for Centrelink staff. Centrelink has 121 staff servicing MPs and 28 staff servicing Senators. These are all Centrelink network staff from Customer Service Offices and Area Support Offices who have experience in assisting MPs and their staff with constituent queries as part of their ongoing work role. In addition, there are 15 Area staff providing Local Liaison Officer coordination in the Centrelink network, and 4 staff in National Support Office coordinating Local Liaison Officer arrangements.

(3) At this early stage of the programme's implementation no new staff will be recruited to resource the Local Liaison Officer program in Centrelink.

(4) Refer to answer (1) and (2).

(5) At this early stage of the program there is no data available to identify workload impacts. Once the program has been operating for a couple of months Centrelink will be better placed to assess any impact the Local Liaison Officer program may be having on other areas of its business.

(6) It is too early to identify any significant, ongoing cost implications for the Local Liaison Officer program.

(7) As the Local Liaison Officer function is performed within existing work roles, costs for the ongoing Local Liaison Officer service to MPs and Senators will be covered under maintenance budgets for the respective offices and staff involved. It is not anticipated that additional costs to budget will be required.

(8) As above.

(9) Each Local Liaison Officer receives an introductory briefing package on the role of the Local Liaison Officer, including operating guidelines, and an overview of the functions and contacts within the other five agencies involved in the program. The Department of Human Services provides training and support where required and operates a Helpdesk facility for all Local Liaison Officers. A support service is also provided within Centrelink's National Support Office to advise Local Liaison Officers on any day to day issues that may arise.

(10) The Department of Human Services.

(11) It is not anticipated that additional funding will be required to support the Local Liaison Officer program.