

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Human Services Portfolio

Department of Human Services

Additional Estimates February 2005

Question: HS35

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

Topic: Family tax benefit taskforce

Hansard Page/Written Question on Notice: Written

Senator Evans asked on 15 February 2005:

(1) What is the purpose/role of the Family tax benefit taskforce, and how does it work (timing of meetings, number of staff involved, reporting arrangements etc)?

(2) Can a summary of the 750 suggestions received from staff be provided? How many of these suggestions have been taken up by Centrelink?

Answer:

(1) The Family Tax Benefit Taskforce, comprising three officers from Centrelink and one from the Department of Family and Community Services, was established in December 2003 and disbanded on 31 March 2004. The Taskforce was tasked with looking at ways to improve the administration of Family Tax Benefit and making suggestions to the Minister for Family and Community Services.

The Taskforce reported monthly to the Secretary of the Department of Family and Community Services and the Chief Executive Officer of Centrelink.

(2) A summary of the types of suggestions received from staff is provided below and includes the key initiatives progressed by the Task Force.

The type of suggestions received included:

- Policy suggestions - these made up 51 per cent of the suggestions received and were referred to the Department of Family and Community Services.
- General communication improvements - these made up 32 per cent of the suggestions received. Resultant changes include:
 - Simplifying the presentation of payment choices included in the Family Tax Benefit claim forms and related claim information products;
 - Developing key messages for customers;
 - Streamlining the Family Tax Benefit claim forms and related claim information product;
 - Consolidating various Family Tax Benefit communication products into a single product called 'The What, Why and How of Family Assistance';
 - A basic framework for outreach activities focussing on Family Tax Benefit; and

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Human Services Portfolio

Department of Human Services

Additional Estimates February 2005

- An internal communication strategy for Centrelink staff not part of the Family Assistance Office to increase their awareness of Family Tax Benefit payments.
- Information technology systems and administrative procedures - these made up the balance of the suggestions received, and resulted in improvements to processes and systems to better target customers at risk of overpayment.

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Human Services Portfolio

Department of Human Services

Additional Estimates February 2005