

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Finance and Administration Portfolio

Department of Human Services and agencies

Additional Estimates 2005-2006, 14 February 2006

Question: HS56

Outcome 1, Output 1.1

Topic: Centrelink – Integrity of Customer Electronic Records

Hansard Page/Written Question on Notice: Written

SENATOR EVANS asked the Minister for Human Services, upon written notice:

1. What is the time schedule and cost of the measures being undertaken to implement each of the recommendations made in the ANAO audit report No. 29, as agreed to by Centrelink.
2. How many cases of duplicate payments were there in 2005 and what proportion of these duplicated payments been recovered?
3. Are you aware of adverse taxation consequences suffered by customers who have received payments in error? What steps have been taken to resolve these situations?
4. Are you aware of adverse consequences relating to other welfare payments suffered by customers who have received payment in error? What steps have been taken to resolve these situations?
5. What is the number of APS level of staff in the Centrelink Data Quality Team?

Answer:

1. Centrelink has agreed to the recommendations by the Australian National Audit Office. Centrelink is now in a planning phase to scope out the work to address the recommendations. Until the scope of each task is fully determined Centrelink is unable to provide either a time schedule or cost associated with the recommendations.
2. Due to the complex nature of Centrelink's operations the detailed information required to answer the question is not readily available. To obtain this information would be highly resource intensive and I cannot justify the level of expenditure that would be required to obtain it.
3. Centrelink acts on the advice of the Australian Taxation Office that, where a customer has been overpaid a taxable income payment, taxable income should be reduced by the amount of the overpayment, from the time the customer first makes a repayment towards the overpayment. Centrelink has an automated process to send payment adjustment notices to customers at that time.
4. Where customers are incorrectly paid as a result of administrative error, Centrelink applies legislative provisions that require waiver of the Commonwealth's right to recover the debt. Where waiver is not supported by the legislation, customers are asked to repay debt at a rate consistent with their means.

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5. A team has been set up in Coffs Harbour Customer Service Centre to focus on data quality. Currently, they are specifically addressing the recommendations from the Australian National Audit Office Audit report No. 29.

The team of 7 APS staff comprises:

1 *C3 upper (ASO6 team leader)
6 *C3 lower (ASO5)

There are 4.5 additional staff in National Support Office. These are:

1.5 *C4 upper (EL2/C4)
2 *C4 lower (EL1/CITM)
1 *C2 upper (ASO4/ITO1)

APS level	No. of staff
EL2 (C4 upper)	1.5
EL1 (C4 lower/CITM)	2
APS 6 (C3 upper)	1
APS 5 (C3 lower)	6
APS 4 (C2 upper/ITO1)	1

This answer required 36 hours and 55 minutes at a cost of \$1594 to prepare.