

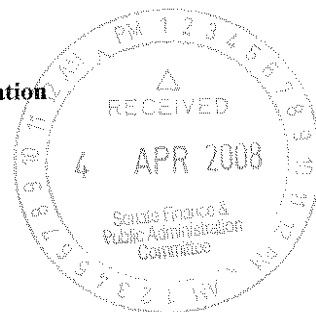
Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Human Services Portfolio

Department of Human Services

Additional Estimates 2007-08 – February 2008



Question: HS136

Outcome 1, Output 2

Topic: Child Support Agency – Data Integrity

Hansard Page/Written Question on Notice: Written

SENATOR COONAN asked on 22/02/2008:

Considering the findings of the ANAO audit of Data Integrity in the Child Support Agency which revealed weaknesses in accurate reporting in customer dates of birth and dates of death, failure in up to 12 per cent of customer records associated with active cases to display a current address, and in other cases invalid TFNs, please advise what steps are being taken to address these weaknesses?

Answer:

In January 2007 (prior to the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) audit), the Child Support Agency (CSA) implemented a Data Quality Improvement Program to continuously improve the quality of CSA's data through improvements to business processes and IT systems. Part of this program's work plan has included the detection, analysis, remediation, and ongoing monitoring of data integrity issues. This program has since incorporated the findings and recommendations of the ANAO report *Data Integrity in the Child Support Agency*.

Broadly, CSA is in the process of, or has implemented, a number of the recommendations of the ANAO audit through:

- IT system enhancements;
- improvements in business processes (e.g. procedural instructions); and
- implementation of cross-agency projects to identify and correct erroneous customer records (i.e. improving data exchanges with Centrelink, which affects accurate reporting of some customer details - including Centrelink Reference Numbers and addresses).

These initiatives have seen a decrease in inaccurate data such as Tax File Numbers, dates of birth, and dates of death.

In preparation for the third stage of Child Support Scheme reforms, CSA has proactively undertaken an extensive campaign encouraging customers to update their contact details, both through direct contact (mail and telephone) and through media campaigns to directly improve the quality of address details.

While extensive progress has been made to improve the accuracy of address details, a large proportion of inaccurate data is linked to limitations in obtaining customer information rather than weaknesses in the storage or keying of information.