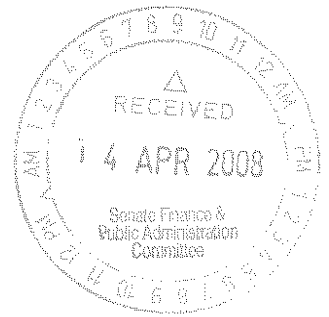


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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE
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Department of Human Services
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Question: HS138

Outcome 1, Output 2

Topic: Child Support Agency – Scheme Reforms Communication Campaign

Hansard Page/Written Question on Notice: Written

SENATOR COONAN asked on 22/02/2008:

What steps are being taken to ensure that clients are aware of the proposed changes and new formula for calculating child support payments?

Answer:

The Scheme campaign aims to increase awareness and understanding of the Child Support Scheme (Scheme) reforms (and their effect) among separated parents and the community and of the need for customers to check their new assessment notice issued from March 2008.

Elements of the campaign will primarily use the Child Support Agency's (CSA's) existing communication channels, including the website and regular Child Support Matters newsletter. Specific elements of the campaign include the following:

2007 campaign communication activities

The major campaign communication activities completed in 2007 were:

- two phases of radio and press advertising:
 1. Phase 1 was “update your contact details in order to get important mail from the Child Support Agency” (April-May 2007); and
 2. Phase 2 was “check your care details are correct to ensure your child support assessment is accurate” supporting the direct mail letter asking all customers to check their care details (September-October 2007);
- developed a Scheme reforms campaign website where parents, stakeholders and community members access the latest information on the Scheme changes (April 2007);
- four editions of CSA's customer newsletter incorporating information about the Scheme changes distributed to all customers and stakeholders (quarterly);
- developed detailed Scheme information booklet for stakeholder and staff training, and for customers without Internet access (booklet only);
- monthly (opt-in) Scheme reforms e-bulletins for stakeholders and customers providing news on the reforms (started in July 2007);
- notified approximately 30,000 employers via their regular mail of the upcoming changes to the Scheme and highlighting the implications for them and their employees who are child support customers (November 2007);

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- conducted 17 seminars on the Scheme changes for legal practitioners as part of the Family Law series (September-November 2007);
- developed face-to-face stakeholder training sessions including detailed information about the reforms to be delivered to stakeholders next year (February 2008);
- conducted approximately 60 community information sessions delivering Scheme reform information to CSA customers nationally (ongoing);
- developed a media plan (jointly with the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs) and issued proactive media releases (ongoing);
- developed a special audiences (Indigenous, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse, MPs, employers, grandparents) communication strategy to communicate the changes to other key groups;
- implemented a comprehensive internal communication campaign to ensure staff (as key conduits for the information for customers) are up-to-date with the changes;
- customer testing research for all campaign materials produced to ensure effectiveness with target audiences (ongoing); and
- campaign tracking research to evaluate levels of awareness, knowledge and understanding of the Scheme reforms among customers and the general community (baseline conducted in May 2007, Wave 1 conducted in September 2007, Wave 2 undertaken in February 2008 and Wave 3 planned for mid 2008).

2008 campaign communication activities

The key campaign activities planned for 2008 (which will be covered by the 2007-08 and 2008-09 allocated budgets totalling \$12.66 million) include:

- Child Support Matters newsletters (February, March, May, June 2008);
- provision of detailed information on-line about the scheme reforms, and 10,000 copies of a detailed information booklet published for stakeholders (this is also available on request to customers);
- national Scheme training for stakeholders (February 2008);
- representation at community events and presentations particularly at multicultural, indigenous, rural and remote locations to provide face-to-face communication of the changes to vulnerable audiences (March – July 2008);
- print, radio, internet and magazine advertising to support the direct mail of assessment notices to customers (over approximately four weeks from mid-May 2008);
- direct mail to all family assistance customers about the Scheme changes as part of Centrelink's new financial year mailout to customers (begins 28 April 2008 over four-week period);
- communication tools for special audiences including Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse customers; and

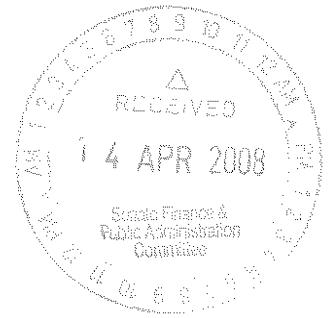
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- creative development including customer and community surveys.

In the first half of 2008, the communication activity also involves informing and training stakeholders. More than 800 stakeholder organisation representatives across the country have been trained so far.