

Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee

ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES 2008-09 (February 2008)

Index to Questions on Notice (QON)

Human Services Portfolio

Note: the FPA Committee resolved that agencies provide answers to Questions on Notice by Thursday, 9 April 2009.

QON No.	Department / agency	Senator	Hansard Reference	Question	Comments/date answer provided
HS1	DHS	SCULLION	110	<p>Senator SCULLION—Secretary, have you had any consultancies that have been let in the 2008-09 financial year to date?</p> <p>Ms Williams—I will ask Ms Hartland to answer that.</p> <p>Ms Hartland—The total expenditure from 1 July to 31 December 2008 was \$166,000. Would you like the details of that breakdown?</p> <p>Senator SCULLION—Indeed, I would; in fact, if you would provide those on notice that would be fine.</p>	6/4/09
HS2a	DHS	SCULLION	110	<p>Senator SCULLION—Have you had any outside contractors or advisers who have been appointed or taken on?</p> <p>Ms Hartland—Outside contractors?</p> <p>Senator SCULLION—Yes.</p> <p>Ms Hartland—Yes, but it would vary in terms of ICT contractors and those sorts of things. I do not have those figures but we could get those.</p>	6/4/09
HS2b	DHS	SCULLION	110	<p>Ms Hartland—I think any of the advisers would be picked up in consultancies. For example,—</p> <p>Senator SCULLION—As to my question, I just wished for completeness to cover that area. It was not specifically only as to consultancies.</p> <p>Ms Williams—We will get you a list of all staff who come into those two</p>	6/4/09

				categories. Senator SCULLION —Okay. When you provide the contractors and who they are, can you also provide the value of each of the contracts, so what they are actually estimated at?	
HS3	DHS	SCULLION	115	Senator SCULLION —Would you be able to supply me, for the 2007-08 financial year, with a list of the departments that have asked you to make a payment where there are parameters that the department would like you to adhere to, and the percentage of payments that have been made within those parameters? You can take that on notice. Mr Pratt —We will take that on notice and we will attempt to give you as much of that as we can.	8/4/09
HS4a	DHS	SCULLION	116-117	Senator SCULLION —Could you give us an update on the status of your online MyAccount service? Ms Hartland —We will have to take that on notice. You were after figures? Senator SCULLION —I just want the status of the online MyAccount service. Ms Hartland —Do you mean in terms of usage? Senator SCULLION —I just want to know the status of it. What is its usage? Are you planning to maintain it? Is this going to be another one of the key planks for the future? What is its future like? What is the general status of that online account? Normally you would have a couple of parameters under which you would provide the answer to that question.	7/4/09
HS4b	DHS	SCULLION	117	Senator SCULLION —Perhaps when you take that on notice you could add this question: have any other services been added to MyAccount in the last 18 months? Senator Ludwig —When you say services, do you mean refreshers or new pages, because that is part of it? Let me not put words into your mouth but let me ask you what you mean by services. Senator SCULLION —Since you are taking it on notice, Minister, I mean all of the above. I just want to know about any changes to the services of MyAccount.	7/4/09
HS5	Centrelink	ABETZ	117	Senator ABETZ —Thank you, Senator Scullion. I have two quick questions: firstly, can we be given an updated figure as to how many welfare recipients we believe live overseas and how many of those would have received a bonus payment in the October stimulus package? If you do not have those details immediately available I am happy for it to be taken on notice.	8/4/09

				<p>Senator Ludwig—The difficulty is that Centrelink will have those statistics, whereas presently we are dealing with DHS.</p> <p>Senator ABETZ—All right, I will put it on notice.</p>	
HS6	CSA	SCULLION	119	<p>Senator SCULLION—There must be quite a large demographic of people who are simply being reassessed. Every time you get a reassessment, it is not going to be on the day of the assessment; it will be backdated to when you were informed. If that is the case—and on notice—would you be able to provide me with a percentage of what figure would fit that demographic?</p> <p>Mr Miller—I am sure we can. I would simply make the point that it is a rolling figure. In the example you cite, somebody may get a notice of an outstanding child support debt or liability. Another person who might have got that the day or the week before will have also got into a payment arrangement. So it may not be the exact person making the payment on the day. There is an averaging out over the 1.4—well, the nearly 800,000 paying parents in the system. We will attempt to get you the breakdown in terms of the age of the debt that is figured in at \$1.032 billion.</p>	6/5/09
HS7	Centrelink	BOYCE	121	<p>Senator BOYCE—How are people being chosen to participate in the post-complaint survey?</p> <p>Mr Gargan—As I understand it, it is at random, because they had made a complaint.</p> <p>Senator BOYCE—Is Centrelink doing this themselves or do they have an outside consultancy or—</p> <p>Mr Gargan—We have an external agency that assists us with that.</p> <p>Senator BOYCE—Who is doing that? Do you know?</p> <p>Mr Gargan—I believe it is a company called DBM, but I will have to take that on notice to make sure.</p>	8/4/09
HS8	Centrelink	SCULLION	122	<p>Senator SCULLION—For completeness, could you take on notice a request to table some data about the number of calls to each payment line, the average wait time, the time taken to answer the query, the total call time and if the customer inquiries are answered in one call or take multiple times to answer the customer's inquiry?</p>	8/4/09
HS9	Centrelink	SCULLION	126	<p>Senator BOYCE—But what other costs are there? Did you have more processors, admin staff?</p> <p>Mr Pratt—Certainly. In addition to the call centre network costs there were</p>	6/4/09

				<p>costs associated with IT. We had to adapt our systems around the payments for pensioners, seniors and carers. We also had to develop a system in relation to the payments for low- and middle-income families, for the one-off lump sum payment of \$1,000. There were some relatively modest costs around media, marketing and communications. The vast majority of that related to the cost of mail, sending letters out to people. There were extra costs in relation to customer service centres because of course there was an increase in traffic in relation to some of these packages. Some people, rather than calling up, will go into a customer service centre to get information.</p> <p>Senator BOYCE—So you have more staff working in the centres.</p> <p>Mr Pratt—Correct, although in relatively minor numbers. Similarly, there were very small additional costs in relation to area offices and the National Support Office.</p> <p>Senator BOYCE—Are we able to put a figure on that?</p> <p>Mr Pratt—Yes, we will take that on notice, and we can break all that up for you. But the total figure that we were funded for in this financial year was \$16.3 million.</p>	
HS10	Medicare	SCULLION	130	<p>Senator SCULLION—I notice that one of your critical performance indicators in the budget was to reduce the amount of your unscheduled leave. How many days were lost due to unplanned leave in the period July 2008 to now? Perhaps on notice you can provide me with a weekly and monthly breakdown of this, but in general terms how does it compare with 2007-08 and 2006-07? Are we meeting the KPIs? Perhaps you can give me a general response in terms of the trends of how we are going reducing the amount of unscheduled leave.</p> <p>Ms Godwin—I think we will need to take that question on notice. I am just checking, but I do not think we have those statistics with us.</p>	6/4/09
HS11	Medicare	SCULLION	130-131	<p>Senator SCULLION—The organisational chart that has been provided shows a whole bunch of positions by level in the offices, including the head, the state and the regional offices. Are there any staff who occupy a position that has been allocated to a regional office who are actually in Canberra or in the head office? Is it a notional allocation about where they are working, or does it actually reflect a geographic location of where they turn up for work?</p> <p>...</p> <p>Senator SCULLION—Perhaps on notice you might indicate how many there are and where they are located.</p>	6/4/09

HS12a	Medicare	CAMERON	133	Senator CAMERON —Ms Godwin, I have more than five questions to be asked in two minutes. But what I will do is just read the questions to you and place them on notice. They are in relation to the chronic dental health scheme. What compliance issues have been identified in relation to chronic disease dental items?	7/4/09
HS12b	Medicare	CAMERON	133	Have there been any cases where patients have received benefits but have not met eligibility requirements for the items? If so, how many?	7/4/09
HS12c	Medicare	CAMERON	133	Have there been any cases of dentists inappropriately claiming the items? If so, in what ways and at what cost to the taxpayer?	7/4/09
HS12d	Medicare	CAMERON	133	Would we expect prosecutions of these dentists?	7/4/09
HS12e	Medicare	CAMERON	133	Have some dentists registered unusually high levels of claiming under the scheme?	7/4/09
HS12f	Medicare	CAMERON	133	At what level were they each claiming?	7/4/09
HS12g	Medicare	CAMERON	133	What was the cost to the taxpayer?	7/4/09
HS12h	Medicare	CAMERON	133	Have some dentists or doctors engaged in inappropriate marketing and promotion of the items?	7/4/09
HS13a	Centrelink	BOYCE	Written	See Attached Sheet	7/4/09
HS13b	Centrelink	BOYCE	Written	See Attached Sheet	7/4/09
HS13c	Centrelink	BOYCE	Written	See Attached Sheet	7/4/09
HS13d	Centrelink	BOYCE	Written	See Attached Sheet	7/4/09
HS13e	Centrelink	BOYCE	Written	See Attached Sheet	7/4/09
HS13f	Centrelink	BOYCE	Written	See Attached Sheet	7/4/09
HS13g	Centrelink	BOYCE	Written	See Attached Sheet	7/4/09
HS14a	Whole Portfolio	COONAN	Written	See Attached Sheet	28/4/09
HS14b	Whole Portfolio	COONAN	Written	See Attached Sheet	28/4/09
HS15a	Whole Portfolio	COONAN	Written	See Attached Sheet	28/4/09
HS15b	Whole Portfolio	COONAN	Written	See Attached Sheet	28/4/09

HS16	Whole Portfolio	COONAN	Written	See Attached Sheet	28/4/09
HS17a	Centrelink	HANSON-YOUNG	Written	See Attached Sheet	Tfr. to FaHCSIA
HS17b	Centrelink	HANSON-YOUNG	Written	See Attached Sheet	Tfr. to FaHCSIA
HS17c	Centrelink	HANSON-YOUNG	Written	See Attached Sheet	Tfr. to FaHCSIA
HS17d	Centrelink	HANSON-YOUNG	Written	See Attached Sheet	7/4/09
HS17e	Centrelink	HANSON-YOUNG	Written	See Attached Sheet	7/4/09
HS17f	Centrelink	HANSON-YOUNG	Written	See Attached Sheet	7/4/09
HS17g	Centrelink	HANSON-YOUNG	Written	See Attached Sheet	7/4/09
HS17h	Centrelink	HANSON-YOUNG	Written	See Attached Sheet	7/4/09
HS18	Whole Portfolio	HUMPHRIES	Written	See Attached Sheet	6/4/09
HS19a	Centrelink	SCULLION	Written	See Attached Sheet	14/4/09
HS19b	Centrelink	SCULLION	Written	See Attached Sheet	14/4/09
HS19c	Centrelink	SCULLION	Written	See Attached Sheet	14/4/09
HS19d	Centrelink	SCULLION	Written	See Attached Sheet	14/4/09
HS19e	Centrelink	SCULLION	Written	See Attached Sheet	14/4/09
HS20a	Centrelink	SCULLION	Written	See Attached Sheet	9/4/09
HS20b	Centrelink	SCULLION	Written	See Attached Sheet	8/4/09
HS20c	Centrelink	SCULLION	Written	See Attached Sheet	7/4/09
HS20d	Centrelink	SCULLION	Written	See Attached Sheet	7/4/09
HS20e	Centrelink	SCULLION	Written	See Attached Sheet	7/4/09
HS21a	CSA	SCULLION	Written	See Attached Sheet	8/4/09
HS21b	CSA	SCULLION	Written	See Attached Sheet	8/4/09
HS21c	CSA	SCULLION	Written	See Attached Sheet	8/4/09
HS21d	CSA	SCULLION	Written	See Attached Sheet	8/4/09
HS22a	Centrelink	SIEWERT	Written	See Attached Sheet	6/4/09

HS22b	Centrelink	SIEWERT	Written	See Attached Sheet	Tfr. to FaHCSIA
HS22c	Centrelink	SIEWERT	Written	See Attached Sheet	Tfr. to FaHCSIA
HS22d	Centrelink	SIEWERT	Written	See Attached Sheet	6/4/09
HS22e	Centrelink	SIEWERT	Written	See Attached Sheet	6/4/09
HS22f	Centrelink	SIEWERT	Written	See Attached Sheet	6/4/09
HS22g	Centrelink	SIEWERT	Written	See Attached Sheet	6/4/09
HS22h	Centrelink	SIEWERT	Written	See Attached Sheet	Tfr. to FaHCSIA
HS22i	Centrelink	SIEWERT	Written	See Attached Sheet	Tfr. to FaHCSIA
HS22j	Centrelink	SIEWERT	Written	See Attached Sheet	Tfr. to FaHCSIA
HS22k	Centrelink	SIEWERT	Written	See Attached Sheet	Tfr. to FaHCSIA
HS22l	Centrelink	SIEWERT	Written	See Attached Sheet	Tfr. to FaHCSIA
HS22m	Centrelink	SIEWERT	Written	See Attached Sheet	6/4/09
HS22n	Centrelink	SIEWERT	Written	See Attached Sheet	6/4/09
HS23a	Centrelink	SIEWERT	Written	See Attached Sheet	7/4/09
HS23b	Centrelink	SIEWERT	Written	See Attached Sheet	7/4/09
HS23c	Centrelink	SIEWERT	Written	See Attached Sheet	7/4/09
HS24a	Medicare	SIEWERT	Written	See Attached Sheet	Tfr. to DOHA
HS24b	Medicare	SIEWERT	Written	See Attached Sheet	Tfr. to Treasury
HS25	Centrelink	SIEWERT	Tfr. from DEEWR	See Attached Sheet	6/4/09

Written Questions on Notice

HS13(a-g) (BOYCE)–CENTRELINK

On page 10 of Centrelink's Annual Report for 2007/08, Centrelink states that it has 6.52 million customers and makes 9.98 million individual entitlements.

- a) How many customers (or recipients of payments) did Centrelink have at the end of December 2008?
- b) How many customers/recipients does Centrelink expect to have at the end of 2009?
- c) How many individual payments did Centrelink make during 2008?
- d) What will this number be expected to be at 31 March 2009?
- e) What percentage of Australians actually receive some sort of benefit paid from Centrelink?
- f) What is the total number of customers (recipients of benefits administered by Centrelink) in 06-07, the total number of customers in 07-08 and the predicted number of customers in 08-09?
- g) If, “net recipients of welfare payments” is taken to mean persons who’s total financial payments from Centrelink in one financial year, under any form of Commonwealth benefit, is greater than the income tax paid (or expected to be paid) by that person for that financial year, then:
 - a. What is the number of persons who were net recipients of welfare payments in the financial years of 2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09 (to date)?
 - b. What is the number of persons who were *not* net recipients of welfare payments in the financial years of 2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09 (to date)?
 - c. What percentage of the Australian adult population for each year do the numbers in (a) represent?
 - d. What percentage of the Australian adult population for each year do the numbers in (b) represent?
 - e. What percentage of the Australian workforce for each year do the numbers in (a) represent?
 - f. What percentage of the Australian workforce for each year do the numbers in (b) represent?

HS14a (COONAN)–HUMAN SERVICES PORTFOLIO

How much did each department and agency spend in 2007-08 on:

- A) Consultants in total
- B) ITC Consultants
- C) Legal Consultants
- D) HR Consultants
- E) Accounting Consultants

HS14b (COONAN)–HUMAN SERVICES PORTFOLIO

What was the average cost per hour for each department of the above A-E?

HS15a (COONAN)–HUMAN SERVICES PORTFOLIO

How much is it estimated that each department and agency will spend in 2008-09 on:

- A) Consultants in total
- B) ITC Consultants
- C) Legal Consultants
- D) HR Consultants

E) Accounting Consultants

HS15b (COONAN)–HUMAN SERVICES PORTFOLIO

What is the average cost per hour for each department and agency of the above A-E?

HS16 (COONAN)–HUMAN SERVICES PORTFOLIO

Over each year of the forward estimates, how much will each department and agency spend on:

- A) Consultants in total
- B) ITC Consultants
- C) Legal Consultants
- D) HR Consultants
- E) Accounting Consultants

HS17(a-h) (HANSON-YOUNG)–CENTRELINK

- a) Would the Minister please provide a breakdown by payment type, age and sex of the number of same-sex individuals estimated by the department to now be eligible for being assessed as a member of a couple?
- b) Based on the above, could the minister elaborate how many of these customers are anticipated to be in a same-sex relationship and may have their payment reduced?
- c) Could the minister further elaborate what the average reduction amount is anticipated to be per person affected by now being assessed as member of a couple?
- d) What costs would you estimate as arising in relation to the assessment of elderly age pensioners to see whether they are a member of a couple for Centrelink payments?
- e) Considering Centrelink have indicated an intention to provide social work support to all elderly couples, as the first point of contact with the agency, how much has been budgeted for this and how many extra positions will be created in the social work service area?
- f) Has the government budgeted for the reviews and appeals likely to result from the inappropriate assessment of elderly couples as being same sex partners when they do not regard themselves as such? Will independent community based advocacy be resourced to assist these couples, both at the point at which they are first in contact with Centrelink (culturally competent trained advocates?) and as they undergo the process of appealing the decision?
- g) What budget estimates have been made to resource these appeals?
- h) What comprehensive education programs will be conducted with Centrelink staff around servicing gay and lesbian clients, including those over 60 who may not in any way identify as 'gay' or 'lesbian' - how will it handle this, what resources has it put towards this training, how many hours, who will be trained? Have these programs commenced, if not why not?

HS18 (HUMPHRIES)–HUMAN SERVICES PORTFOLIO

[For all Departments]

How many SES positions were there in this department as at:

- 24 November 2007
- 26 February 2009

HS19(a-e) (SCULLION)–CENTRELINK

The ANAO report released on 17 Feb 2009 revealed over 3000 complaints from people who received 'call centre busy' on the phone.

- a) Does the department have any mechanism to record the number incidences or number of minutes a day that the incoming call routing system is at maximum capacity and unable to answer further calls?
- b) How many occurrences or minutes have been recorded as call centre busy per month and year for the last reporting period?

- c) For the latest reporting period what was the average time to answer a customer call on all access numbers?
- d) For the latest reporting period how many calls take longer than 5 minutes? How many between 10 and 15 minutes? How many 15 minutes plus?
- e) What was the longest on hold call recorded?

HS20(a-e) (SCULLION)–CENTRELINK

- a) How many cases of errors made by Centrelink were reported or detected in 2007-08? Is incorrect payment made due to Centrelink calculation or assessment error.
- b) What is the process followed for correction of this error? Who admits error and when?
- c) How are underpayments corrected, is interest or compensation paid?
- d) How are overpayments recovered, are interest or fees charged?
- e) When are cases escalated to the AAT?

HS21(a-d) (SCULLION)–CSA

- a) Can one parent elect to opt in or out of a private agreement at any time and without the consent of the other party?
- b) If so what effect or binding powers are contained within private agreements?
- c) If a statutory declaration has been signed and submitted by both parents stating that neither party will request money from each other for child support throughout the children's childhood and adolescent years, on what grounds can the CSA award child support payments against a parent?
- d) If a statutory declaration has been signed and lodged by each parent, and this statutory declaration has not been contested or voided by a court order, what authority if any does the CSA exercise to act contrary to the provisions specified in the statutory agreement?

HS22(a-n) (SIEWERT)–CENTRELINK

- a) Please provide the list of suburbs in the Perth metropolitan area that are currently subject to Income Management trials?
- b) Please provide an updated list of the regional towns in WA that are currently subject to Income Management trials as at 20 February 2009 or which are proposed for introduction in 2009?
- c) Please provide details of Perth suburbs and other regional towns in WA that will become part of these trials within the next 12 months?
 - a. What are the numbers of people who have agreed to participate in Voluntary Income Management in WA?
 - b. Please provide a further breakdown of these numbers by Centrelink regions in WA?
- d) What are the numbers of people who have been referred to Centrelink for Involuntary Income management?
- e) Please provide a further breakdown of these numbers by Centrelink regions in WA?
- f) What are the processes, including timeframes adopted by Centrelink and DCP offices before a person is placed on Involuntary Income Management?
- g) How many families are affected by voluntary income and involuntary income management trials in WA?
- h) Have any non-government community service organisations been contracted to provide services? If so, what are the organisations, the nature of these services to be provided and the level of funding provided to these organisations for the delivery of these services?
- i) What is the nature of the baseline data that is being used to assess the effectiveness of the trials?
- j) What evaluation process will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the trials?
- k) What is the anticipated total cost of implementing each of the trials?

- l) Please provide a breakdown of the anticipated total cost of implementing each of the trials including personnel and evaluation costs?
- m) How many people have been breached by Centrelink and awaiting further action for either voluntary or involuntary income management?
- n) Can you please provide a further breakdown of these numbers by Centrelink regions in WA.

HS23(a-c) (SIEWERT)–CENTRELINK

- a) How many domestic violence activity exemptions have been issued by Centrelink in the period from July 1 2006 to the present.
- b) What was the average duration of exemptions.
- c) How many requests for domestic violence exemptions have been refused over the period and what have been the grounds for refusal. (Could this data be provided by State and Indigenous identity)

HS24(a-b) (SIEWERT)–MEDICARE

- a) With regard to the Medicare Safety Net Threshold why is the threshold the same for individuals, couples and families?
- b) With regard to the medical expenses tax offset why is the amount the same for individuals, couples and families?

HS25 (SIEWERT)–CENTRELINK – Transfer from DEEWR (D97)

How many people have been moved from CDEP to Newstart?