

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Human Services Portfolio

Centrelink

Budget Estimates 26 May 2005

QUESTION NUMBER: HS40
DATE ASKED: 26/05/2005
DATE DUE TABLING: 08/07/2005

SENATOR LUDWIG asked on 26 May 2005:

(1) Regarding the employees that your department or agency has identified as having:

- a) fluency
- b) accredited translator
- c) accredited interpreter

(2) Of these employees, please indicate what the department is doing in order to make full use of its employees skills in this regard, and please provide a breakdown of this between employees whose accreditation was paid for by the department and those whose were not?

Answer:

(1) and (2) Centrelink draws on the accredited language capability of its employees according to the accreditation of the skill and on local opportunities for making use of this skill. Decisions in relation to the use of interpreter and translating skills are made in the customer service locations where the language skill may be required to meet a customer need. Accordingly, the number of instances involving staff engagement in the delivery of interpreting and/or translating functions is not recorded. Employees with requisite skills will undertake customer document translation as required within their skill limit. Where the requisite skill is not available, the document is translated by a professional translator contracted to Centrelink. Centrelink employees do not generally engage in interpreting - this is undertaken by professional interpreters contracted to Centrelink.

Employees are encouraged to seek accreditation of their language skills through the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters or through language proficiency tests conducted nationally for Centrelink by the Institute of Languages in the University of NSW.

Centrelink has paid 108 staff to be accredited through the University of NSW this financial year for accreditation with the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters in indigenous languages and Auslan. Information about the number of employees whose accreditation was not paid for by Centrelink is not available.