

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Finance and Administration Portfolio

Department of Human Services and agencies

Budget Estimates 2005-2006, 26 May 2005

Question: HS83

Outcome 1, Output Group 1.1

Topic: Centrelink – Debt prevention research and development

Hansard Page/Written Question on Notice: Written

SENATOR EVANS asked on 26 May 2005:

- (1) Please provide a full breakdown of how the \$14.5 million allocated to Centrelink [for Debt prevention research and development] over the next two financial years will be spent.
- (2) How many staff will be working on this initiative in each of these two years?
- (3) Please provide details of the work that will be done under this initiative
- (4) How important are the activities undertaken with this funds? Why are there no funds allocated beyond 2006-07?

Answer:

- (1) The table below shows the split of funding by initiatives and financial years 2005-06 and 2006-07.

	National Support		I&T		Area support		Network		Total	
	05-06	06-07	05-06	06-07	05-06	06-07	05-06	06-07	05-06	06-07
Total Cost \$m	1.760	1.783	1.123	0.167	2.895	3.887	2.025	0.840	7.803	6.677

- (2) The table below shows the Average Staffing Levels * allocated

	2005-06	2006-07
Total Average Staffing Levels	79.8	71.0

* Average Staffing Levels across a financial year.

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(3) Research will be conducted in order to improve the control of incorrect payment and fraudulent claims, identifying further scope for tightening existing controls and testing methods. This will be achieved through four sub projects, all of which will be run as pilots:

1. A proof-of-concept pilot between the eight State and Territory Registries of Births, Deaths and Marriages and Centrelink running in 2005-06 and 2006-07, and in conjunction with the Department of Veterans' Affairs. This task will be undertaken by the Department of Family and Community Services who have agreed to provide the data to Centrelink and, if required, the Health Insurance Commission.
2. A random circumstance review of 1,200 Family Tax Benefit recipients in 2005-06.
3. A random circumstance review of 2,000 Child Care Benefit recipients in 2005-06.
4. A review of ten Child Care Service Providers each year in 2005-06 and 2006-07.

The projects will be evaluated to establish whether they should become a permanent part of the control framework.

(4) The package of debt prevention and research measures will further strengthen the integrity of the social security system by ensuring customers receive their correct entitlement. Any reasons for incorrect payment or emerging areas of risks to Family and Community Services payments will be identified, with debt prevention being the primary focus of the pilots. Funding is for two years to pilot the initiatives. After the pilot funding the initiatives will be evaluated to determine if they should become part of the ongoing control framework.