

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Finance and Administration Portfolio**

**Department of Human Services and agencies**

Budget Estimates 2006-2007, 25 May 2006

**Question: HS29**

**Outcome 1, Output 1.1**

**Topic: Centrelink - IT Refresh – Update on Progress**

**Hansard Page or Written Question on Notice: F&PA 121**

**SENATOR Moore** asked the Minister for Human Services, upon written notice:

Mr Wadeson—I gather the components you are talking about are those often described in the early days as customer to Centrelink, business to Centrelink, government to government and government to community. You would like an update, under those four headings, of where we are going?

Senator MOORE—Yes, and also in terms of your project plan. There was the five-year project plan, but there were also snapshots, 12-month project plans, within that. We just want to see how it is going. That may then lead to further questions next time, but I think it is timely to get that question on the books at this stage.

Mr Whalan—I am happy to give that. Thank goodness for that investment, which we are now halfway through, because a lot of our ability to respond quickly now is a result of that investment.

**Answer:**

An update on the four principal components of the IT Refresh programme of customer to Centrelink, business to Centrelink, government to government and government to community is provided below.

Customer to Centrelink

- Online applications such as Student Online, New Apprentices Online, Maternity Allowance, Immunisation and Family Tax Benefit for newborns make it easier to submit claims.
- A selected group of employment income support recipients are able to report fortnightly employment and activity test requirements using Internet or speech recognition technology, rather than having to personally lodge their forms at a Centrelink office.
- Customers can also register via the Internet for access to telephony self-service applications.
- Improvements in the stability and availability of business critical software applications include upgraded debt calculations and debt balance reconciliation between the debt management system and the financial management system.

Business and Community to Centrelink

- System upgrades have increased the number of customers able to use services like Centrepay (a service for direct bill paying deductions from Centrelink payments).

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- Information exchange with universities to validate student workload status reduces unnecessary debt for students and lowers administrative burden for educational institutions.
- Administrative burden also lowered for businesses that utilise electronic links for income reporting.
- Virtual Private Network capability improves the level and speed of connectivity and enables staff access to systems from non-Centrelink locations within the community.

Government to Government

- Standard interfaces facilitate access to core systems to exchange information more easily and support service delivery requirements.

Project Plan

- Detailed planning work for the remaining two years of the program has concentrated on a review of costs and deliverables with particular emphasis on the basis upon which the estimates were made.

To prepare this answer it has taken approximately 5 hours and 7 minutes at an estimated cost of \$290.