

Estimates 2005-06 — Supplementary Budget Estimates, October – November 2005

Questions on Notice Index—Department of Human Services and agencies

QON No.	Department / agency	Senator	Hansard reference	Question	Comments
HS1	DHS	Wong	F&PA 87 1/11/05	<p>Senator WONG—When were the answers which we have just been provided with provided to the minister's office?</p> <p>Ms Scott—I will need to get that information. I do not have it on the piece of paper I have here. I will see what I can do on that.</p>	Answer received 9/2/06
HS2	DHS	Wong	F&PA 88 1/11/05	<p>Senator WONG—If you could take these questions on notice: in relation to the bundle that was provided to the secretariat on Friday and yesterday, when were those questions provided to the minister's office? And, of the outstanding questions, how many of those have been provided to the minister's office and the dates of that provision?</p> <p>Ms Scott—I have got that.</p>	Answer received 9/2/06
HS3	DHS	Wong	F&PA 88 1/11/05	<p>Senator WONG—It is in this bundle I have just been given. It is HS84. There were quite a number of payment types and then four sets of questions in relation to each of those. The answer says, 'Population numbers are provided on a point-in-time basis for both years.' Can you clarify for me what time that is? It may be somewhere in the document but, as I said, I have only just looked at these.</p> <p>Ms Scott—I will see if we can find out exactly what that point-in-time reference is. My experience has been that there will be a small footnote that will tell us the answer but I cannot see it.</p> <p>Senator WONG—I was trying to look for that. It does in relation to crisis payment but not in relation to the others. It would be useful to know that because it may affect what I ask you next. Are these figures averaged over the calendar year? Are they point in time as at October? Is there someone who knows?</p>	Answer received 20/2/06

QON No.	Department / agency	Senator	Hansard reference	Question	Comments
HS4	DHS	Moore	F&PA 88 1/11/05	<p>Senator MOORE—Before we leave the issue of questions on notice and the process, I ask on notice that you do a bit of an exercise. I will take two questions, Nos 86 and 87. They are both questions that involve Centrelink data figures. They are both questions that may involve the kind of thing you said at the start about trying to get things up on the internet. Could we get a potted history of that? The questions were asked on 26 May—they were both asked in the same process. Can we get something that would trace when the data came from Centrelink, when it came to Human Services, when it went from Human Services to the minister and so on?</p> <p>Ms Scott—We will see what we can do, Senator.</p> <p>Senator MOORE—I think that would be somewhere in the file and it would be interesting to see. Those questions tend to be of the kind that we ask—a payment type, the data distribution across gender and location, and the kind of information that Senator Wong is asking for. It might be useful to see the process. If there is a particular reason then we can trace that through when we get the answer.</p> <p>Ms Scott—I will see what we can do.</p> <p>Senator MOORE—That would be good.</p>	Answer received 9/2/06
HS5	DHS	Wong	F&PA 95 1/11/05	<p>Senator WONG—Yes, I am happy for it to be tabled. In terms of your outworking of the DEWR trial, did the situation arise where the work assessment differed from the treating doctor's report or medical certificate?</p> <p>Mr Dolan—I would have to take that question on notice. I am not aware of the number of instances.</p>	Answer received 8/2/06
HS6	DHS	Wong	F&PA 97 1/11/05	<p>Senator WONG—What proportion of Centrelink decisions currently differ from the assessment decisions?</p> <p>Ms Scott—We have Centrelink officers here. We will see if someone can find that information.</p> <p>Senator WONG—I am happy for you to take it on notice. I am just trying to work out the difference.</p> <p>Ms Scott—We are comfortable to take that on notice. We will do that.</p>	Answer received 8/2/06

QON No.	Department / agency	Senator	Hansard reference	Question	Comments
HS7	Centrelink	Wong	F&PA 97 1/11/05	<p>Senator WONG—Could you take the provision of those letters on notice, please?</p> <p>Mr Whalan—I can.</p> <p>Senator WONG—I am particularly interested in the ones sent to parenting payment recipients, but if there are letters for people who are on DSP then obviously I would like to see those as well. Is there more than one version or is there a standardised version across Centrelink?</p>	Answer received 8/2/06
HS8	Centrelink	Wong	F&PA 98 1/11/05	<p>Senator WONG—My recollection is that around 40 or 45 per cent of parenting payment recipients are gaining some form of income. Is that right? I could be wrong on that.</p> <p>Mr Whalan—We will just check that figure. It is a significant number.</p>	Answer received 8/2/06
HS9	Centrelink	Wong	F&PA 99 1/11/05	<p>Senator WONG—Perhaps on notice you can confirm those figures. As for the 1 March to 21 October period, why did you use that specific time frame, Mr Whalan?</p> <p>Mr Whalan—They are just figures that we had in front of us.</p> <p>Senator WONG—This voluntary engagement—or whatever this particular strategy is called—commenced in November last year?</p> <p>Mr Whalan—Correct.</p> <p>Senator WONG—I would like pre and post that period—the figures that Ms Scott is referring to. I would like to be able to compare the 12 months prior to November and the 12 months subsequent in terms of numbers of people engaging and the numbers of people moving into work in the two categories of disability support pensioners and parenting payment recipients. I am happy for that to be on notice if that is accessible.</p>	Answer received 8/2/06
HS10	DHS	Wong	F&PA 100 1/11/05	<p>Senator WONG—I am not sure you were in your current position at the time of the implementation of Australians Working Together, but how much time was there between the passage of the legislation and the actual date of implementation of Australians Working Together?</p> <p>Ms Scott—We will have take that on notice.</p>	Answer received 8/2/06

QON No.	Department / agency	Senator	Hansard reference	Question	Comments
HS11	DHS + Centrelink	Moore	F&PA 103 1/11/05	<p>Senator MOORE—I will be putting questions on notice on staffing issues generally across the department. I will be asking where you are currently in filling your jobs—this is in Human Services. We have got in the Human Services annual report the top process, but we raised a lot of questions last time about the number of jobs on staff, had they all been filled and those kinds of things. So we will put those on notice again. For Centrelink, we have the general figures there in terms of your area but we will run that through again. I have been asked to put similar questions about staffing, filling of jobs, terminations and all those things for each of the agencies that come under the Human Services umbrella. I will not take up the time this evening on that.</p> <p>Mr Whalan—Thank you, Senator. We are happy to take those on notice.</p>	Answer received 9/2/06
HS12	Centrelink	Moore	F&PA 104 1/11/05	<p>Senator MOORE—I have my moments! It is at the bottom of page 53 under the heading 'Total expenditure on new and existing consultancies'. There is a figure there of \$446,624. Then in another part of the document it talks about a figure of five-hundred-and-something dollars. I am trying to clarify what the difference is. I will put that one on notice as well.</p>	Answer received 8/2/06
HS13	Centrelink	Moore	F&PA 104 1/11/05	<p>Senator MOORE—I will be putting on notice issues with respect to the various components to do with the tenders and so on and about where I find out about things that would be, say, \$1,000 or \$2,000 within your department. There is probably some general discussion, but I am interested in that within your department. So I will put that on notice rather than waste time here this evening. That would then come through your agency, Mr Whalan, COS and all the others. So it will come through that way.</p>	Answer received 24/1/06

QON No.	Department / agency	Senator	Hansard reference	Question	Comments
HS14	DHS	Moore	F&PA 109-110 1/11/05	<p>Senator MOORE—Have you got documentation on that pilot project—where it is being done and that kind of basic data?</p> <p>Ms Bird—I do not have it with me, but we do have some documentation about that.</p> <p>Senator MOORE—Is that something that we can have, Ms Scott?</p> <p>Ms Bird—It can now cover all of our clients. We have extended it to the general pool of clients.</p> <p>Senator MOORE—Can we have information on that pilot, Ms Scott? I do not think we have heard of that one before.</p> <p>Ms Scott—We do have a little in the achievements document.</p> <p>Senator MOORE—I knew you were going to say that.</p> <p>Ms Scott—I would be comfortable to take that question on notice, and then we can provide you with more information.</p> <p>Senator MOORE—This particular case has stimulated the questions. It seems like this is an attempt which the department is making to look at that. We would like to get some data on the pilot as to how it is going, what the uptake is and that kind of thing.</p> <p>Mr Miller—We can provide a briefing or some data for you on that.</p>	Answer received 25/1/06
HS15	DHS	Moore	F&PA 110 1/11/05	<p>Ms Bird—There is a written protocol. It is available to Child Support Agency staff on our intranet.</p> <p>Senator MOORE—Is that something we could have?</p> <p>Ms Bird—Yes.</p>	Answer received 8/2/06

QON No.	Department / agency	Senator	Hansard reference	Question	Comments
HS16	DHS	Moore	F&PA 113 1/11/05	<p>Senator MOORE—On page 243, you list CSA consultancy services to the value of \$10,000 or more. We heard from you, Mr Miller, about the different things that you were doing in your part of the Department of Human Services in looking at communication. There are a lot of things on that page that look at communications. I am going to ask particularly about Crosby Textor Research Strategies Results. I am looking at the strategic communications framework. Can you tell me what that is?</p> <p>Mr Miller—I would like to take that on notice.</p> <p>Senator MOORE—You could not just tell me, Mr Miller? No, I am joking. That kind of strategic communications framework is one of those things that could be anything. I am just interested in where it fits within your agency in terms of the things that you have told us about. I am happy for you to take that on notice and get back to us. There was another one above that under the same heading, which was Cosway Australia and the development of the strategic communications framework. Given the information you have given us, it would be nice to know what the strategic communications framework is and how it fits into the evidence we have been given.</p>	Answer received 8/2/06
HS17	Centrelink	Carol Brown	F&PA 114 1/11/05	<p>Senator CAROL BROWN—How about face-to-face communication? If I went into a Centrelink office, would I get a receipt number?</p> <p>Mr Bashford—I understand that we are currently looking at that possibility, but they do not in all cases at the moment.</p> <p>Senator CAROL BROWN—Are you undertaking some sort of review?</p> <p>Mr Bashford—I believe that is the case, yes.</p> <p>Senator CAROL BROWN—Is there any timeline?</p> <p>Mr Bashford—I can find that out.</p> <p>Senator CAROL BROWN—I would appreciate that. I was just really wondering why, with internet and phone contact, you do get a receipt—obviously, that would be some sort of proof of the contact—but, with face-to-face contact, as I understand it, there is currently no receipt. Can you take on notice the provision of information about the review on face-to-face contacts?</p> <p>Mr Whalan—In terms of the receipts.</p> <p>Senator CAROL BROWN—Yes, that is right. That would be good.</p>	Answer received 8/2/06

QON No.	Department / agency	Senator	Hansard reference	Question	Comments
HS18	Centrelink	Carol Brown	F&PA 114-115 1/11/05	Senator CAROL BROWN—Has there been a case in Centrelink where the personal data of a client has been sent out to a third party without authorisation—and I mean a third party that is not entitled to receive that information? ... Senator CAROL BROWN—I do not really mean misdirected mail. I mean something like a client's file being sent to a third person.	Answer received 8/2/06
HS19	Centrelink	Moore	F&PA 117 1/11/05	Mr Whalan—Not at a systemic level, other than that we have engaged quite a number of staff on management initiated part-time arrangements, which is a slightly different approach. Senator MOORE—Have you the numbers for those? You can take it on notice.	Answer received 8/2/06
HS20	DHS	Siewert	Written	Attached	Answer received 24/1/06
HS21	Centrelink	Siewert	Written	Attached	Transferred to CA and EWRE Committees 17/11/05. Answer (parts 11,12,13) received 8/2/06 (HS)
HS22	DHS	Conroy	Written	Attached	Answer Received
HS23	Centrelink	Conroy	Written	Attached	Answer Received
HS24	Medicare Australia	Conroy	Written	Attached	Answer Received
HS25	Australian Hearing	Crossin	Written	Attached	Answer received 8/2/06
HS26	Medicare Australia	Humphries	Written	Attached	Answer Received
HS27	DHS	Murray	Written	Attached	Answer received 10/2/06
HS28	Centrelink	Murray	Written	Attached	Answer received 8/2/06
HS29	Medicare Australia	Murray	Written	Attached	Answer received 8/2/06
HS30	DHS	Evans	Written	Attached	Answer received 10/2/06
HS31	DHS - CSA	Evans	Written	Attached	Answer received 8/2/06

QON No.	Department / agency	Senator	Hansard reference	Question	Comments
HS32	Centrelink	Evans	Written	Attached	Answer received 24/1/06
HS33	Centrelink	Evans	Written	Attached	Answer received 11/4/06
HS34	Centrelink	Evans	Written	Attached	Answer received 25/1/06
HS35	Centrelink	Evans	Written	Attached	Answer received 20/2/06
HS36	Centrelink	Evans	Written	Attached	Answer received 25/1/06
HS37	Centrelink	Evans	Written	Attached	Answer received 20/2/06
HS38	Centrelink	Evans	Written	Attached	Transferred to CA Committee for FaCS 23/11/05
HS39	Centrelink	Evans	Written	Attached	Answer received 11/4/06
HS40	Centrelink	Evans	Written	Attached	Answer received 8/2/06
HS41	Centrelink	Evans	Written	Attached	Answer received 24/1/06
HS42	Centrelink	Evans	Written	Attached	Answer received 8/2/06
HS43	Centrelink	Evans	Written	Attached	Answer received 24/1/06
HS44	Centrelink	Evans	Written	Attached	Answer received 20/2/06
HS45	Centrelink	Evans	Written	Attached	Answer received 9/2/06
HS46	Centrelink	Evans	Written	Attached	Answer received 14/2/06
HS47	Centrelink	Evans	Written	Attached	Answer received 8/2/06
HS48	DHS	Evans	Written	Attached	Answer received 10/2/06
HS49	Centrelink	Evans	Written	Attached	Answer received 8/2/06

QON No.	Department / agency	Senator	Hansard reference	Question	Comments
HS50	Medicare Australia	Evans	Written	Attached	Answer received 10/2/06
HS51	DHS	Evans	Written	Attached	Answer received 9/2/06
HS52	Centrelink	Evans	Written	Attached	Answer received 8/2/06
HS53	Medicare Australia	Evans	Written	Attached	Answer received 8/2/06
HS54	DHS	Evans	Written	Attached	Answer received 8/2/06
HS55	Centrelink	Evans	Written	Attached	Answer received 11/4/06
HS56	Centrelink	Evans	Written	Attached	Answer received 20/2/06
HS57	Medicare Australia	Evans	Written	Attached	Answer received 8/2/06
HS58	Medicare Australia	Evans	Written	Attached	Answer received 20/2/06
HS59	Medicare Australia	Evans	Written	Attached	Answer received 8/2/06
HS60	Medicare Australia	McLucas	Written	Attached	Answer received 8/2/06
HS61	Centrelink	McLucas	Written	Attached	Answer received 8/2/06
HS62	DHS	Fielding	Written	Attached	Answer received 8/2/06
HS63	Centrelink	Fielding	Written	Attached	Answer received 9/2/06
HS64	Medicare Australia	Fielding	Written	Attached	Answer received 9/2/06
HS65	Centrelink	Wong	Written	Attached	Transferred from EWRE Committee 11/11/05 Answer received 24/1/06

QON No.	Department / agency	Senator	Hansard reference	Question	Comments
HS66	Medicare Australia	McLucas	Written	Attached	Transferred from CA Committee 17/11/05 Answer received 8/2/06 (HS)
HS67	Centrelink	Crossin	Written	What percentage of indigenous peoples have a health care card?	Transferred from CA committee 23/11/05 Answer received 24/1/06

Please note that answers are due on 31 January 2006

Written QON

HS20

Child Support Agency

1. Is the Agency aware that they can receive two different assessments from Child Support if they enter the system as both a client and a payee?
2. How do they reconcile the divergence of these assessments?
3. Will the proposed changes to the assessment system address this problem?

HS21 [Transferred to various departments on 17/11/05: parts 1-10 deal with policy matters which are the responsibility of the Department of Family and Community Services, parts 11- 29 deal with matters which are the policy responsibility of the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, Parts 30 – 32 deal with matters which are the policy responsibility of the Department of Education, Science and Training.]

References below are to Budget related paper 1.9B - Department of Human Services, Centrelink and HIC 2005-06 – pages 84-87

PARENTS

(Page 84) Welfare to work – Enhanced childcare arrangements to support work participation, and (page 86) Welfare to work – Increasing participation of parents

1. Can you tell me what type of childcare arrangements is it envisaged that this money will fund in each of the three years from 2006-07 and in what proportion?
2. How have these figures been modelled and what assumptions do they make about increasing employment of those currently receiving parenting payments?
3. Does this modelling take into account the relative proportion of these parents currently living in rural areas given variations in the relative likelihood of new jobs being created in these areas?

4. Does this modelling take into account the education and skill levels of these parents in the type of work likely to be available – given that according to ABS 97.5% of the 236,000 new jobs created last year were high skilled positions that went to people with a university degree, TAFE diploma or equivalent work experience – and given that the majority of single parents have only year 10 education?
5. What are your projections for the numbers of new jobs being created that will be accessible by those with these education and skill levels, and what programs or schemes are in place to create these jobs?
6. Did these figures allow for the recent policy announcements from the Minister regarding support payments for Nannies? If not, how are those changes likely to impact upon resources available to support other forms of day care?
7. Is the money to be means tested?
8. Can you explain the trend in costs over time for the 'enhanced childcare arrangements'? [In 2005-06 the budget is \$11.6 M the drops to \$7.2M in 2006-07 then \$4.1M in 2007-08 and to \$3.8M in 2008-09].
9. What is the explanation for this decrease of over 300% over the 4 years?
10. How does this relate to the increasing trend in the costs attributed to 'Increasing participation of parents'?

PERSONAL ADVISORS

(Page 85), Centrelink Personal Adviser services – rationalisation.

I note that this rationalisation will be saving the department \$2.5M in 2005-06 and then 5.3M each year thereafter

11. Can you explain how this rationalisation is taking place?
12. Are these lost jobs or are the employees being transferred?
13. What advisory services will be in place to meet demand?

DISABILITIES

I'd now like to ask about the projected figures for the increased participation of people with a disability on page 85

14. How have these figures been modelled and what assumptions do they make about increasing employment of those currently receiving disabilities payments?
15. Does this modelling take into account the relative proportion of people with disabilities currently living in rural areas given variations in the relative likelihood of new jobs being created in these areas?
16. Does this modelling take into account the education and skill levels of people with disabilities in the type of work likely to be available – given that according to ABS 97.5% of the 236,000 new jobs created last year were high skilled positions that went to people with a university degree, TAFE diploma or equivalent work experience – and given that the majority of people with disabilities have only year 10 education?
17. What are your projections for the numbers of new jobs being created that will be accessible by those with these education and skill levels, and what programs or schemes are in place to create these jobs?
18. What incentives are there for employers to provide equipment and facilities to support workers with disabilities?

MATURE AGED

I'd now like to ask about the projected figures for the increased participation of mature aged people on page 86

19. How have these figures been modelled and what assumptions do they make about increasing employment of those currently receiving pension payments?
20. Does this modelling take into account the relative proportion of mature aged people currently living in rural areas given variations in the relative likelihood of new jobs being created in these areas?
21. Does this modelling take into account the education and skill levels of mature aged people in the type of work likely to be available?
22. What are your projections for the numbers of new jobs being created that will be accessible by mature aged people given their education and skill levels, and what programs or schemes are in place to create these jobs?

LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED

I'd now like to ask about the projected figures for the increased participation of long-term unemployed on page 86

23. How have these figures been modelled and what assumptions do they make about increasing employment of those currently receiving pension payments?
24. Does this modelling take into account the relative proportion of long-term unemployed people currently living in rural areas given variations in the relative likelihood of new jobs being created in these areas?
25. Does this modelling take into account the education and skill levels of long term unemployed people in the type of work likely to be available?
26. What are your projections for the numbers of new jobs being created that will be accessible by long-term unemployed people given their education and skill levels, and what programs or schemes are in place to create these jobs?

SHIFT TO REGIONAL AREAS

The Minister recently announced that the proposed Welfare to Work provisions would be altered to reduce the compliance regime for welfare recipients such as single mothers living in rural and regional areas.

27. Has there been consideration of the likely budgetary implications of this change?
28. Is this likely to function as an incentive for welfare recipients such as single mothers, people with disabilities or mature aged people to move to rural areas?
29. If so, has there been consideration of the increased costs of the delivery of services in rural areas? Has there been consideration of the reduced likelihood of these people finding employment in rural areas? How does this impact upon your projections?

YOUTH ALLOWANCE

30. Can you explain the reason for the inconsistencies in the way in the definition and level of support provided to unemployed young people versus students?
31. For example why is it that a 21 year old unemployed person living at home receives \$399.90 independent of parental income, whereas a student under the age of 25 receives \$214.90 and is means tested.
32. Why is a 21 y.o. unemployed person considered independent adult while a 25 y.o. student is a dependant youth?

Performance of Information Technology outsourcing arrangements

1. Please provide details of total departmental/organisational spending on Information and Communications Technology products and services during the last 12 months.
 2. Please break down this spending by ICT function (eg communications, security, private network, websites).
 3. Was this spending in line with budget forecasts for this 12 month period?
 - a. If not, please provide details of:
 - i. The extent that ICT spending exceeded budget forecasts for this 12 month period;
 - ii. Details of on specific ICT contracts which resulted in department/organisation spending in excess of budget forecasts for this 12 month period;
 - iii. The reasons ICT spending exceeded budget forecasts for this 12 month period.
 4. Please provide details of any ICT projects that have been commissioned by the Department/organisation during the past 12 months that have failed to meet designated project time frames (ie have failed to satisfy agreed milestones by agreed dates).
 - a. For such projects that were not completed on schedule, please provide details of:
 - i. The extent of any delay;
 - ii. The reasons these projects were not completed on time;
 - iii. Any contractual remedies sought by the Department/organisation as a result of these delays (eg penalty payments).
 5. Please provide details of any ICT projects delivered in the past 12 months that have materially failed to satisfy project specifications.
 6. Please provide details of any ICT projects that were abandoned by the Department/organisation within the last 12 months before the delivery of all project specifications outlined at the time the project was commissioned.
 - a. For such abandoned projects, please provide details of:
 - i. Any contractual remedies sought by the Department as a result of the abandonment of these projects.
 - ii. Any costs of re-tendering the ICT project.
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HS25

- 1) What is the total number of clients who received services under the Community Service Obligation (CSO) from March 2003 to July 2005?
- 2) What % of clients identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders?
- 3) What was the total number of vouchers issued in this time and what % of these vouchers were issued to people who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders?

- 4) Could you provide a copy of the last Australian Hearing quarterly reports (in the same format as the answer to question EO3-/68)?
 - 5) In how many communities, and where, were AHSPIA programs provided in the last 12 months?
 - 6) What was the amount budgeted for and then expended on the AHSPIA program in the last 12 months?
 - 7) In the last 12 months how many CSO who received audiological services under the CSO and who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders were adults and how many were children?
 - 8) How many people who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders received hearing services under the voucher program in the last 12 months?
 - 9) Please provide a list of the permanent and visiting sites for Australian Hearing as at 31 July 2005 and a list of the other sites visited under the AHSPIA program.
 - 10) How many people received services under the CSO in the last 12 months?
 - 11) Please provide a breakdown of funds under the AHSPIA program including total expenditure, travel costs and administration.
 - 12) Please provide an update of the review of the bonus scheme.
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HS26

I seek answers concerning the Multiple Payments Project undertaken by the PBS Compliance Branch of Medicare Australia.

This was an audit that identified pharmacies claiming more than one payment for the same prescribed supply of PBS medicine. Commonwealth regulations require that, except in urgent situations, a pharmacist must be presented with a prescription in order to supply pharmaceutical benefits.

The audit found that when patients lose a prescription or leave a prescription at home, pharmacists sometimes supply the medicine by printing another copy from the dispensing computer. Subsequently a number of pharmacists have been asked to repay a total of \$3.5 million as of March 2005.

However my understanding is that it is only recently that Medicare Australia, through this audit, has attempted to strictly enforce this legislation.

- 1) What inspired Medicare Australia to carry out this audit? Was there any evidence, or has any evidence been produced, that any pharmacists have deliberately set out to defraud the Commonwealth?
- 2) How often have pharmacists been required to repay money when there has been no deliberate fraud and no loss to the Commonwealth?
- 3) Prior to its commencement, Medicare Australia used its Bulletin Board magazine and other industry journals to raise pharmacists' awareness of the audit. However there have been claims that information about the audit was not prominently displayed in these publications. Has an analysis been conducted into the effectiveness of this information campaign?
- 4) There are now apparently very few GPs willing to replace a lost prescription without charging a consultation fee. Would you agree that by authorising a duplicate prescription, a pharmacist is saving customers, and therefore Medicare, money?
- 5) Has Medicare Australia interviewed any of the patients concerned to ascertain whether they would not have been supplied medication if not for the duplicate prescriptions? If the patients would have received the medication anyway, aren't any savings claimed illusory?

HS27 to HS29

Order for departmental and agency contracts

1. What guidance is provided to staff with responsibilities for contract negotiations specifically about the requirements of the Senate Order? If relevant guidance is not provided, please explain why this is the case.
2. What training and awareness sessions are provided, either in-house or through other training providers (eg. DOFA, APS Commission or private firms) in respect of the Order? Please provide a list of the dates, the identity of the training providers and the content of the training that staff attended in 2005. If training and awareness sessions are not provided, please explain why this is the case.
3. Has the department/agency revised its procurement guidelines to incorporate the new Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines that took effect from 1 January 2005, particularly with respect to the confidentiality elements contained in those guidelines? If so, when did this occur and can a copy be provided? If not, what is the cause of the delay and when will the revision occur?
4. ANAO audits for the last three years have revealed a consistently low level of compliance across most agencies with DOFA confidentiality criteria (February 2003) for determining whether commercial information should be protected as confidential. The ANAO's latest report on the Order (No.11 2005-2006, September 2005) states that departments and agencies need to give higher priority with this important requirement of the Senate Order.
 - What specific measures have been or will be taken to address this problem, give it higher priority and raise compliance levels?
 - What guidance and training are provided to staff about the confidentiality criteria and the four tests employed to determine whether information should be protected?
 - What internal auditing or checking is performed to test compliance in this area? If none is performed, why not and is the agency considering the adoption of internal controls and checks?
5. What problems, if any, has the agency and/or relevant staff experienced in complying with the Senate Order? What is the nature and cause of any problems? What measures have been, or could be, adopted to address these concerns?

HS30

Department of Human Services

Staffing

Please provide an update of the information that was provided in response to question on notice HS 69 from May Estimates.

Late responses to questions on notice

For all questions on notice asked of the Department of Human Services and its agencies at May Estimates, please indicate:

- The date the answer was cleared by the Department of Human Services,

- The date the answer was submitted to the Minister's office for clearance, and
- The date the answer was submitted to the Secretariat of the Finance and Public Administration Committee.

Are all questions cleared through the Department of Human Services? If so, why? Surely questions asked of Centrelink are the responsibility of Centrelink and not the Department of Human Services?

Why doesn't Centrelink submit its own responses straight to the Minister's office for clearance? Does Human Services now sign off on all responses to questions on notice submitted by Centrelink? If so, why?

Were any of the responses to questions on notice arising out of the May Estimates hearings originally supplied by Centrelink changed by officials of the Department of Human Services? Why?

HS31

Child Support Agency

Staffing

1. Please provide an update to the information provided in response to question on notice HS 74 from May Estimates.

Child support payers and recipients

2. Please provide an update to the information in response to question on notice HS 17 from February Estimates.

Legal expenses

3. Please indicate how much was spent on legal services by the Child Support Agency in 2004-05.
 4. Please provide a list of all legal firms that were paid by the CSA for legal services. Please also indicate how much was paid to these legal firms in 2004-05.
-

HS32

Centrelink

Staffing

1. Please provide an update to the information provided in response to question on notice HS 78 from May Estimates.
2. Review of payment recipients' property holdings
3. Can we have a breakdown of the number, by payment type, of all recipients with real estate holdings that are additional to their principal residence?
4. How many of these real estate holdings have been reviewed in each of the past five financial years?

5. Can Centrelink please figures for the 2004-05 financial year in the format used in the response to question on notice HS 41 from February Estimates.
 6. Please also provide these figures for the 2005-06 financial year (to date).
 7. For each of the last four financial years (2001-02, 2002-03, 2003-04 and 2004-05), please indicate the number of appeals against real estate review outcomes that have occurred. Please indicate the number of appeals that were affirmed and rejected. Please provide this information for each stage of the appeal process (ARO, SSAT, AAT).
 8. Did AVO conduct all reviews in 2002-03, 2003-04, 2004-05 and 2005-06 (to date)? If not, please indicate how many reviews were not conducted by the AVO, and who conducted these other reviews?
 9. What was AVO paid to conduct reviews in 2002-03, 2003-04, 2004-05 and 2005-06 (to date)?
 10. Has the increase in review activity in the September 2005 quarter now ceased?
 11. What steps are being put in place to ensure the real estate holdings are more regularly reviewed?
 12. Are pensioners given a transition period following the new assessment of the value of their properties, or does their pension cease immediately?
 13. If there is no transition period, why not?
-

HS33

Centrelink

Income support customers

1. Please provide an update to the 2005 figures provided in the tables in response to question on notice HS 84 from May Estimates.
 2. Parenting payment (single) customers
 3. For the 2005 calendar year please indicate the number of parents in receipt of parenting payment (single).
 4. Please provide a breakdown of how many parents in each state and territory were in receipt of parenting payment (single) in 2005.
 5. Please indicate the total number of dependent children of parenting payment (single) recipients in 2005.
 6. Please indicate how many of these children were (a) aged under 6, (b) aged between 6 and 12, and (c) between 13 and 16.
-

HS34

Centrelink

Disability support pension customers

1. For the 2005 calendar years (to date), please indicate the number of people in receipt of disability support pension.
 2. How many people are currently receiving the DSP?
 3. Please provide a full breakdown of these figures by age, gender, state/territory and federal electorate.
-

HS35

Centrelink

Breaching/compliance statistics

1. For 2004 and 2005 (to date), please indicate:
 - (a) The total number of customers who appeal a breach penalty to an Authorised Review Officer.
 - (b) The number of breach decisions that were rejected/upheld by AROs.
 - (c) The total number of customers who appeal a breach penalty to the SSAT.
 - (d) The number of breach decisions that were rejected/upheld by the SSAT.
 - (e) The total number of customers who appeal a breach penalty to the AAT.
 - (f) The number of breach decisions that were rejected/upheld by the AAT.
2. How many breaches have been imposed on recipients of Parenting Payment Single since September 2003? Please supply these figures for the 2003-04, 2004-05 and 2005-06 (to date) financial years.
3. Is there an internal policy to not impose breaches on Parenting Payment recipients? If so, why? Hasn't it been the law to impose a breach on Parenting Payment customers who do not comply with participation requirements since September 2003? Why isn't this being enforced?
4. Can we have the total number of breaches for Indigenous clients in 2004-05 and 2005-06 (to date). Please break this information down by state and territory and payment type.
5. For 2004 and 2005 (to date), please indicate:
 - (a) The total number of Indigenous customers who appeal a breach penalty to an Authorised Review Officer.
 - (b) The number of breach decisions against Indigenous customers that were rejected/upheld by AROs.
 - (c) The total number of Indigenous customers who appeal a breach penalty to the SSAT.
 - (d) The number of breach decisions against Indigenous customers that were rejected/upheld by the SSAT.
 - (e) The total number of Indigenous customers who appeal a breach penalty to the AAT.
 - (f) The number of breach decisions against Indigenous customers that were rejected/upheld by the AAT.

6. Please supply a full breakdown of all multiple breaches (both activity and administrative) for the last two financial years.
 7. Please supply a full breakdown of all multiple breaches by Indigenous customers (both activity and administrative) for the last two financial years.
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HS36

Centrelink

Marriage-like relationships

1. Please update all of the tables provided in response to part (1) of question on notice HS 89 from May Estimates to include data for the full 2004-05 financial year.
 2. Please also provide the same information for the 2005-06 financial year (to date).
-

HS37

Centrelink

Debt management

1. Please provide an update (covering the 2005-06 financial year to date) of the figures provided on table 4 on page 44 of the Centrelink Annual Report 2004-05.
 2. Please provide a table showing a full breakdown (by payment type and value of debt raised) of all debts raised in 2004-05 and 2005-06 (to date).
 3. What is the total value of debts that have been recovered by Centrelink in the 2005-06 financial year (to date).
 4. Please provide a full breakdown of the cause (ie payment type) of all debts recovered in 2004-05 and 2005-06 (to date).
 5. Please provide a table listing of all private debt collection agencies used by Centrelink, the commencement of the contract with the agency, the expiry date of the contract, the value of the contract, and how much has been paid to the agency under the contract to date.
 6. Do any of Centrelink's contracts with private sector debt collection agencies have performance/incentive bonuses of any kind built into the contract? Please provide all details of all such bonus arrangements.
 7. Are private debt collection agencies required to follow Centrelink debt collection guidelines when undertaking debt collection activities for Centrelink? If not, why not? If so, please supply a copy of the guidelines.
 8. How much Centrelink debt has been recovered by Dun & Bradstreet in 2004-05 and 2005-06 (to date)? Please indicate the value of the debts recovered in these years, and the number of customers repaying these debts.
 9. What level of debt has been recovered by credit card by Dun & Bradstreet in 2004-05 and 2005-06 (to date)?
-

HS38 [transferred to Community Affairs Legislation Committee – for FaCS – 23/11/05]

Centrelink

Family tax benefit debts

1. Can we find out, for the 2004-05 and 2005-06 (to date) financial years the number and value of family tax benefit debts that have been waived under the provisions of the Act relating to administrative error and severe financial hardship?
 2. How does this compare to the total number/value of FTB debts?
 3. In relation to the \$600 per child supplement, if, as a result of a debt a customer receives nothing or less than the full entitlement, are these customers informed of their rights to appeal the raising of the debt? If not, why not?
 4. Could we be provided with a copy the advice that goes to customers about this matter?
 5. Please provide a summary table showing the number of reviews/appeals of these cases, and whether these appeals were upheld/rejected by (a) AROs, (b) SSAT, and (c) AAT?
-

HS39

Centrelink

Youth allowance debts

1. Please provide full details of the number of and value of debts raised by Centrelink from students receiving Youth Allowance who went from studying full time, to part time? Please provide this information for 2004-05 and 2005-06 (to date).
 2. Please provide a summary table showing the number of these debts that were appealed to Authorised Review Officers, SSAT and AAT, and indicate whether the appeal was upheld/rejected at each of these stages.
 3. How many youth allowance debts were referred to the Director of Public Prosecution, in 2004-05 and 2005-06 (to date). Please provide details.
-

HS40

Centrelink

Industrial issues

1. Has Centrelink blocked the access of Centrelink staff to the websites of the CPSU and the ACTU? If so, why has this occurred?
2. What is the rationale for blocking access to the ACTU website?

3. Why is Centrelink limiting access for staff to both sides of the story on the progress of the bargaining for their new agreement? Why should they only be able to be given information from Centrelink management and not from the union?
 4. Has Centrelink sought any legal advice as to whether it is legal to do this – particularly in NSW? What about in other states and territories?
 5. What is the policy on the wearing of union lanyards in the office?
 6. Does this policy differ for Customer Service areas, compared to National Office staff?
 7. Can you please provide the Committee with a written copy of Centrelink's policy on this matter?
 8. What action is taken against staff who wear union lanyards in the office?
 9. What if employees refuse to remove the union lanyard?
 10. Why is this sort of action taken?
 11. Can you outline what Centrelink's policy is to reduce unplanned sick leave, and how that is progressing?
 12. What are the instructions to Centrelink managers on how to deal with staff coming into work when they are sick? Doesn't this policy encourage that to happen?
 13. Has Centrelink introduced 'attendance plans' that restrict the access of workers to certain roles if they have three absences of personal leave in a three month period, irrespective of their past record?
 14. Is it true that in bargaining the union has offered to establish a joint review of the underlying causes of the high personal leave rates in Centrelink? Why is Centrelink refusing to work cooperatively with the union to investigate the underlying causes and find solutions to those causes?
-

HS41

Centrelink

'Naming and shaming' of 'welfare cheats'

1. Is it normal practice for Centrelink or other Government agencies to release the names of individuals who are deemed to be 'welfare cheats'?
2. How does Centrelink work out the names of people that are released? Are names just randomly selected?
3. What sort of checks are done before releasing names in this way (does Centrelink check to ensure that individuals don't have special circumstances – eg a brain injury)?
4. Have all of the individuals named in the Herald Sun article of 30 September 2005 had their cases completely finalised? Or are some of the cases still ongoing?
5. Are there any Privacy Act implications of the decision to publicly release these names? Please provide an explanation of any issues.
6. Have any of the individuals named in the Herald Sun article indicated that they will take legal action against the Commonwealth for the release of their name?
7. Is any compensation being sought for this action? Please provide details.

8. Is it now Centrelink policy that the names of so-called 'welfare cheats' should be released in this way? Why? Is this a change in policy? If so, why did the change in policy occur?
 9. Was the change in policy directed by the Minister's office?
 10. Was the Minister's office advised that Centrelink was going to release the names? Why?
 11. When was the Minister's office advised that this was going to occur?
-

HS42

Centrelink

Centrelink debt recovery

1. What are the standard rates for debt recovery?
 2. What account is taken of customers' individual financial circumstances when determining whether the standard rate of debt recovery is appropriate?
 3. Does Centrelink undertake any checks before imposing the standard rate of recovery on individual customers? If so, please give details. Or is it up to the customer to request a change to the standard rate to suit their particular circumstances?
 4. What has been the impact of the new streamlined approach to debt recovery that was introduced in October 2004?
 5. Does Centrelink now measure or monitor customer perceptions of the recovery process, in accordance with the findings of last year's audit report on debt recovery issues? If not, why not?
 6. Wasn't this one of the key areas of concern raised by the Audit Office last year?
 7. Didn't the Audit Office criticise Centrelink for not taking customers' financial circumstances into account in framing its debt recovery arrangements?
 8. Why doesn't Centrelink have a view about whether its debt recovery arrangements place customers in financial hardship?
 9. Why isn't Centrelink able to ascertain whether it is meeting its objective of ensuring that its debt recovery procedures are not placing its customers in 'severe financial hardship'?
 10. Does Centrelink have any plans to do this in the future? If not, why not?
-

HS43

Centrelink

Quantifying social security fraud

In relation to the tables provided in response to question on notice HS 93 from May Estimates (Table 4 for 2002-03 and Table 4 for 2003-04), is the number of prosecutions high (compared to previous years):

- (a) please provide the same table for the 2004-05 financial year and 2005-06 (to date).
 - (b) please explain how Centrelink determines the 'amount involved' figures?
 - (c) what assumptions are used?
 - (d) is this simply the amount that the individual has received fraudulently before they are caught out?
 - (e) or does the figure assume that people receive the fraudulent payment for the entire year (that is, is the figure for each individual actually a projection of what they would've received over the entire year if they hadn't been caught)?
-

HS44

Centrelink

Halls Creek trial of withholding benefits from Indigenous parents who do not send their children to school

1. What exactly is occurring with this trial?
 2. What exactly is the legal basis for the scheme? On what basis is Centrelink able to withhold payments from parents of children who are not attending school?
 3. Has this been done through legislation? What scrutiny was there of the decision to proceed with the scheme?
 4. What checks does Centrelink have in place to ensure that the scheme is working appropriately? Or does Centrelink just rely on what the school tells them about the attendance of indigenous children?
 5. What sorts of education programs about the scheme have been used? (that is, are parents and children fully informed of their obligations?)
 6. Who came up with the idea in the first place? Was it suggested by the local indigenous community?
 7. Who actually endorsed the scheme in the first place? What consultation occurred with the indigenous community at Halls Creek and elsewhere? Ask for details of all consultation that occurred.
 8. Has the possibility of extending the scheme to other communities been considered? What other communities are being considered? What consultation has occurred in these other communities?
 9. Has the possibility of extending the scheme to cover issues other than education outcomes been considered?
 10. Is Centrelink considering whether to extend the scheme to cover health/hygiene outcomes? (for example, is Centrelink considering whether to withhold welfare payments from indigenous parents who don't ensure their children are washed? How would such a scheme operate?)
-

HS45

Centrelink

Appeals

1. Please provide a breakdown of appeals by Indigenous customers to AROs, the Social Security Appeals Tribunal and the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, by payment type and state and territory. Please also indicate the outcome of these appeals (affirmed/rejected).
 2. Can you outline what steps are being taken by Centrelink to increase appeal rates amongst Indigenous customers?
-

HS46

Centrelink

Social Security Fraud

1. Please indicate the total number of people charged for Social Security fraud in the years 2003-04, 2004-05 and 2005-06 (to date). For each of these years, could we have:
 - (a) the number of people who gained Centrelink payments by using the names of a deceased person who got the name from a gravestone; and
 - (b) the number of people using more than one identity to claim an income support payment, broken down to the following ranges (1-2 identities; 3-5 identities; 6-10 identities; 11-20 identities; 21-30 identities; 31-40 identities, and over 41 identities).
 2. For the 2003-04, 2004-05 and 2005-06 (to date) financial years, please supply a breakdown by each state and territory of the number of clients considered by Centrelink for prosecution activity, and the numbers sent to the Director of Public Prosecution (DPP).
 3. Is it the standard practice to continue with the criminal prosecution for Social Security fraud where a customer has been referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions and Centrelink or the Social Security Appeals Tribunal subsequently waives the debt?
In the last three years, how many cases have been prosecuted where the debt has been fully waived by Centrelink or the Social Security Appeals Tribunal?
 4. In the last three years, how many cases have been withdrawn by the Director of Public Prosecutions where the debt has been either waived or found not to exist by Centrelink or the Social Security Appeals Tribunal?
 5. Over the last three financial years, how many customers have been referred from Centrelink to the Director of Public Prosecutions where the DPP has subsequently decided not to proceed with the prosecution?
-

HS47

Centrelink

Crisis payment

How many grants of Crisis Payment for the last financial year were paid for reasons other than being released from goal? Could this figure be broken down by both gender and age?

HS48 to HS50

Staffing

The following questions (1 to 18) are in relation to the department and each agency:

1. By classification, how many staff are currently employed by DHS?
 2. How many positions by classification are currently unfilled? Why are these positions unfilled?
 3. What changes have occurred during the last financial year? What are the reasons for these changes i.e. retrenchment/redundancies/retirement etc.?
 4. How many staff are employed under a) Australian Workplace Agreements; b) certified agreements; c) individual contracts?
 5. Please advise current levels of a) sick leave; b) stress leave by month? What are the reasons for any increases/decreases in sick or stress leave from month to month?
 6. Has there been any legal action taken by employees against the DHS?
 7. How many cases in total during the last financial year?
 8. How many are now complete?
 9. How many still outstanding?
 10. Please provide an outline of each case, i.e. reason and outcome of each action?
 11. What is the total cost of such action? What is the cost for each individual case?
 12. What is the cost of external legal advice or other advice needed for each action, a) in total; b) per individual case?
 13. Have any cases related to stress of staff dealing with clients?
 14. Has there been complaints/incident made by staff relating to stress? Please provide details of each complaint/incident.
 15. Has there been any staff resignations relating to stress? Please provide details.
 16. Have there been any physical altercations between staff and clients reported? Please give details of each case.
 17. How many staff are entitled to performance bonuses?
 18. What was the amount paid in 2003/2004 compared to 2004/2005 in performance bonuses a) in total; b) per classification; c) give explanations of each on how the bonuses calculated.
-

HS51 to HS53

Consultancies

These questions (1 to 6) are to be asked of all agencies and the core department.

1. List a) all consultants used; b) total amount spent; c) reason for each project; d) whether each project was tendered, if so provide details of tender process.
 2. For each of the projects provide a) outcomes of the project; b) recommendations of the project; c) in depth detail of the purpose of the project?
 3. For each project, provide dates that the consultancies were paid?
 4. For each project, what action has followed as a result of any recommendations?
 5. For each project, provide a copy of all consultants' reports?
 6. For each project provide a copy of the tender document?
-

HS54

Role of DHS

1. Can you please explain the role of the DHS?
 2. How does this improve the delivery of social and health related services?
 3. How are improvements measured? Please give specific egs.
 4. What programs have been implemented by the DHS?
 5. What have been the results?
 6. What are the costs/savings of implementing these programs?
 7. I refer to the local liaison officer (LLO) program – can you explain how this works? What are the benefits? How does this improve services to Australian families ?
 8. What was the cost of this program?
-

HS55

Referrals to Job Network

1. How many Centrelink clients that are not activity tested have been referred to the job network?

2. How many of these are receiving a) disability support pension (DSP) b) parenting payment partnered (PPP) c) parenting payment single (PPS)?
 3. What are the results in terms of how many people have then gone on to get a job that where on a) DSP b) PPP c) PPS?
 4. Why are there so many PPS recipients being referred to job network as compared to the other two categories of recipients?
-

HS56

Newstart and Youth Allowance

With reference to Newstart and Youth Allowance recipients: for each of the different activity test breach reasons and administrative tests that can attract a breach, what was the number of breaches applied over each of the financial years a) 2002/03 b) 2003/04 c) 2004/05 in 1) each of the Centrelink Customer Services Centres 2) for each state and territory as a total 3) for Australia in total.

HS57

MEDICARE AUSTRALIA – Online billing

1. How many doctors' offices use MEDICARE AUSTRALIA Online for non-bulk billed consultations?
 2. How many doctors does this represent?
 3. What proportion of doctors' services is claimed through MEDICARE AUSTRALIA Online?
 4. How many GP offices use MEDICARE AUSTRALIA Online for non-bulk billed consultations?
 5. How many GPs does this represent?
 6. What proportion of GP services is claimed through MEDICARE AUSTRALIA Online?
 7. What is the Department doing to address the concerns that GPs have about how this system currently operates, viz: that the transactions are in real time?
 8. How many pharmacies currently use PBS Online?
 9. Is the Department aware of complaints from pharmacists about the slow rate of payments from PBS Online?
 10. What is the Department doing to address the concerns that pharmacists have about how this system currently operates, viz: that the transactions are in real time?
-

HS58

Staffing at Medicare Australia

1. I note that in the Budget the MEDICARE AUSTRALIA was allocated 100 fewer staff than last year. What is the reason for the budget cuts to the MEDICARE AUSTRALIA?
 2. Is it the case that the Managing Director told staff in an email that the repercussions would go beyond temporary staff and natural attrition?
 3. What is the scope of the restructure taking place in MEDICARE AUSTRALIA?
 4. Are the cuts currently taking place limited to 400 or could they be greater?
 5. Is it true that eleven branch heads in MEDICARE AUSTRALIA have been told that they are to go?
 6. With how many staff have consultations begun on separation, under the terms of the MEDICARE AUSTRALIA Certified Agreement?
 7. Will there be cuts in regional offices or are the cuts limited to the Canberra headquarters?
 8. Had there been a previous promise by management to MEDICARE AUSTRALIA staff that there would be no mass sackings?
 9. Can you tell us what is referred to in the MEDICARE AUSTRALIA as the “talent pool?”
 10. How many staff are currently designated in the “talent pool?”
 11. Do you envisage this number will increase during the restructure?
 12. Was there a failure of budget management and oversight of the executive by the MEDICARE AUSTRALIA board?
 13. Can you guarantee the staff cuts will not impact on customer service?
 14. MEDICARE AUSTRALIA Online says that by 2005 MEDICARE AUSTRALIA expects to be receiving 60% of its patient claims and 83% of bulk bill claims via electronic means. Is that on track?
 15. It goes on to say that by 2010 100% of claims are expected to be lodged electronically. What will be the expected impact on staffing if this target is achieved?
-

HS59

HIC re-badging

1. What is the cost of re-badging HIC as Medicare Australia?
2. Is there to be a government advertising campaign on the re-badging of the organisation? What will it cost?
3. Can you outline the non-health services that the MEDICARE AUSTRALIA is now carrying out for other agencies?
4. What is the reason for the MEDICARE AUSTRALIA taking on these roles?
5. Is there likely to be an expansion of these non-health services to be carried out by MEDICARE AUSTRALIA on behalf of other agencies?

6. Can you guarantee that there will be no loss of staff in other agencies because of these extra roles?
-

HS60

Authority in prescribing a PBS listed drug

1. Which drugs require a written authority from Medicare Australia?
2. What is the process that the prescribing doctor must adopt to prescribe a "written authority" drug?
3. What does the patient have to do to receive the drug?
4. What is the rationale for "written authority" as opposed to the more regular phone authority?

FOR REFERENCE

Hansard extract, p.CA32

Senator McLUCAS—My understanding of the process is as follows—and it may not be correct. The patient goes to the doctor, and the doctor seeks to prescribe the particular drug. Information is then sent to Medicare Australia. I am advised that Medicare Australia will do one of two things. Either it will send to the patient a piece of paper—I do not know what is on that paper but obviously it is an approval—or the doctor may request that it be sent back to the doctor. The concern from the Alzheimer's community is that, when a person with Alzheimer's receives that authority, they do not know what it is for, they lose it, they are confused about the process and there is failure in the treatment as a result. It has also been put to me that it is only Alzheimer's drugs that have to go through this written authority process.

Ms Corbett—No, there are other drugs with that requirement.

Senator McLUCAS—If you could provide a list of those separately on notice, that would be good. Is that correct—the process that I have just described?

Ms Huxtable—I think should clarify what the process is with Medicare Australia, because, while in the general sense I think Dr Primrose has referred to what the process is, I do not feel confident in responding on their behalf about how precisely that process is administered in this case. So if we can refer that question to them, perhaps they can respond directly.

Ms Halton—We will talk to them about the context of the question, particularly in terms of the concern, and clarify whether in fact that is actually what occurs. I think your point is quite reasonable.

Senator McLUCAS—It is not mine—it is theirs, the Alzheimer’s community.

Ms Halton—The point you are relaying is perfectly reasonable. We need to check with them what in fact is the actual practice. If you are happy for us to refer that to them, we will make sure an answer is provided.

Senator McLUCAS—Did the PBAC recommend that the written authority be pursued?

HS61

Centrelink

Please provide the number of carer payment recipients who moved on to aged pension in both the 2003-04 and 2004-05 financial years. And, how many carer payment recipients who reached aged pension age, elected to remain on carer payment for those financial years.

HS62 to HS64

1. How much money has the portfolio spent on domestic airfares for each of the last three financial years?
2. How much money has the portfolio spent on overseas airfares for each of the last three financial years?
3. How much money has the portfolio spent on economy class domestic airfares for each of the last three financial years?
4. How much money has the portfolio spent on business class domestic airfares for each of the last three financial years?
5. How much has the portfolio spent on first class domestic airfares for each of the last three financial years?
6. What would be the estimated financial year dollar saving if all public servants in the portfolio travelled economy class for flights of less than one and a half hours duration?

HS65

Youth Allowance –

Can we have the number of “unreasonable to live at home” claims for Youth Allowance, and the numbers rejected, in the year 2004-05? Can we have any breakdown of data on the time taken to assess these claims? Of the claims that were rejected can we have data on the numbers that were appealed to the Original

Decision Maker, the Authorised Review Officer, the Social Security Appeals Tribunal and the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, and the outcome of the appeal? How many of these claims were withdrawn? What is the percentage of social work time taken up in assessing these claims?

HS66

Online billing (Health and Ageing have advised that Qs 7 & 8 will be answered by them)

1. How many doctors' offices use HIC Online for non-bulk billed consultations?
 2. How many doctors does this represent?
 3. What proportion of doctors' services is claimed through HIC Online?
 4. How many GP offices use HIC Online for non-bulk billed consultations?
 5. How many GPs does this represent?
 6. What proportion of GP services is claimed through HIC Online?
 7. What is the Department doing to address the concerns that GPs have about how this system currently operates, viz: that the transactions are in real time?
 8. Does the Department plan to re-introduce the HIC Online proposal from Fairer Medicare where patients were required to only pay the gap?
 9. How many pharmacies currently use PBS Online?
 10. Is the Department aware of complaints from pharmacists about the slow rate of payments from PBS Online?
 11. What is the Department doing to address the concerns that pharmacists have about how this system currently operates, viz: that the transactions are in real time?
-

HS67