

Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Finance and Administration Portfolio

Department of Human Services and Agencies

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2006-2007, 31 October, 2006

Question: HS 34

Outcome 1, Output 1

Topic: Australian Workplace Agreements

Hansard Page/Written Question on Notice:

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

1. Can Centrelink confirm that AWAs are currently being offered to workers in CSCs and AOs?
2. Can Centrelink confirm that AWAs are planned to be offered to all workers in the Call Centre network?
3. Can Centrelink confirm that AWAs are being offered as a condition of employment for graduate recruits in NSO?
4. Can Centrelink confirm that AWAs are being offered to existing employees in NSO?
5. How many employees APS6 and below have voluntarily taken up AWAs since Workchoices was introduced?
6. What is Centrelinks national target/quota for new employees to be covered by AWAs?
7. Has Centrelink set AWA take-up targets/ quotas for its existing staff? If yes, please provide details of the targets/ quotas for each Centrelink region?
8. Has Centrelink identified regions that are failing to meet their AWA take up target? If yes, which regions?
9. What is Centrelinks strategy or proposed strategy to assist regions to meet their AWA take-up target?
10. What is Centrelinks national budget allocation for developing, promoting and administrating AWAs?
11. How much has Centrelink spent this financial year on offering money for sign on bonuses for AWAs, regional trips of Senior Managers promoting AWAs to employees through compulsory all-staff meetings, and employing AWA Account Managers to administer AWAs?
12. Is Centrelink aware of any Centrelink Managers or Staff receiving and/ or being offered financial incentives to transfer existing staff onto AWAs? If yes, please detail. If no, is this action being considered by Centrelink for the future?

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13. What is the budget allocated to promoting AWAs in:
 - a. each regional area for eg. Area Hunter NSW;
 - b. call centres;
 - c. graduates in NSO?
14. Where does Centrelink anticipate the savings to come from to fund this budgetary expenditure?
15. What is Centrelinks timeframe for rolling out AWAs to meet targets?
16. Does Centrelink support 'choice' for all employees and potential employees on whether they sign an AWA or elect to be covered by the existing Certified Agreement? If not, why not?
17. Does Centrelink support 'choice' for all employees to elect to be covered by the Certified Agreement at the expiry of their AWA? If not, why not?
18. Does Centrelink support the choice for employees to align the expiry of their AWA with the expiry of the Certified Agreement? If not, why not?
19. Will Centrelink guarantee that no Centrelink worker will be worse off under an AWA than the Certified Agreement? If not, why not?
20. Does Centrelink plan to increase its opening hours in any of its Offices? If yes, provide details.
21. Will Centrelink open on Saturdays this financial year? If yes, provide details.
22. Are the AWAs Centrelink are offering to all existing employees APS6 and below the same in terms and conditions? If no, provide details.
23. What clauses in the template AWA for APS6 and below are negotiable?
24. What clauses in the template AWA for APS6 and below are not negotiable? Provide reasons why.

Answer:

1. Yes
2. Yes
3. Yes.
4. Yes.
5. 338.

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6. Centrelink does not have a target/quota specifically for new employees to be covered by Australian Workplace Agreements
7. Centrelink does not have a target/quota specifically for existing employees to be covered by Australian Workplace Agreements
8. No.
9. There is no strategy for assisting each region to meet any Australian Workplace Agreements take-up target.
10. Centrelink has a team based in Canberra to administer Australian Workplace Agreements. That team has an administration budget of \$99,996.
11. Centrelink does not offer “sign-on” bonuses for Australian Workplace Agreements. Centrelink has not required compulsory, all-staff meetings to promote Australian Workplace Agreements. Account Managers in the Workplace Relations and Employment Policy Branch act as an initial point of contact for handling Australian Workplace Agreement queries.
12. The answer to both aspects of this question is no.
13. There is no budget allocated to promoting Australian Workplace Agreements in each regional area, call centre or to graduates in the National Support Office.
14. Centrelink anticipates savings to come from performance and productivity improvements of each of the employees who enter into an Australian Workplace Agreement.
15. There are no targets nor timeframe for rolling out Australian Workplace Agreements.
16. All existing Australian Public Service employees have a choice. In line with Government policy Australian Workplace Agreements are being utilised for new employees.
17. Under WorkChoices employees who choose to move from their AWA (after expiry and termination of their AWA) to a Certified Agreement will have to wait until a new collective agreement is being negotiated to allow them to vote on it, and then be covered by it.
18. Centrelink generally offers its Australian Workplace Agreements for three years but does consider requests for different periods of operation on a case-by-case basis.
19. Yes.
20. There are currently no plans to increase opening hours.
21. There are currently no plans for Saturday trading.
22. Yes. Centrelink’s Australian Workplace Agreements contain common basic terms and conditions. In addition to these common terms and conditions, there is scope for individual employees to negotiate additional provisions which may enhance the flexibility of their working conditions or provide recognition of their specific circumstances.

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23. Within the limits defined by the Australian Fair Pay and Conditions Standard and the Workplace Relations Policy Parameters for Agreement Making in the Australian Public Service, it is possible for additional provisions to be negotiated within overall compliance with the relevant legislation.
24. Centrelink AWAs comply with the relevant legislation.

To prepare this answer it has taken approximately 7 hours and 25 minutes at an estimated cost of \$401.