

Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee
SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES 2008-09 (October 2008)

Index to Questions on Notice (QON)

Human Services Portfolio

Note: the FPA Committee resolved that agencies provide answers to Questions on Notice by Friday, 5 December 2008.

QON No.	Department / agency	Senator	Hansard Reference	Question	Comments/date answer provided
HS1	CSA	BOYCE	F&PA 116	<p>Senator BOYCE—There have been a number of media reports about sole parents, particularly single mothers, who have received less through family support than they did in under the old system. I would have thought that they would have been the ones most vociferously objecting or complaining. Is that the case?</p> <p>Mr Miller—I do not have a breakdown as to whether those complaints were from receiving or paying parents.</p> <p>Senator BOYCE—You must break them down into some sort of subsets for analysis purposes—is that correct?</p> <p>Mr Miller—I would need to take on notice whether we do break them down.</p> <p>Mr Sutton—Yes, we do break them down into receiving and paying parents.</p> <p>Senator BOYCE—Can you give me any information about the level of complaints that came from each group?</p> <p>Mr Sutton—Not at this moment.</p> <p>Senator BOYCE—If you could take that on notice that would be good. Also, if you could categorise the complaints and objections by type, I would find that useful.</p>	Answered 5/12/08.

				Mr Sutton —Yes.	
HS2	CSA	BOYCE	F&PA 120	<p>Senator BOYCE—Is it possible to table that document?</p> <p>Senator Ludwig—I might take that on notice; we might just check first.</p> <p>Senator BOYCE—What is the document?</p> <p>Senator Ludwig—We will call it a CSA compliance program performance report as at 30 September 2008.</p>	Answered 5/12/08.
HS3	CSA	RYAN	F&PA 125	<p>Senator RYAN—I will ask you to take one last question on notice, given our time. It also struck me in the same article that there were references to the widely varying amounts outstanding in payments and the variations between states. I was wondering whether you could take on notice whether you had any knowledge or reasoning as to why it varied so strongly between New South Wales, the ACT and with Victoria and Tasmania being at opposite ends of the scale.</p> <p>Mr Miller—I would like to take that on notice.</p>	Answered 5/12/08.
HS4	Centrelink	BERNARDI	F&PA 126	<p>Mr Cowan—The Australian Valuation Office uses a profiling approach to determine how best to do their valuations on properties of Centrelink customers. I do not have any figures at all with me on the break-up of the various methods they use. I can provide them for you, but I do not have them here today.</p> <p>Senator BERNARDI—If you could take that on notice. I am specifically interested in whether there has been any significant change or any change at all in the percentage of physical inspections versus desktop valuations. The valuation office, through Mr D’Ascenzo, who is the head of the ATO, said that they respond to Centrelink requests. I hope I am right in that. I will stand corrected if I am not. They respond to your requests for the number of valuations and how they should be conducted; they do not determine that themselves.</p> <p>Mr Cowan—We would talk about an appropriate approach but we would not specify a specific type of valuation for a specific type of property—and take into account they do valuations of properties for us right across Australia and overseas of Centrelink customers. They use a mixed bag of approaches, and we discuss with them regularly the approaches they use to do valuations.</p> <p>Senator BERNARDI—I appreciate that.</p>	Answered 5/12/08.
HS5	Centrelink	BERNARDI	F&PA 127	<p>Mr Cowan—We will have to give you some explanations of the data, because this time last year there was a significant increase in applicants for the age pension as a result of changes to the taper rate. That would distort any sort of time line of activity. We can give you some clarification on that.</p> <p>Senator BERNARDI—The easiest way to do this is to be full and fearless in</p>	Answered 5/12/08.

				providing the information to us, which I am sure that the minister would support. Senator Ludwig —Absolutely.	
HS6	Centrelink	BERANRDI	F&PA 128	<p>Senator BERNARDI—That might be interesting. What percentage of family tax benefit A recipients get their payment as a lump sum with their tax return at the end of the year?</p> <p>Ms Thomas—That is probably not a figure I am in receipt of at this point.</p> <p>Senator BERNARDI—Are you able to take it on notice and supply it to us?</p> <p>Ms Thomas—I could take it on notice. It could be something that you could refer to the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.</p> <p>Senator BERNARDI—I will tomorrow, but I am happy for you to take it on notice too in case they try and say I should be referring it to Centrelink, which sometimes happens in estimates.</p> <p>Ms Thomas—I can take it on notice and I can certainly talk with them about getting you the information.</p>	Answered 5/12/08.
HS7	Centrelink	BERNARDI	F&PA 131	<p>Senator BERNARDI—There was a quote in one of the newspapers—I think it was in a story in the <i>Herald Sun</i>—that said the government would amend the claim form to provide greater clarity to health professionals about baby bonus eligibility...No, there was an assurance that the form would be amended. The form is available through the Centrelink website and, as at the date when we last downloaded it—</p> <p>Senator Ludwig—So the question may then be characterised as: has Centrelink changed the form or been advised—</p> <p>Senator BERNARDI—That is the next question, because I have downloaded the form and I cannot detect where there has been any change.</p> <p>Mr Pratt—We will take that on notice. If we can get an answer for you in the next 55 minutes, we will bring it back to you.</p> <p>Senator BERNARDI—Thank you. And if you are unable to, I would appreciate a prompt answer to a question on notice.</p> <p>Mr Pratt—We will take it on notice, irrespective of whether or not analysis of the transcript suggests that it is more appropriate to ask it of the families portfolio as per your previous question.</p> <p>Senator BERNARDI—Thank you.</p>	Also see discussion on F&PA 132. Answered 5/12/08.
HS8	Centrelink	BERNARDI	F&PA 132	Senator BERNARDI —Would you be able to take some other questions on	Answered

				<p>notice? I presume you will have to; they go to this matter. I would be interested in knowing how many women have actually received the baby bonus since 28 August this year and how many of those have been for late-term abortions.</p> <p>Mr Pratt—We will take that on notice.</p>	5/12/08.
HS9	Centrelink	BERNARDI/ BARNETT	F&PA 132–133	<p>Senator BERNARDI—Thank you. I am also interested in the figures indicating how many terminations where the foetus was 20 weeks or older have occurred in the last year. I do not know whether your department would be responsible for that information.</p> <p>Mr Pratt—We will take that on notice.</p> <p>Senator BARNETT—And, in that instance, where the baby bonus was paid.</p> <p>Mr Pratt—Yes, Senator.</p> <p>Senator BARNETT—Applied for and/or paid.</p>	Answered 5/12/08.
HS10	Centrelink	BOYCE	F&PA 133	<p>Senator BOYCE—I have a question on the baby bonus. The income test that was introduced for the baby bonus did not give people nine months notice before implementation. I know that, given where the income test is set, there is quite a small but nevertheless significant number of about 700 women, as I understand it, who have therefore missed out on the baby bonus because there was not nine months notice. If it had been introduced in March, for example, they would have all known before conception about it. Have you had complaints from people in that category?</p> <p>Mr Cowan—None that I am aware of. I am not aware of any complaints on that particular issue of people not getting nine months notice.</p> <p>Senator BOYCE—So that is a categorical no—no complaints?</p> <p>Mr Cowan—Not that I am aware of.</p> <p>Senator BOYCE—If you could take that on notice, that would be good.</p> <p>Mr Cowan—I can take that on notice, again, but it is not an issue that I am aware of that is outstanding.</p>	Answered 5/12/08.
HS11	Centrelink	BERNARDI	F&PA 133	<p>Senator BERNARDI—Just in regard to the immunisation allowance, too, my understanding is that the immunisation allowance is also paid for stillbirths and terminations after a certain period, in line with the baby bonus. Can someone confirm that to me? I will go to the expert, Ms Thomas.</p> <p>Ms Thomas—Essentially, maternity immunisation allowance is paid in two instalments. It is paid at 18 to 24 months, after the immunisation has been done, and it is also paid between four and five years, once the immunisation has been</p>	Answered 5/12/08.

				<p>done for that schedule as well.</p> <p>Senator BERNARDI—So there is no payment received in the event of stillbirth?</p> <p>Ms Thomas—I am not aware that there is, but we may need to take that one on notice.</p> <p>Senator BERNARDI—Thank you. If you could undertake to get that back to us, I would appreciate it.</p>	
HS12	Centrelink	RYAN	F&PA 134	<p>Senator RYAN—Does the department provide a regular [staff security incident] report on that, and is it available to the committee? Is it an annual or a quarterly report that the department would regularly compile?</p> <p>Mr Dunn—Generally we do a report quarterly. That is usually for internal purposes.</p> <p>Senator RYAN—If that could be made available to the committee, that would be appreciated.</p> <p>Mr Pratt—We will take that on notice.</p>	Answered 5/12/08.
HS13	Centrelink	BERNARDI	F&PA 134	<p>Senator BERNARDI—Well, perhaps you can advise me how many people have been in receipt of this maternity immunisation allowance for stillbirths?</p> <p>Mr Pratt—If those facts are correct—</p> <p>Senator BERNARDI—They are.</p> <p>Mr Pratt—and we have any data on that, we will provide that to you.</p>	Answered 5/12/08.
HS14a to HS14f	Medicare	RYAN	F&PA 139	<p>Senator RYAN—I have a couple of questions I can give you quickly that you might be able to take on notice, and they are about the total numbers in Medicare Australia—[a] how many Medicare claims offices there are around the country now, [b] how many there were as at 1 January 2008, [c] the total staff members in those claims offices, [d] whether those numbers have increased or decreased since January this year and, finally, [e] the total staff in the Canberra head office, presumably of Medicare Australia, and [f] whether those numbers have increased or decreased since 1 January 2008. I am happy for those to be taken on notice.</p> <p>Senator Ludwig—Thank you. We will take those on notice.</p>	Answer received 24/11/08.
HS15	Medicare	BARNETT	F&PA 139	<p>Senator BARNETT—I have a question for Medicare and, Ms Mellor, you probably know what I am about to ask because I indicated the question earlier to the Department of Human Services. Firstly, in terms of Medicare payments for second trimester and late term abortions and specifically Medicare item number 16525—part 3 of schedule 1 of the Health Insurance (General Medical Services) Table Regulations 2007, which I am sure you are fully aware of—can you</p>	Answer received 12/11/08.

				<p>provide the statistics on the total amount that has been paid since 1994? Secondly, can that be broken down on a state and territory basis? Do you have those figures with you?</p> <p>Ms Mellor—I do not have them with me now. I heard the question put during earlier discussion by the committee. The question I heard is: what evidence is required to make a payment?</p> <p>Senator BARNETT—I am about to ask that question.</p> <p>Ms Mellor—I do not have those detailed statistics with me, but I am happy to take that on notice.</p>	
HS16	Medicare	BARNETT	F&PA 140	<p>Senator BARNETT—It may do. If you could assist us in answering that and track it back to when it first commenced? If you could also do a breakdown for the first trimester—I do not have the item number with me.</p> <p>Ms Mellor—There are two different item numbers for management of labour in trimesters.</p> <p>Senator BARNETT—Yes. If you could do it for that item number as well, that would be appreciated.</p>	Answer received 12/11/08.
HS17a– HS17c	Human Services portfolio	BOSWELL	Written	See attachment below	Answer received 14/11/08.
HS18a– HS18d	CSA	ABETZ	Written	See attachment below	Answer received 9/12/08.
HS19a	Centrelink	LUDLAM	Written	See attachment below	Answered 5/12/08.
HS19b	Centrelink	LUDLAM	Written	See attachment below	<p>Note: Senator Ludlam agreed Centrelink's interpretation of this question on 10/11/08.</p> <p>Answer received 5/12/08.</p>

HS19c	Centrelink	LUDLAM	Written	See attachment below	Answered 5/12/08.
HS20a	CSA	SIEWERT	Written	See attachment below	On 28/10/08 this question was transferred to FaHCSIA for an answer.
HS20b	CSA	SIEWERT	Written	See attachment below	Answered 5/12/08.
HS20c	CSA	SIEWERT	Written	See attachment below	Answered 5/12/08.
HS20d	CSA	SIEWERT	Written	See attachment below	Answered 5/12/08.
HS21a	Centrelink	SIEWERT	Written	See attachment below	Answered 5/12/08.
HS21b	Centrelink	SIEWERT	Written	See attachment below	Answered 5/12/08.
HS21c	Centrelink	SIEWERT	Written	See attachment below	Answered 5/12/08.

Written Questions on Notice

HS17a (BOSWELL)–Human Service portfolio

What if any steps have been taken to estimate the costs of the government’s response to climate change including the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme for every department, agency and program within this portfolio?

HS17b (BOSWELL)–Human Services portfolio

What are the costs and estimated costs identified (reported separately)?

HS17c (BOSWELL)–Human Services portfolio

Have any costs been included in forward estimates and if so where?

HS18a (ABETZ)–CSA

Can the Child Support Agency demand details of the purchasers in real estate contracts, together with information how the purchase of the property is funded, example by mortgage or cash?

HS18b (ABETZ)–CSA

Is the Child Support Agency entitled to ask real estate agents if the purchaser has agreed to the release of the deposit?

HS18c (ABETZ)–CSA

Is it also appropriate for the Child Support Agency to enquire as to the name of the legal representative of the purchaser of the property?

HS18d (ABETZ)–CSA

Is it appropriate for Child Support Agency officials when making these requests of real estate agents to request the agent not to tell the purchaser that their details have been forwarded?

HS19a (LUDLAM)–Centrelink

On how many occasions has homelessness been accepted as a reason for failing to meet the requirements of activity agreements during the 2007/08 financial year?

HS19b (LUDLAM)–Centrelink

How many non-payment periods have been revoked at appeal because of homelessness of the jobseeker during the 2007/08 financial year?

HS19c (LUDLAM)–Centrelink

How many instances have there been of the Homeless Vulnerability Indicator being raised for jobseekers during the 2007/08 financial year?

HS20a (SIEWERT)–CSA

In the “Report on the Population Impact of the New Child Support Formula” released on 7 August 2008 the highest level provided for payment per week net charge in all the charts is “more than \$60”. Is it possible to obtain figures for per week net charge higher than that i.e. more than \$200?

HS20b (SIEWERT)–CSA

A key objective of the child support reforms was to improve compliance with child support obligations. In the three months since stage three of the child support reforms was implemented

how has the compliance rate changed on the previous six months and how does it differ across different levels of payment. (including for more than \$200 per week net charge).

HS20c (SIEWERT)–CSA

I understand the child support agency has been collecting complaints/feedback received regarding the new child support formula for the Minister. Is it possible to have access to this information – will it be released?

HS20d (SIEWERT)–CSA

How many of the complaints received refer to the number of nights a parent cares for a child and the impact this has on the increase or decrease in payments. There is an incentive for the payee to discourage children from staying with the payer and an incentive for the payer to have the children for more nights than they may have in the past. What mechanisms are in place when children won't go to the non resident parent to stay?

HS21a (SIEWERT)–Centrelink

Since July 2008 how many people have been breached and how many incurred eight week non-payment periods? Can you please provide breakdowns of the above numbers according to State, according to number of Indigenous persons by State and according to reason for breaching?

HS21b (SIEWERT)–Centrelink

Since July 2008 how many people have been offered case management and of these how many accepted it. Could you please provide a breakdown of these two areas into those with dependent children, those who are exceptionally vulnerable and those who are Indigenous?

HS21c (SIEWERT)–Centrelink

Since July 2008 how many people on the Disability Support Pension have been reviewed; how many stayed on the DSP; how many moved to Newstart Allowance; how many people have applied for DSP; how many assessed to go on DSP; how many people have applied for DSP; how many assessed to go on DSP and how many assessed onto Newstart Allowance?