

# Senate Finance and Public Administration Standing Committee

## SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES – 20 October 2009 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

### Human Services Portfolio

**Topic:** Client Service and Customer Satisfaction

**Question reference number:** HS33 (a -b)

**Senator:** Scullion

**Type of question:** Written

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 4 December 2009

**Number of pages:** 2

#### **Question:**

A report produced by the Australian National Audit Office earlier in the year showed that Centrelink believed that, at the end of every day, about 97 per cent of basic complaints have been resolved. When it came to the customers, only about 11 per cent think their complaints have been resolved.

(a) Has Centrelink reviewed or changed their complaint handling processes to reflect customer satisfaction before a complaint is deemed resolved?

(b) How many complaints are received per day by Centrelink?

#### **Answer:**

(a) The ANAO report provides details of a Post Complaints Survey conducted by Centrelink in 2006. The survey engaged 700 customers who had made a tier one or tier two complaint to Centrelink within the period July to September 2006 and November 2007 to April 2008.

The results of the 2008 survey showed that 11 per cent of customers viewed that their complaint was resolved within one day whereas Centrelink viewed that 97 per cent of the Tier One and Tier Two complaints were resolved within one day.

The ANAO also commented on the reasons for this disparity and included the following factors:

- Centrelink defines a complaint as being resolved when the matter a complainant has raised is investigated in accordance with Centrelink practices and the complainant:
  - receives an explanation of the outcome of that investigation;
  - acknowledges they understand the outcome as explained to them; and
  - is informed of additional options they have to seek a review of the outcome.

At times a complainant will understand the decision made however may not be satisfied with the outcome as they do not agree with the policy or legislation. They may therefore appeal a decision and may consider that the complaint is not resolved until such time as the appeal is considered.

Centrelink has not changed the manner in which we measure complaint resolution however we continuously review and improve complaint-handling processes. Centrelink surveys customers to gauge their perceptions of the complaint handling process and uses this feedback to identify where processes can be improved. This includes customer satisfaction associated with complaint resolution.

The June 2009 Post Complaints Survey showed that 19 per cent of respondents advised their complaint was resolved in one day. This is an eight per cent increase from the April 2008 result.

(b) The number of complaints received by Centrelink each day varies throughout the year and may be influenced by outside factors, such as Government announcements or local disaster/emergencies.

***2008-09 Financial Year***

Centrelink averaged 177 complaints per day.

***Quarter One, 2009-10 Financial Year***

Centrelink is currently averaging 139 complaints per day. Variation is again evident with results varying from an average of 119 complaints per day in August 2009 to an average of 176 complaints per day in July 2009.