

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES 2009–10 —October 2009**Questions on Notice (QON) index— Human Services Portfolio**

Answers to the QON taken or submitted during the Supplementary Estimates hearings, are due on Friday, 4 December 2009.

HUMAN SERVICES PORTFOLIO**Written Questions on Notice****DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES (including CHILD SUPPORT AGENCY)**Topic: Compliance initiatives**HS1 –DHS - (Bernardi)**

The Annual Report mentions six initiatives to improve compliance and reduce fraud in the welfare and health systems. (Department of Human Services 2008–09 Annual Report, p.36) What is the total Budget for these six initiatives?

Topic: Centrelink funding**HS2 (a–c) – DHS – (Bernardi)**

The Annual report states that from 1 July 2009 the Government will streamline Centrelink funding arrangements so that Centrelink receives its funding directly from the Budget, instead of through various policy departments. (Department of Human Services 2008–09 Annual Report, p.41)

- a) Has this occurred?
- b) Have there been any problems/issues with changing the funding arrangements?
- c) Has the Department heard if Centrelink is satisfied with the change?

Topic: Coping with Financial Stress seminars**HS3 (a–g) – DHS – (Bernardi)**

- a) A joint media release from Ministers Ludwig and Macklin on 2 June 2009 announced funding of \$60,000 for 20 *Coping with Financial Stress* seminars. Did this come in under the \$60,000 budget?
- b) Regarding the list of 20 locations for the seminars attached to the media release: why were these locations chosen?
- c) How many seminars were held in ALP electorates?

- d) Why did WA, NT, VIC and TAS miss out on having a seminar in their state?
- e) Did all 20 seminars go ahead?
- f) How many people attended each seminar?
- g) Did the financial councillors receive any payment for taking part in these seminars?

Topic: Debt collection

HS4 (a–l) – CSA- (Bernardi)

- a) The outstanding child support debt has steadily increased (\$1.013 billion at 30 June 2008, \$1.067 billion at 30 April 2009 and \$1.088 billion at 30 June 2009). (Department of Human Services, Annual Report 2008–09, p.44 and Commonwealth Ombudsman report, *CSA: Administration of Departure Prohibition Order powers*, June 2009, p.4.) Apart from the reasons given in the Annual Report, are there any other explanations for this increase?
- b) The Annual Report uses the following reason for the increase in debt: “*reduced proactive collection activity arising from increased workload demands associated with the implementation of the new Child Support Scheme on 1 July 2008.*” Does that mean that the staff had to focus more on the new Child Support Scheme, so less time was spent on debt collection?
- c) Was any effort made to employ more staff to cope with the increased workload?
- d) The Annual Report states that the Department is now finalising a strategy to address the rise in domestic child support debt. (Department of Human Services, Annual Report 2008–09, p.44) What are the details of this strategy?
- e) When will the strategy be finalised?
- f) When will the strategy be implemented?
- g) Are there any costs associated with the strategy?
- h) Will a review be conducted after the strategy begins, to assess the effectiveness of it?
- i) In July 2008 the Department organised a summit about international debt, which identified measures to improve administration processes. (Department of Human Services, Annual Report 2008–09, p.44) How long have these measures been in place?
- j) Has a review been conducted to see if they have been effective?
- k) What are all the costs associated with implementing these new measures?
- l) How much international child support debt has been collected since the new measures were put in place?

Topic: Departure Prohibition Orders

HS5 – CSA- (Bernardi)

In June 2009 the Commonwealth Ombudsman released a report into the administration of Departure Prohibition Orders, and concluded that the CSA’s administration of the orders was not up to scratch in several areas. I believe that the CSA reviewed all of its current DPOs (in response to the Ombudsman’s

recommendation). (See Commonwealth Ombudsman report, *CSA: Administration of Departure Prohibition Order powers*, June 2009, p.37) What were the results of this internal review – were all current DPOs deemed to be valid?

HS6 – CSA- (Bernardi)

A quality audit of the internal review was currently underway in May. Has this audit been completed? If so, what were the results of the audit? If not, when will the audit be completed?

HS7 (a–d) – CSA- (Bernardi)

The Ombudsman’s report was critical of the CSA’s targeted approach to Departure Prohibition Orders eg the aim to issue 4,500 DPOs and collect \$25.8 million in payments by 2010, because the pressure of meeting the target may encourage staff to issue DPOs in inappropriate circumstances. The Ombudsman made a recommendation reflecting his concerns. (Commonwealth Ombudsman report, *CSA: Administration of Departure Prohibition Order powers*, June 2009, p.36)

- a) What was the CSA’s response to that recommendation?
- b) Has any action been taken to address the Ombudsman’s concerns?
- c) The CSA’s response to the draft report mentioned that additional training for DPO teams would be provided. (Commonwealth Ombudsman report, *CSA: Administration of Departure Prohibition Order powers*, June 2009, p.37) Have the DPO teams received this additional training?
- d) What are the details of this training?

HS8 (a–d) – CSA- (Bernardi)

The CSA also said that they would revise the DPO notification letter and the Procedural Instructions.

- a) Has this occurred?
- b) Will the CSA be conducting regular reviews (eg annually) of their DPO administration to ensure that the changes are effective?
- c) Will the CSA also be conducting regular reviews of the DPOs to ensure that they are all valid?
- d) How many DPOs are currently in effect?

HS9 – CSA- (Bernardi)

The Human Services Department’s annual reports states that 427 DPOs were issued in 2008-09, compared to 924 in 2007-08. (Department of Human Services, Annual report 2008-09, p.450) What is the reason behind this difference?

Topic: Optical Surveillance**HS10– CSA- (Bernardi)**

An answer (HS6) to a Question on Notice from 2009 May Estimates stated that the Child Support Program (CSP) had completed an evaluation of the surveillance trial on 30 June 2009 and that a decision was yet to be made as to whether to implement surveillance as ongoing business. Minister Bowen’s

spokesperson confirmed in July that the Government was considering making the surveillance program permanent. (Sunday Telegraph, 'Spies to target cheating parents', by Linda Silmalis, 12.7.09) Has that decision been made yet, and what was the decision?

HS11– CSA- (Bernardi)

Back in May it was stated that about 20 people were being considered as part of the trial. (F&PA Estimates Hansard, 28.5.09, p.105) Was any surveillance conducted on these 20 people?

HS12(a–b) – CSA- (Bernardi)

- a) At the May Estimates, it was also stated that **six cases** were being investigated for prosecution action, due to the surveillance trial. (see F&PA Estimates Hansard, 28.5.09, p.105 and Department of Human Services, Annual Report 2008–09, p.46) But the Annual Report says that **only one customer** was referred on to the Director of Public Prosecutions. Why did this happen?
- b) And what of the three cases that were referred to other areas of the CSP?

HS13 – CSA- (Bernardi)

The Annual Report also states that nine cases are still being investigated. (Department of Human Services, Annual Report 2008–09, p.46) Can you provide me with further details of these?

HS14 (a–b) – CSA- (Bernardi)

At 31 May 2009, the cost of the trial was \$337,807. (HS7, Answer to Question on Notice)

- a) What was the cost of the trial as at 30 June 2009?
- b) What is the breakdown of that cost?

HS15 – CSA- (Bernardi)

I am aware that the CSP has stated that it *“does not expect to be in a position to definitively allocate collection outcomes solely due to surveillance activity.”* (HS7, Answer to Question on Notice) Why is this the case?

HS16– CSA- (Bernardi)

If the CSP is successfully able to prosecute people and collect overdue payments from them due to the surveillance trial, isn't it possible to get the totals of those collected payments and add them up to see how much was collected from the trial?

Topic: CSA Income determinations**HS17 (a–d) – CSA- (Scullion)**

- a) How does the CSA arrive at assumed earnings for self employed parents?

- b) What avenue of appeal is available to someone who has had their assumed earnings set at a rate above that as reported and assessed by the Tax office?
- c) Can an individual who is a wage and salary earner have their CSA assessed income set at a level higher than that of their group certificate or pay slips from their employer?
- d) If so on what basis is the assessment made?

CENTRELINK

Topic: Indigenous employment benefits

HS18– Centrelink- (Boyce)

With regards to Indigenous Australians who receive unemployment benefits in the form of Newstart or Youth Allowance, how many Indigenous people are on "work experience" in order to qualify for unemployment benefits, broken down to numbers in each state and territory?

***(Transferred to DEEWR)* HS19– Centrelink- (Boyce)**

Since November 2007, how many Indigenous Australians have had their Centrelink benefits suspended or terminated due to not fulfilling their mutual obligation requirements?

HS20– Centrelink- (Boyce)

How many previous Community Development Employment Project (CDEP) recipients are now receiving unemployment benefits after changes to CDEP policy since the last federal election?

HS21 - Centrelink- (Siewert)

What is the number, value and payment type of Indigenous recipients with Centrelink overpayments, including FTB?

Topic: Pension reporting changes

HS22– Centrelink- (Boyce)

How long, on average, does it take for a pension recipient to report their income over the phone?

HS23– Centrelink- (Boyce)

How many weeks can a pensioner receive a \$0 benefit before their pension is cancelled and they then need to reapply?

HS24– Centrelink- (Boyce)

How does the new policy affect recipients who work for 3 weeks of the year every year such as those in seasonal employment? Do they have to have contact with Centrelink every fortnight for the rest of the year to report any income?

HS25– Centrelink- (Boyce)

After what period of earning nothing is a pensioner free of these reporting requirements? Is he or she then classified as a person who at times earns and as a result is required to report income every fortnight for the rest of their lives?

HS26– Centrelink- (Boyce)

Is there an income estimator available on the Centrelink website or on the phone to assist pensioners to assess how much their benefits will be worth after completing a particular period of employment?

Topic: Disability Pension**HS27– Centrelink- (Boyce)**

Can Centrelink please provide a copy of the letter(s) sent to all Disability Pension recipients in September?

HS28 (a–o) – Centrelink- (Fifield)

- a) How many people have received (granted) Disability Support Pension each month since start of the new financial year?
- b) How many people applied (claimed) for Disability Support Pension each month since the start of the new financial year?
- c) How many were transferred to the Disability Support Pension from other income support payments since the start of the financial year?
- d) How many people were suspended from Disability Support Pension each month since the start of the new financial year?
- e) How many people left the Disability Support Pension each month since the start of the new financial year?
- f) How many of those who left the Disability Support Pension went on to other payments, since the start of the new financial year?
- g) Do Centrelink officers have discretion to put someone on Disability Support Pension without going through the normal application process?
- h) Are there any situations when Centrelink will temporarily put someone on Disability Support Pension without completing the normal application process?
- i) What sort of timeframe do you put on fast-tracking – a day, a week, two weeks?
- j) How many enquiries has Centrelink received regarding the Pension Supplement following its implementation?
- k) What has been the nature of the enquiries?
- l) Has Centrelink begun making preparations for the new health professional advice units?
- m) What consultation with stakeholders and professionals has been undertaken so far?
- n) How many staff will be employed in the units?
- o) What will their roles be?

Topic: Financial Counselling**HS29– Centrelink- (Ludlam)**

Minister Plibersek on the 4th September announced a doubling of financial counselling – where an additional \$10 million over 4 years for financial counsellors and increased legal support to help people who experience hardship to hang on to their homes is to be provided. Is Centrelink involved with the delivery of these financial counselling services?

HS30 (a–b) – Centrelink- (Ludlam)

- a) What financial counselling services does Centreline currently provide to its clients, particularly those at risk of homelessness?
- b) How many people are currently employed in this service and how many clients would they see per year?

Topic: Commonwealth Rental Assistance***(Transferred to FaHCSIA)* HS31 (a–f) – Centrelink- (Ludlam)**

Centrelink recipients are one of the groups most acutely affected by housing affordability. The Commonwealth Rental Assistance is pegged to the CPI:

- a) How has this translated in real terms in the last ten years? That is, what was the full rent assistance payment ten years ago compared with today?
- b) To what degree have increases in median rents outpaced increases in the CPI over the last decade?
- c) How have rises in median incomes over the last decade compared with the CPI?
- d) As rent assistance is pegged to the CPI and not median rent prices, how do median rental prices for each state and territory (metropolitan figure) compare with the rises in CPI?
- e) Could you also provide a comparison of the CPI index over the last decade with the median rental price rises for the specific regions of Carnarvon, Karratha, Port Hedland, South Hedland, and Broome?
- f) How do rises in median personal income over the last ten years compare with increases to the full Rent Assistance payment, in terms of dollar figures and as a percentage increase?

HS32 – Centrelink- (Ludlam)

During the last estimates hearings on Commonwealth Rent Assistance I was told that there is someone looking at the geographical breakdown of rent assistance recipients and those sorts of figures across different geographical areas. Is that information able to be described or tabled?

Topic: Client Service and Customer Satisfaction**HS33 (a–b) – Centrelink- (Scullion)**

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 had 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?

Topic: Service benchmarks**HS34 (a–i) – Centrelink- (Scullion)**

- a) What is the current telephone call answer time average?
- b) What is the longest answer time?
- c) How many callers complain that they receive busy tone or the call dials out? In other words what is the unmet demand?
- d) Is this broken down by individual number? (ie specific number for youth allowance, aged pension enquiries etc)
- e) What statistics are kept on Centrelink office based transactions?
- f) How many people are seen each day in a Centrelink office?
- g) What is the average wait times in a Centrelink office?
- h) What are the peak wait times?
- i) How does this compare to the previous reporting periods?

Topic: Escalated or Complex Cases**HS35 (a–e) – Centrelink- (Scullion)**

- a) How many cases or enquiries are escalated after original call centre operator or customer service officer is unable to resolve the issue?
- b) What records are kept to track resolution times?
- c) Are details recorded on customer files of promised call back times?
- d) Are these undertakings to call a customer or client audited or reviewed?
- e) What processes are in place to ensure that if a customer or client is advised that Centrelink would contact them with further information that the contact is made?

Topic: Breaches**(Transferred to DEEWR) HS36 (a–b) – Centrelink- (Scullion)**

- a) How many people have had any Centrelink payments stopped as a result of breach action?
- b) For what act or omission was the breach for?

Topic: Economic Stimulus Payments**HS37 – Centrelink- (Scullion)**

How many and what was the dollar value of economic stimulus payments from all programs that were paid to overseas recipients?

Topic: Pensioner Entitlement Review**HS38 (a–c) – Centrelink- (Scullion)**

Centrelink, in particular the Tasmanian office have recently conducted a review of pension entitlements specifically on those who also receive a foreign pension.

- a) How many pensioners have received a notice of overpayment recovery?
- b) How many cases have been identified as resulting from Centrelink failing to enter correct details in the past?
- c) What processes are Centrelink putting in place to resolve overpayments where the pensioner has no assets or capacity to repay the assessed debt?

HS39 (a–d)– Centrelink- (Bernardi)

- a) How many Centrelink staff attended Senate Estimates on Tuesday, 20 October 2009?
- b) What time did they arrive at Senate Estimates in preparation to appear before the Senate committee?
- c) How many hours were they deemed to be ‘in attendance’ waiting to appear before the Senate committee?
- d) Based on the pay rates of the staff involved in appearing before Senate Estimates, please provide an estimated cost of the Senate Estimates appearance based on the staff available, waiting times and questioning by the committee?

(Transferred to DEEWR) HS40 (a–b) – Centrelink- (Siewert)

- a) What is the total number of eight week no payment penalties,¹ broken down by “third strike” and “serious” failures by Centrelink Area Office and Indigenous and non-Indigenous recipient status?
- b) Please provide a breakdown by numbers of first, second and third participation failures.

(Transferred to DEEWR) HS41 (a–b) – Centrelink- (Siewert)

- a) What is the number of “serious failures” by reason for failure (eg. misconduct, refused a suitable job offer)?
- b) What is the total number of “serious failures” by reason for failure (eg. misconduct, refused a suitable job offer) by Indigenous and non-Indigenous status?

(Transferred to DEEWR) HS42 (a–b) – Centrelink- (Siewert)

- a) What is the total number of participation failures lodged by Job Network Providers?
- b) What is the number of participation failures lodged by Job Network Providers that were subsequently rejected by Centrelink?

HS43 - Centrelink- (Siewert)

Please provide the number of people who lost their accommodation as a result of the imposition of an eight no payment penalty.

HS44 - Centrelink- (Siewert)

Please provide the numbers in 2008/09 offered Financial Case Management (FCM) by payment type and number of recipients taking up the offer of FCM.

¹ See also HS47.

(Transferred to DEEWR) HS45 - Centrelink- (Siewert)

Can you provide a copy of the publicly available data which will be provided on the new compliance arrangements introduced from 1 July 2009?

HS46 - Centrelink- (Siewert)

What compliance data has Centrelink been requested to collect by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations?

(Transferred to DEEWR) HS47 (a–e) - Centrelink- (Siewert)

- a) How many eight week no payment penalties have been imposed in the first 3 months of the new system?²
- b) How many eight week payment “waiting periods” or immediate eight week penalties have been applied?
- c) For the new penalty system please provide the number of financial penalties that have been imposed under the “no show, no pay” regime.
- d) Please provide details of the category of failures, whether a financial penalty was imposed and where applicable, the number of days involved.
- e) Is there any data that could be provided about numbers of job seekers “working off” penalties that have arisen after 1 July 2009?

HS48 - Centrelink- (Siewert)

Have problems associated with the “locking” of payments with the new compliance system, which mean that some job seekers find they have not been paid, brought to your attention? What is being done about this situation? Is this how the system was meant to work?

HS49 - Centrelink- (Siewert)

Does Centrelink have appropriate policies in place to address situations where job seekers have to make expensive 1800 or 13 numbers to report income or contact either Centrelink or Job Services Australia about their obligations in order to remain on payment?

HS50 - Centrelink- (Siewert)

Could we have data on the number of requests for Emergency Benefit Transfer Payments in 2008/09, and the number rejected?

HS51(a–b) - Centrelink- (Siewert)

- a) Please provide the number of recipients with Centrelink debts under management in 2008/09. By payment type and Family Tax Benefit.
- b) Please provide the total value of these debts per type of payment and numbers per payment type, for 2007/08 and 2008/09.

HS52 - Centrelink- (Siewert)

What is the amount of Centrelink overpayments recovered and numbers affected in 2007/08, by Centrelink, Dunn & Bradstreet and RC Mercantille agents?

HS53 - Centrelink- (Siewert)

² See also HS40.

What is the amount of Centrelink overpayments recovered in 2007/08, broken down by income support payment type, including FTB?

HS54 - Centrelink- (Siewert)

Please provide the breakdown of Advance Payment grants, by payment type, for 2008/09.

HS55 - Centrelink- (Siewert)

Please provide the breakdown of Crisis payment grants, by payment type, for 2008/09, by gender.

HS56 (a-c) - Centrelink- (Siewert)

- a) Provide data on the numbers of people who have lost all Centrelink payments, by payment type.
- b) Where a person had a rate reduction, what is the average loss of payment, per week, and how many affected?
- c) How many had a rate increase or became newly entitled to a payment?

HS57 - Centrelink- (Siewert)

How has Centrelink determined activity test exemption for a female couple in a same sex relationship when both give birth and both newborn children are only months old?

Topic: Carer's Payments

HS58 (a-e) – Centrelink - (Siewert)

- a) Is it normal practice for a GP rather than a psychologist to be required to fill out a medical form for someone with Aspergers Syndrome for a Carers' Allowance application?
- b) Is it Centrelink's normal practice to send correspondence to both the carer and the person they are caring for if the person being cared for cannot read or write?
- c) Is a family who is in receipt of Carers Allowance required to report their salary to Centrelink only when it changes, or on a fortnightly basis?
- d) Is it true that Centrelink only notes changes with respect to family allowances itself and not Carers Payment?
- e) If yes to (d), then why?

Topic: Aged Pension

HS59 - Centrelink- (Siewert)

Is it true that despite pensioners being told that no one would be worse off under the new rules, that pensioners who happen to be seasonal workers will, in fact, be worse off if they receive a lump sum payment at the end of their engagement? This group includes the many pensioners who help to supervise Higher School Certificate and university exams each year. If a pensioner couple get 12 or 14 days work, they may end up with a joint earnings that total nearly \$3,000.

Under the old rules, they were permitted to earn that one-off payment without penalty. Yet a Centrelink supervisor advised that under the new rules, which purport "to provide an incentive for senior workers to be in the workforce", pensioners who receive such a large, albeit one-off, lump sum payment will have their next fortnightly joint pension payment cancelled.

According to the information provided, casual workers, including pensioners who help to conduct exams, who often have to wait a month or six weeks to be paid, must report their anticipated earnings at the end of the fortnight in which they earned that money. This is irrespective of the fact that pensioners may have their pensions cancelled for at least a fortnight because of those anticipated earnings. So unless they have savings, they will find themselves with nothing to live on for several weeks. Could you please confirm if this is the case and if so how these Pensioners are better off?

MEDICARE AUSTRALIA

HS60 (a–b) - Medicare- (Bernardi)

- a) An answer from a question on notice from last Estimates (HS16) revealed that 32 cases had been referred to the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions from July 2008 to 31 May 2009. What was the total for the 2008–09 financial year?
- b) If less than the previous financial year, why were less cases referred to the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions?

HS61 - Medicare- (Bernardi)

During the last Estimates, Ms Godwin stated that *"It is in that area of incorrect claiming, of course, where we have what we would regard as gaps in our ability to make real inroads."* (F&PA Estimates Hansard, 28.5.09, p.151) Have any "inroads" been made into incorrect claiming in the months since the last Estimates?

HS62 - Medicare- (Bernardi)

According to an answer to a question on notice from last Estimates (HS15), 12 providers had been referred to the Medicare Participation Review Committee (as at 28 May 2009). Have any more been referred since then?

HS63 (a–b) - Medicare- (Bernardi)

- a) How do Medicare officers determine if an invoice is legitimate?
- b) Has Medicare ever considered having a barcode or marking placed on providers' invoices to limit the incidences of fraud?

HS64 - Medicare- (Bernardi)

At the last Estimates Senator Ludwig stated that Medicare aimed to recover about \$145 million in four years. (F&PA Estimates Hansard, 28.5.09, pp.150–1) What has been the total amount recovered for the 2008–09 financial year?

HS65 (a–d) - Medicare- (Bernardi)

- a) The paper on the National Compliance Program states that Medicare conducts compliance audits of providers. (p.10) How many compliance audits were conducted in 2008–09?
- b) How many have been conducted so far in this financial year, 2009–10?
- c) Of those audits made, how many identified incorrect payments being made?
- d) Does Medicare have an annual target for the number of compliance audits that it needs to complete?

HS66 (a–c)- Medicare- (Bernardi)

- a) Medicare also conducts Payment accuracy reviews (PARs) of providers and patients to measure the accuracy of payments made by Medicare. How many PARs were conducted in 2008–09?
- b) How many have been conducted so far in 2009–10?
- c) Of the PARs made, how many incidences of inaccurate payments have been exposed?

HS67 (a–b)- Medicare- (Bernardi)

- a) According to the Compliance Program paper, eLearning “aims to increase participation in online learning and support services by new providers.” (p.13) It said that a pilot program of ‘teletutorials’ will be trialled with new providers from July 2009. Has this pilot program begun?
- b) How have these teletutorials progressed?

HS68 (a–b)- Medicare- (Bernardi)

- a) The Compliance Program paper also states that Medicare is “increasing promotion of introductory eLearning to all new providers from July 2009”. (p.13) What does this ‘increasing promotion’ involve?
- b) Are all new providers being provided with information on eLearning?

HS69- Medicare- (Bernardi)

Medicare has stated, in respect to the Teen Dental Plan, that “in 2009–10 we will undertake audit activity on the providers with the highest levels of billing.” (National Compliance Program paper, p.18) Have the audits on the Teen Dental Plan taken place? If so, what are the details and results of the audits? If not, when are these audits expected to take place?

HS70 (a–d)- Medicare- (Adams)

- a) How many requests for PBS authorities did Medicare Australia receive in 2008–09?
- b) How many requests did Medicare Australia reject?
- c) What were the reasons for those rejections?
- d) How much does it cost to administer the PBS authority system?

Topic: Medicare Easy Claim

HS71 (a-f) – Medicare- (Scullion)

Medicare Easy Claim is a program where patients can claim their Medicare rebate through the doctors rooms. The take up rate has been slow with most patients still claiming their rebate through a Medicare office or through the mail.

- a) What is the break down of Medicare claims by method? (ie Easy Claim, Medicare office, telephone, mail.)
- b) What is the total expense to date of for the Medicare Easy Claim – Increasing Take up program?
- c) What was the cost of the promotion campaign for Medicare Easy claim where every Medicare card holder was sent information?
- d) What other expenses such as print and electronic advertising and promotional material have been incurred on promoting Medicare Easy Claim?
- e) What has been the increase in Medicare Easy Claim over the past 12 months?
- f) What is the increase or decrease in the number of Medicare claims processed through Medicare offices?

***(Transferred to DHA)* HS72 – Medicare- (Adams)**

The Productivity Commission Review of Regulatory Burdens on Business has yet again recommended that the Government introduce a single provider number under Medicare for each medical practitioner rather than the current arrangements where practitioners are required to have a different provider number for each location that they practice in. What progress has the Department made in implementing this recommendation?

HS91 – Medicare – (Adams) *(Transferred from DHA)*

How many requests for authority did Medicare Australia receive and reject each year for the past 5 years?

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES 2009–10 —October 2009

Questions on Notice (QON) index— Human Services Portfolio

| QON No. | Department / agency | Senator | Hansard Reference | Question |
|---------------|---------------------|----------|-------------------------------------|---|
| HS73 (a–c) | DHS | Scullion | Hansard 20/10/09 Page 116 | <p>Senator SCULLION—[a] Can you recall, Minister, the election commitments in the area of Human Services in 2007?</p> <p>Senator Ludwig—It would be testing me to recall them all. Do you mean in relation to Human Services or the portfolio?</p> <p>Senator SCULLION—Human Services.</p> <p>Senator Ludwig—I might have to ask the department if they have a list. Certainly I can take it on notice to provide it to you.</p> <p>Senator LUDWIG— ...[b] When you provide that list, could you see if it has any indications of implementation dates and see where we are up to with those election commitments. Perhaps the department can provide some advice on that now.</p> <p>[...]</p> <p>Senator SCULLION—Would you be able to take that on notice?</p> <p>Mr Pratt—Yes.</p> <p>Senator SCULLION—[c] When you are taking that on notice, I wonder if you could deal not only with the implementation dates but with how the outcomes are going with regard to the implementation date and the actual activity—whether or not we are meeting the implementation date.</p> <p>Mr Pratt—Certainly.</p> <p>[...]</p> <p>Senator SCULLION—If you could provide the entire list within the Human Services portfolio and the appended question, Mr Pratt, that would be very useful.</p> <p>Mr Pratt—Yes.</p> |
| HS74 | DHS | Scullion | Hansard 20/10/09 Page 116 | <p>Senator SCULLION—Do you prepare electoral reports? For example, do you say how many Centrelink offices are in Solomon or how many Medicare offices or staff there are et cetera? Is it perhaps electorate specific?</p> <p>Mr Pratt—I will just check.</p> <p>Ms Hartland—There has been some information of that ilk that has been provided through the Parliamentary Library but not on a regular basis in response to some specific request. We would have</p> |

| QON No. | Department / agency | Senator | Hansard Reference | Question |
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| | | | | to take the specifics of that question on notice. |
| HS75a | DHS | Scullion | Hansard 20/10/09 Page 117 | Senator SCULLION —Well, perhaps on notice—and thank you again for that comprehensive list [of consultancy services since November 2007]—you can indicate in each case why the department or agencies could not undertake that work themselves and perhaps explain those specific talents that were not inside the department and for which you had to go outside, as well as the rationale of the project and its intended use. Ms Hartland —Okay. |
| HS75b | DHS | Collins | Hansard 20/10/09 Page 117 | ACTING CHAIR —Just while you are on this point, there is a table on page 223 of the annual report which covers most of these but I am just a bit confused, as you were reading it to Senator Scullion, that there is a difference between a contract price and the price you have specified. Could you include an explanation for that as well? Ms Hartland —Yes, we can do that. |
| HS76 | DHS | Scullion | Hansard 20/10/09 Pages 117, 118 | Senator SCULLION —Moving on to advertising and marketing, educational—I am not really sure of the exact terminology we use for that—how much have you spent on advertising and marketing since 2007? Perhaps you could take that on notice. Ms Hartland —I have got it here, Senator. I was just looking for it. Senator SCULLION —Okay. Mr Pratt —While we are looking for the details, appendix 4 on page 220 of the annual report sets out the payments made on advertising and market research for 2008-09. Senator SCULLION —What I was particularly interested in was very similar to my previous question: to have a rationale for why that was done and the justification for the expenditure on each of those items. Mr Pratt —We will respond more fully, but the answer will be basically the same: it is an area where we do not have significant expertise, so we need to buy it in. |
| HS77 | DHS | Scullion | Hansard 20/10/09 Page 118 | Senator SCULLION —Thank you. How many staff are there in the Department of Human Services and each of its agencies? I am not all that interested in the number; I am more interested in the trends, although you can provide that on notice. Has the number increased or decreased? Ms Hartland —I do not have the figures across years to make that comparison. I have got some total figures here before total staff headcount that I could provide to you, but I do not have the comparison across years. Senator SCULLION —If you could take that on notice that would be fine. Mr Pratt —Yes, we will take it on notice. |

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| HS78 | DHS | Scullion | Hansard 20/10/09 Page 119 | Senator SCULLION —Would you be able to just provide me with the three [departmental liaison officer] roles and which ones have changed or how many times they have changed. That would be useful. Mr Pratt —Yes. |
| HS79 | DHS | Scullion | Hansard 20/10/09 Page 119 | Senator SCULLION —Are you able to measure the rate of staff turnover in DHS and each of its agencies? Mr Pratt —Yes. Senator SCULLION —Do you think the rate is higher or lower within the executive? Mr Pratt —Within the executive? Senator SCULLION —I am asking about the rate of staff turnover in DHS and each of its agencies. So, in comparison with the agencies, the agencies have a staff turnover and DHS itself has a staff turnover. Mr Pratt —Correct. Senator SCULLION —I was sort of referring to DHS as the executive. Mr Pratt —I understand. Yes, we can give you the turnover rate for DHS. Ms Hartland —The total turnover rate on average for the agencies is around 12 per cent. It does vary quite a lot, but we will get you the individual information. |
| HS80 | DHS | Scullion | Hansard 20/10/09 Page 119 | Senator SCULLION —How many staff does DHS and its agencies have seconded from other areas of government to come into DHS? Ms Hartland —We will have to take that on notice. [...] Senator SCULLION —When you provide that detail, I wonder if you could provide me a list of where the staff come from and what level they are at—and, when they come over to DHS, whether or not, if they are at a higher level, they retain their pay level in DHS or fit in some other way. I am happy for you to take that on notice. |
| HS81 | DHS | Scullion | Hansard 20/10/09 Page 120 | Senator SCULLION —You might need to take this on notice. If it is clearly over your targeted area, you have a plan to reduce [unplanned leave rates]. I would like to have a look at those detailed plans. Is there any possibility of quantifying how those changes have reduced costs and what impact those plans have actually had on absenteeism? Mr Pratt —I propose to give you, on notice, detail of the strategies each of the agencies is using to address their unplanned absences. If it would be helpful, I will also give you the trend figures over |

| QON No. | Department / agency | Senator | Hansard Reference | Question |
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| | | | | recent years. That will be able to show whether or not it is trending down or up. |
| HS82 | DHS | Scullion | Hansard 20/10/09 Page 120 | Senator SCULLION —I do not know whether it is part of the [unplanned leave] plan, but the plan may say that you do team-building activities. If so, could you provide the details of who provided those activities and how they were implemented? Mr Pratt —Yes, Senator. |
| HS83 | DHS | Scullion | Hansard 20/10/09 Page 122 | Senator SCULLION —In response to a question on notice from the last time we had a chat, which was on 28 May, you provided information...[about] overall satisfaction with CSA and the satisfaction with service during the call. Would you be able to provide us with the current satisfaction rates? The last ones you provided were in May this year, and the overall satisfaction with CSA was 72 per cent and the satisfaction with service during the call—which was actually measured for five months—was 84 per cent. Could I have an update on those two figures monthly between May and now? Perhaps you can provide that on notice... Ms Godwin —We have some information here but I might need to take it on notice to update all of the aspects of that question... |
| HS84 (a–b) | DHS | Scullion | Hansard 20/10/09 Page 125 | Senator SCULLION —A satisfaction target of 70 per cent; who set that? Mr Pratt, how did you come up with 70 per cent? Be frank; it sounds like a number under which we can all survive. [a] How did you come up with that as a target? Mr Pratt —We are going to have to come back to you on exactly how that was set... Senator SCULLION —[b] I appreciate that, and I have no problem with that. To be frank, I just think that is a number. Basically you are saying that you are happy with almost one in three customers walking out the door not too happy. So perhaps you can look at a rationale for why you thought that was a reasonable number as part of that answer. I am happy for you to take that on notice... |
| HS85 | Centrelink | Boyce | Hansard 20/10/09 Page 128 | Senator BOYCE —What was the cost of that mail out [regarding the pension changes]? Mr Cowan —I am afraid I do not have that information at the moment. I will have to take that question on notice. Senator BOYCE —You could provide that on notice, though? Mr Cowan —Yes. |
| HS86 | Centrelink | Boyce | Hansard 20/10/09 Page 130 | Senator BOYCE —...I would particularly like to find out if distinctions between different classes of disability support pensioners have ever been made in the past, how many people are affected and what effect there has been. |
| HS87 | Centrelink | Boyce | Hansard | Senator BOYCE —Are you able to give me the figure for what the change [in how many pensioners |

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| | | | 20/10/09 Page 130 | are required to report their fortnightly income to Centrelink] is? For example, is it up to 56,000 from something? Mr Cowan —I will have to take that on notice. |
| HS88 | Centrelink | Boyce | Hansard 20/10/09 Page 132 | Mr Cowan —...I cannot give you a definitive answer as to how long someone would have to be earning \$2,274 a fortnight before their pension were cancelled and they had to reapply. Can I take that question on notice? Senator BOYCE —Okay... |
| HS89 | Centrelink | Ludlam | Hansard 20/10/09 Page 134 | Senator LUDLAM —...Maybe you could just give us a broad wrap-up...of other ways in which Centrelink is being reformed under the National Affordable Housing Agreement, if there is anything I have missed apart from those things that I have pointed out there. Mr Tidswell —I think we will have to take that on notice. I am not completely sure what else we might be doing. |
| HS90 | DHS | Scullion | Hansard 20/10/09 Page 135 | Senator SCULLION —Would you be able to tell me, perhaps on notice, how many people have actually used the [In Touch] program over that period of time [since 1998]. Ms Hogg —Yes, we can go back that far. I can tell you that in the last two years we have had 7,000 applications to use it. |