BUDGET ESTIMATES 2009–10 (May 2009). Questions on Notice index—Human Services Portfolio

Answers to QON taken during the Budget Estimates hearings, or written QON submitted thereafter, are due on 10 July 2009.

QON No.	Department / agency	Senator	Hansard Reference	Question	Comments/date answer provided
HS1	DHS	SCULLION	28/5/09 p57	On breakdown of staffing numbers: Senator Ludwig—If we took what we had got to and tried to break it down as to where they are now, that might be able to provide a point in time Bear in mind that we will put some caveats round those that are whole of portfolio but try at least to nominate those that are in that category. That might provide at least the picture for now. Would that be what you are seeking to achieve? Senator SCULLION—That would appear to be the best I am able to achieve, given the changes in the way that we allocate things. As I said, from my perspective, the principle is that there will be people who are the externals—the people who run the department, if you like; its machinery—but, whilst there will be some fluctuations in that machinery, the sort of fluctuations we are looking at here are really a function of demand. I know some machinery changes will have to take place. If you employ 410 fewer people it will be 410 fewer people to pay, and there will be some impact on those things. But I think it would be useful, if you have had a substantive change, to have some measurements and benchmarks that are not a single number. I think it would be useful to be able to explore what those numbers are and what they mean. Ms Williams—We cannot do that for you right now. We could see what we could come back with.	07/10/09
HS2	DHS	SCULLION	28/5/09 p58-59	Mrs Carmody—The staffing levels in CRS have depended on what demand flows through to us from a range of contracts Senator SCULLION—Do you do any modelling to predict how many staff you are going to need, given these variations?	10/7/09

Updated: 14/10/09

				Mrs Carmody—We do Senator SCULLION—Probably just the last year would be sufficient for us to understand the process. Can you provide that modelling to us? Mrs Carmody—The modelling is really an internal document. It contains a lot of commercial-in confidence information. Senator Ludwig—Because CRS Australia is in the contestable market, 20 per cent of it is in the commercial field. They bid for work. What that means is that you are asking for what would be described as commercial-in-confidence information that would be valuable for competitors in the marketplace who bid against CRS Australia. Therefore, public interest immunity could be invoked not to provide that modelling	
				Senator SCULLION—I accept that. What I was looking for, and you may be able to provide it notice, is an understanding of what sort of process you would use. If you think there are aspects that would impact on your commercial-inconfidence, I am happy for you not to provide that. I would appreciate if you could at least examine the circumstances where you may be able to provide us some sort of a framework that did not impact on those things. Senator Ludwig—We can take that on notice and see what we can find.	
HS3a	CSA	SCULLION	28/5/09 p65	Ms Cooke—We do it on a number of levels. On one of the levels, we ask the customers, immediately after the call, 'How satisfied were you with the service that was provided to you during that call?' In April this year, about 83 per cent of people were satisfied with the service that was provided by the customer service officer. That is the direct feedback on the service they were provided. Senator SCULLION—You will be able to table this later, but what percentage of people were actually asked the questions?	10/7/09
HS3b	CSA	SCULLION	28/5/09 p65	Senator SCULLION —Would you be able to provide the results just for the last year?	10/7/09
HS4	CSA	SCULLION	28/5/08 p67-68	Senator SCULLION—Would you be able to give me, on notice, any sort of breakdown within areas? Do you have certain areas within CSA? I understand what you said about people being flexible enough in and outside of jobs. Someone might be, say, a phone operator but they are involved in a range of things— counselling and the compliance end of things; I acknowledge that. Do you have categories? I am just trying to set some benchmarks so we can see where the work is needed in the future. Do you have categories of employment—where these extra staff would be going? Would you be able to provide that on notice? I do appreciate that within the one department that may be a bit difficult. Given that we have had some changes about the reporting, I would like to go back to having some benchmarks that make it easy for everyone to make some	

				comparisons and to understand some of the trends. Over that period of time we had a big injection of staff. If you can provide for me a breakdown in a general—it might only be two or three areas; I am not sure. I know how difficult that can sometimes be. I have no real understanding myself of areas within your department. I would like an understanding of what the sorts of staffing levels would be in one department next to another. I am not sure whether you can break that down. If there is a natural breakdown—how people would see themselves operating—then I would appreciate getting information on that. Ms Williams—We will see what we can do and get back to you.	
HS5	CSA	BERNARDI	28/5/09 p73-74	Senator BERNARDI—Can I raise the issue of the optical surveillance trial. I will address this question toyou, Ms Williams. The trial has been going since 1 July 2008 and I understand it was expected to go for 12 months How many people are involved in this part of the agency's work? Ms Cooke—I am not absolutely sure of the number; I can take that on notice.	27/7/09
HS6	CSA	BERNARDI	28/5/09 p74	Senator BERNARDI—Expected to be. The information that I have is that it was announced that it was to start on 1 July 2008 and was expected to go for 12 months. Has a decision then been reached that this will continue past 1 July 2009? Ms Cooke—I would have to take that on notice Ms Williams—I wonder, Senator Bernardi, if we could get back to you with the exact details on this. We seem to have slightly different views on exactly when the pilot was and exactly when the trial was. I have got to come back to you with actual facts. Senator BERNARDI—Ms Williams, you and I have different views or there are different views across the agency? Ms Williams—No; I mean there are different views about exactly when the pilot was and exactly when the trial was and when it finishes. If we could come back to you with details and how many cases.	10/7/09
HS7	CSA	BERNARDI	28/5/09 p75-77	Senator BERNARDI— I would like further information about it. I would like to know how many people are involved in it and what the costs are of running the pilot and the trial Ms Cooke—I can take on notice the question you asked before, about the full details of what it costs and the amounts we have collected; I am happy to provide the answer to that.	10/7/09

				Senator BERNARDI—I understand that and I appreciate you clarifying it. My question was: is the administration really expected to result in a transfer of an equal quantum of money to receiving parents? But you can take that notice; that will come into your budgetary analysis.	
HS8	CSA	BERNARDI	28/5/09 p78	Senator BERNARDI—That is good. I have a couple more questions. I would like to discuss departure prohibition orders. How many DPOs have been handed out since January 2009, which are the last figures that I have? Ms Cooke—I will check. I do not think I have the numbers here. Ms Williams—We will take that on notice, Senator. Ms Cooke—I can give you some figures. From 1 July 2006 to 30 April 2009 we have issued 2,175 departure prohibition orders. Senator BERNARDI—You do not have any for the last six months? Ms Cooke—I can take that on notice to break it down.	27/7/09
HS9	CSA	BERNARDI	28/5/09 p80	Ms Cooke—We do. They relate to arrangements with particular countries, not all countries. That really goes to our international arrangements. Where we can, if we have the arrangement with the reciprocal jurisdiction, we will attempt to have that country collect the child support debt on our behalf. Senator BERNARDI—With how many countries do we have that arrangement? You might just table that list of countries. Senator BERNARDI—Perhaps you could table that at some point for me.	Updated attachment provided 10/09/09
HS10	Centrelink	BERNARDI	28/5/09 p83-84	Senator BERNARDI—Mr Pratt, I will address my question to you. The quote I have in front of me says: THOUSANDS of Australian pensioners who also get a British pension will be forced to repay money to Centrelink after an investigation found they were getting more money than they were entitled to. And then I have information that 175,000 Australian pensioners also get a British pension. Using UK data, it was found that 14,000 pensioners were being overpaid because they had underdeclared their income from the UK. Has the department managed to reclaim money from those 14,000 pensioners? Mr Pratt—I am advised that we will have to take that on notice, Senator, but we may be able to answer you over the course of the session.	10/7/09
HS11	Centrelink	SCULLION	28/5/09 p86-87	Senator SCULLION—I wonder if you would provide on notice your analysis of, perhaps, the last four quarters. You obviously are going to do this modelling every quarter and I know you work with others on it, but would you provide something so we know what the model looks like and what sort of assumptions you have made—all those sorts of inputs. Why don't we make it over the last couple of quarters and if we require something more we will look at that later on. Mr Pratt—We will take that on notice and give you a breakdown of what goes	

HS12	Centrelink	SCULLION	28/5/09 p91	into the Centrelink funding model. Senator SCULLION—And I would be interested to know how you measure some of those changes. Clearly, none of this is retrospective; it is all predictive modelling and you have to rely on other departments, but I am interested in whatever is in your area of responsibility. Would that be possible? Mr Pratt—To some extent, yes. Senator SCULLION—Indeed. Are you able to tell me how many calls were	14/10/09
11312	Centremik	SCOLLION	20/3/07 μ71	unanswered in that same period? Mr Jones—I have given you last year's figure already. Mr Pratt—Would it help, Senator, if we took this on notice? Senator SCULLION—Perhaps you can get back to me; that would be fine.	14/10/07
HS13	Centrelink	SCULLION	28/5/09 p96	Senator SCULLION—Thanks for that. Rather than me giving an example of a change that would require an IT change in the department, if you could find one and provide me an answer on notice, in terms of what that actually costs. From all the processes that the minister described, the edict comes down, you will then go and deliver it—what does that actually cost? Perhaps you could take that on notice.	
HS14a	Medicare	SCULLION	28/5/09 p102	Senator SCULLION—On page 105 there is a statement which says that supplier costs will rise by \$44 million. Would you be to advise us what those supplier costs are? Ms Godwin—Is this under the 'Expenses' heading? I am not sure I can attest to every one of them. I might ask whether the CFO can assist. Senator SCULLION—If you can take that on notice.	27/7/09
HS14b	Medicare	SCULLION	28/5/09 p103	Senator SCULLION—It just seems that there is an awful lot more tasking that has come to Medicare. Some of it appears to be funded, some of it appears to be new work which perhaps you have not done before. Notwithstanding your initial comments that there are probably not that many spare shirts but there will be some, how will you deal with the fact that there will be fewer staff—I think you will acknowledge that—and effectively some more work, notwithstanding the funded policies? Ms Godwin—I probably need to clarify: I cannot speculate at this point whether there will be fewer staff across the year. There may be but there may not be. Certainly, during 2008-09 our staffing predictions have moved around a lot and we have ended up at the end of the year at a higher number than was predicted at this time last year. I do not know whether there will be fewer at all. I do believe the additional work that is coming in is appropriately costed and funded and that, across the organisation, there is an appropriate balance between new work coming in and resourcing and other areas where workload is reducing, so that that sort of balances across the organisation.	27/7/09

				Senator SCULLION—It will be interesting to see perhaps at the next set of estimates how we are going with that, and I will come back to that. So perhaps you can take it on notice. I know it is difficult as we go along, but it is very difficult for us to look at a number that says, 'You will be 138 less'—and that is what it says—and to have an appreciation of the amount of work you have and this apparent shortfall in staff, but we will keep a watching eye on it.	
HS15	Medicare	BERNARDI	28/5/09 p105	Mr Bridge—If I could go back to the suspension issue and clarify one point. Doctors can be suspended after there has been a criminal finding against them. Senator BERNARDI—By Medicare or the AMA? Mr Bridge—No, a separate body altogether. It is a party called the Medicare Participation Review Committee, which is a committee of doctors and a lawyer. We refer them there. They have the power to suspend. Senator BERNARDI—How many doctors have been suspended through that body? Mr Bridge—I do not have the figure with me? Senator BERNARDI—Would you be able to find it for me? I would be interested in that.	10/7/09
HS16	Medicare	BERNARDI	28/5/09 p105	Senator BERNARDI—The media release by the minister of 4 September 2008 also said that 74 individuals had been referred to the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions. I am interested in how many of those people were actually taken to court and/or have been convicted or have results still pending. I would like to know how many individuals have been referred so far in 2008-09 and I would like you to compare that over the last, say, five years. Can you take all that on notice and provide it to me? Mr Bridge—Yes.	10/7/09
HS17	Australian Hearing	BERNARDI	28/5/09 p106	Senator BERNARDI—Welcome. At the time of printing your 2008 annual report, 100,000 calls had been made to the Telscreen telephone hearing service. Can you give us an update on how many have been made since then? Mr Grundy—We do not have that number on us at this time. We would like to take that on notice.	10/7/09
HS18	Australian Hearing	BERNARDI	28/5/09 p106	Senator BERNARDI—Okay. Can you tell me about the costs associated with running that service? Mr Grundy—I do not have the exact costs for that service but the Telscreen is a 1800 service which is free to the clients. The cost is borne by Australian Hearing from the revenues obtained by our commercial operation. I do not have the exact figures available at this time. I can come back to you and take on notice the actual costs.	10/7/09
HS19	Australian	BERNARDI	28/5/09 p106	Senator BERNARDI—Mr Grundy, I thought you would be so enthused about	10/7/09

	Hearing			coming to estimates you would have all this data ready. Never mind. Let us talk about your clients. In your annual report your clients have been growing quite solidly, frankly: from 2004 you had 335,000 clients, adults and children, up to 383,000. How many do you have this year? Mr Grundy—I will check the annual report. I do not have the current figure.	
HS20	Australian Hearing	BERNARDI	28/5/09 p107	Senator BERNARDI— You conducted a survey in the 2007-08 financial year. It was in your annual report, a thousand people. How much did that survey cost? Mr Grundy—I do not have that figure available. I would like to take that on notice.	10/7/09
HS21	Australian Hearing	BERNARDI	28/5/09 p107	Senator BERNARDI—If you do not mind. And I am interested in whether you received any additional funding to conduct that survey. Mr Grundy—I would have to take that on notice as well.	10/7/09
HS22	Australian Hearing	SCULLION	28/5/09 p108	Senator SCULLION—That is interesting. I read the other day that in both New Zealand and the United Kingdom they have introduced suppressors on rifles as a work health issue. It has something to do with the particular frequency. The suppressor looks like a silencer but it is not. It still makes a noise but it does not damage your hearing. I am not sure if you are aware that a laboratory in the United Kingdom was used to bring those issues to bear. Obviously, technology is a big part of keeping Australians up to the level. Is National Acoustic Laboratories involved in developing technology? Ms Dewberry—Under our legislation the National Acoustic Laboratories is limited to specific areas of research, predominantly to do with hearing assessment, hearing aid fitting and prescription procedures, rehabilitation programs and prevention. They concentrate their research in the prevention area, and less on the technology, I would think, other than looking at hearing aid features—that is certainly part of what they do research. I am not aware of any research in technology relating to prevention. I am happy to take that on notice.	10/7/09
HS23a	Medicare	RYAN	Written	See attached below	10/7/09
HS23b	Medicare	RYAN	Written	See attached below	10/7/09
HS23c	Medicare	RYAN	Written	See attached below	10/7/09
HS23d	Medicare	RYAN	Written	See attached below	10/7/09
HS23e	Medicare	RYAN	Written	See attached below	10/7/09
HS23f	Medicare	RYAN	Written	See attached below	10/7/09
HS23g	Medicare	RYAN	Written	See attached below	10/7/09
HS23h	Medicare	RYAN	Written	See attached below	10/7/09
HS23i	Medicare	RYAN	Written	See attached below	10/7/09

HS23j	Medicare	RYAN	Written	See attached below	10/7/09
HS24a	Centrelink	SCULLION	Written	See attached below	
HS24b	Centrelink	SCULLION	Written	See attached below	
HS24c	Centrelink	SCULLION	Written	See attached below	
HS24d	Centrelink	SCULLION	Written	See attached below	
HS24e	Centrelink	SCULLION	Written	See attached below	
HS24f	Centrelink	SCULLION	Written	See attached below	
HS24g	Centrelink	SCULLION	Written	See attached below	
HS25	DHS	RYAN	Transfer from DoHA	How many calls has the Prescription Shopping Information Service (formerly the Doctor Shopping Hotline) received each year for the past two years in: a) Victoria? b) New South Wales? c) Queensland? d) South Australia? e) Western Australia? f) Tasmania? g) ACT? h) NT?	10/7/09
HS26	DHS	RYAN	Transfer from DoHA	a) Upon report to the Prescription Shopping Information Service, how are patients and doctors investigated?b) What are the implications for doctors and patients reported?	10/7/09
HS27	DHS	RYAN	Transfer from DoHA	a) Has the Department undertaken or commissioned any research on the cost associated with doctor/prescription shopping to the taxpayer in terms of Medicare or PBS costs?b) If so, what is the cost?c) If not, why has no such research been undertaken?	10/7/09

Written Questions on Notice

HS23(a-j) (RYAN)-Medicare

- a) Which cosmetic/plastic surgery procedures can be claimed under the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) and under what circumstances?
- b) How many such procedures have been performed and what is their total cost?
- c) What is the cost to the MBS of each procedure?
- d) Has the Department received any evidence or reports that Medicare rebates have been claimed for such procedures contrary to these restrictions?
 - a. If so, what action has been taken?
- e) How many cosmetic procedures are undertaken each year in Australia and in:
 - a. Victoria
 - b. New South Wales
 - c. Queensland
 - d. South Australia
 - e. Western Australia
 - f. Tasmania
 - g. ACT
 - h. NT
- f) What are the ten most-performed cosmetic procedures?
- g) What regulatory controls exist over those performing cosmetic surgery?
 - b. What level of education, training and/or professional accreditation is required for those performing cosmetic surgery?
 - c. What, if any, level of ongoing training is required to continue to practice in this field?
 - d. How are individual practitioners and clinics registered?
- h) How does this regulatory regime compare to general practitioners and to members of the College of Surgeons and College of Physicians?
- i) Is safety data collected regarding cosmetic surgery procedures?
- j) How many complaints have been received per year over the last two years, against cosmetic surgeons in:
 - a. Victoria
 - b. New South Wales
 - c. Queensland
 - d. South Australia
 - e. Western Australia
 - f. Tasmania
 - g. ACT
 - h. NT

HS24(a-g) (SCULLION)-Centrelink

- a) In relation to income support payment eligibility, how does Centrelink treat farmlands transferred to a younger generation under a succession plan?
- b) Has the SSAT ever ruled farm succession as an exempt asset for income support application purposes?
- c) How many income support recipients have had their payments stopped as a result of transferring their farm under succession planning arrangements?
- d) How many income support payment applications have been rejected by Centrelink as a result of farm land being transferred under succession planning arrangements?

- e) How many affected parties have appealed Centrelink's decision?
- f) How many appeals have found against Centrelink?
- g) Has the SSAT ever found Centrelink's policy relating to the treatment of farm assets under a succession plan to be a misinterpretation of the Law?