

Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs

ADDITIONAL BUDGET ESTIMATES – 16 FEBRUARY 2012 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Human Services Portfolio

Topic: Family Assistance Office

Question reference number: HSW 75

Senator: Birmingham

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 29 March 2012

Number of pages: 2

Question:

- a) Since 1 July 2011, how many calls were placed to the Family Assistance phone line?
- b) Since 1 July 2011, what is the average wait time when people call the Family Assistance office phone line
- c) How frequently does the Family Assistance phone number give an engaged signal? How many phone lines are staffed between the hours 8am – 8pm Monday to Friday?
- d) What percentage of Centrelink offices deal with Family Assistance questions directly as opposed to providing a phone on the wall and the Family Assistance number?
- e) Since 1 July 2011, what is the average processing time for a new Childcare Benefit application (Note: processing time being the time between the lodging of an application and notification to the applicant).

Answer:

- a) Since 1 July 2011, there have been 6,760,493 calls placed to the Families Assistance line (now known as the Families and Parents line). This figure is at 26 February 2012.
- b) As at 26 February 2012, the average wait time when people call the Families and Parents line is 12 minutes and 47 seconds.
- c) The Families and Parents line may give an engaged signal during peak demand periods of the day where infrastructure limits on the number of callers entering the queue are activated. It is difficult to provide specific details in relation to the frequency as the peak demand period can change.
On average, approximately 1,400 staff are skilled to handle calls on the Families and Parents line.

- d) All of the department's Service Centres are able to deal with simple enquiries on Family Assistance matters. Where more complex enquiries are encountered, Service Centre staff can make immediate contact with specialist families and parents processing staff to provide detailed information directly to the customer.
- e) For all Child Care Benefit (CCB) claims granted in the period 1 July 2011 to 24 February 2012, the average days to grant was:
- Child Care Benefit Approved Care: these are taken over the phone and are granted, on average, the day they are received.
 - Child Care Benefit Registered: These are granted on average on day 14. These cases require a claim to be lodged and require verification and documentation to be provided by the customer.