

**SENATE COMMUNITY AFFAIRS LEGISLATION COMMITTEE  
SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES – 25 OCTOBER 2017  
QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**

HS No.	Broad topic	Senator	Question
1	Income Management call lines	Siewert	<p>Senator SIEWERT: Are the Income Management calls separate to that or are they a subset of the 10 million? Mr Jackson: Income Management is a subset of Other. You asked that question last time, so we do have that number for you, which is 2,406,511 answered calls.</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT: My understanding is that's two lines. There's the line that asks about how much people have in their account and then there used to be the line that asks about problems and things like that, or if they have anything to report. Does that cover both lines? Mr Jackson: We'd have to take that on notice. Hopefully we should be able to find out while we're here. <i>[page 105]</i></p>
2	Call wait times – Centrelink	Singh	<p>a) Senator SINGH: I'd also like to ask, while that person's coming to the table, how many calls took more than 30 minutes in that financial year. Mr Jackson: That one, we'd have to take on notice. Ms Leon: It is an average, so at least half the calls will have taken more or less than 30 minutes. Some of the calls will only have taken a couple of minutes and some of them will have taken longer.</p> <p>b) Senator SINGH: You can take that on notice, and how many calls took more than an hour. Mr Jackson: We can take that on notice. <i>[page 106]</i></p>
3	Age Pension applications	Singh	<p>Senator SINGH: What is the average processing time for a new applicant to receive the age pension? Ms Leon: Do you mean in 2016-17 or this year? Senator SINGH: This year. Mr Jackson: Bear with us one moment, Senator. ... Senator SINGH: ... I would like to know the average processing time currently, but, if you can, also provide it for the last financial year as well. Mr Jackson: The median days to process for age pension for last financial year was 36 days. We don't have it for this current year, unfortunately, but we can take that on notice. <i>[page 107]</i></p>
4	Cashless Debit Card	Siewert	<p>a) Senator SIEWERT: Can I just chase up a few things around the wait times. Does income management and BasicsCard include the cashless welfare card or do they fall somewhere else? Do they call Indue? Mr Jackson: We'll have to take that on notice and, again, try to get it while you're here.</p> <p>b) Senator SIEWERT: That would be appreciated. Could you take on notice the number of abandoned calls for the first part of this financial year, or do you have that easily accessible? Mr Jackson: Certainly. <i>[pages 108-109]</i></p>

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5	Online Compliance Initiative – debt notices	Siewert	<p>a) Senator SIEWERT: Can I go to the online compliance system. Could we have an update on the number of debt notices, again with a break down, if possible, with those for the financial year, and then those in this quarter, please? And if you had a nice table as well, that would be great.</p> <p>...</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT: Are you able to provide a table against the payment types? For example, how many are Newstart, how many are youth allowance, et cetera? Do you have that breakdown, or can you take it on notice?</p> <p>Mr McNamara: I can take that on notice. We can definitely get you that breakdown. <i>[page 109]</i></p> <p>b) Senator SIEWERT: It's only June that I don't think we'll have, in terms of when we did the inquiry.</p> <p>Mr McNamara: We can give you those. <i>[page 110]</i></p>
6	Online Compliance Initiative – debt appeals	Siewert	<p>Senator SIEWERT: What is the value of the 29,000 debts that were changed?</p> <p>Mr Storen: I would have to take that on notice. I'm assuming you're exploring the net value in the change of those debts?</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT: Yes.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Mr Storen: There are multiple reassessments in the 29,127, and our data is not—</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT: That granular.</p> <p>Mr Storen: as sophisticated to give us what you are after, but I think we can take the question on notice, and we'll do an order of magnitude—rather than to the dollar.</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT: If you could. <i>[page 111]</i></p>
7	Centrelink Call Centre Enhancement Project	Singh	<p>Senator SINGH: All right. Let's talk about these 1,100 people who have been engaged by a labour hire arrangement to undertake compliance work in the department.</p> <p>Ms Leon: I don't think it's 1,100; I think it's 1,000 that we have announced. We've consulted to the effect that we are going to engage the 1,000, but we haven't yet engaged them.</p> <p>Senator SINGH: Why is this additional work being staffed through a labour hire arrangement?</p> <p>Mr McNamara: Well, that's the decision the government's made.</p> <p>Senator SINGH: Was this a decision by the minister or by the department?</p> <p>...</p> <p>Senator Ryan: I'll take it on notice and provide any more information. Obviously I am only representing the minister here, so I can't speculate. <i>[page 119]</i></p>
8	Online Compliance Initiative – debt appeals	Siewert	<p>Senator SIEWERT: I wanted to go back to the robo-debt issue. Remember, I said I had a question I couldn't remember. It related to the number of appeals to the AAT. It relates to the number of appeals that you're aware of that have gone to the AAT and that are unresolved.</p> <p>...</p> <p>Ms Musolino: ... As a result of a secretary review, in 41 of those the decision remained unchanged. That includes withdrawals—and that can occur for a whole range of reasons—new evidence, et cetera. 48 decisions</p>

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			<p>were changed.</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT: In other words, they owed—</p> <p>Ms Musolino: The secretary's appeal got up.</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT: They either had a debt or the debt increased.</p> <p>Ms Musolino: Well, it may not be a debt matter.</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT: Okay—whatever the decision was.</p> <p>Ms Musolino: Yes.</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT: Can you take on notice how many of those related to—or do you have a table—of how many of those related to debts over those three years?</p> <p>...</p> <p>Mr McNamara: We can take that on notice. <i>[pages 120-121]</i></p>
9	Centrelink Call Centre Enhancement project – Serco	Siewert	<p>Senator SIEWERT: When was the decision actually made that Serco would be the provider?</p> <p>...</p> <p>Mr Jackson: It was 7 September.</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT: And it's starting, presumably, on Monday, 30 October.</p> <p>Mr Jackson: 30 October.</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT: What was the delay in making the announcement?</p> <p>Ms Leon: The date of announcement's a matter for the minister.</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT: Can I ask the minister to take that on notice, please.</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT: ... The decision was made on 7 September, yet there was a period of delay before the announcement.</p> <p>Senator Ryan: I'll take that on notice. <i>[pages 122-123]</i></p>
10	Centrepay	Pratt	<p>a) Senator PRATT: I have some questions about Centrepay. You've had figures from your stakeholder forum in 2017, at the beginning of this year. I am essentially looking for updated figures for that for January 2017 to June 2017 in terms of the average numbers of customers with Centrepay payments for those periods and the average numbers of deductions per month.</p> <p>...</p> <p>Senator PRATT: I'm advised that we are seeking numbers for January 2017 to June 2017. Are they not figures you've got with you?</p> <p>Mr Bennett: I've got financial year figures.</p> <p>Senator PRATT: Financial year only. Can you take that on notice?</p> <p>Mr Bennett: Yes. <i>[pages 123-124]</i></p> <p>b) Senator PRATT: And are you able to give us the average number of customers per month that related to consumer lease payments?</p> <p>Mr Bennett: I think I'm going to have to take that one on notice too. <i>[page 124]</i></p>

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11	Child Support Program	Pratt	<p>a) Senator PRATT: In relation to one of the recommendations, in August last year, the Australian government agreed in principle with a recommendation of <i>From conflict to cooperation</i> that the government should: ... amend current policy to ensure that the penalties applicable to the non-lodgement or late-lodgement of tax returns are enforced for all clients of the Child Support Program.</p> <p>What progress has been made on implementing that recommendation specifically?</p> <p>Ms Bridger: Would you be able to just let me know what recommendation that was? It will then just let me work through my paperwork a bit more quickly for you. Do you have the actual recommendation number?</p> <p>Senator PRATT: Recommendation 7. ....</p> <p>Senator PRATT: ... What work have you done to establish a penalty, the size of the penalty and to see its implementation?</p> <p>Ms Bridger: I do know we are working on that. With regard to the size and the timing, I would need to come back to you. I'll take that one on notice. [pages 124-125]</p> <p>b) Senator SIEWERT: Could you update us on the number of outstanding tax returns there are for child support.</p> <p>Senator PRATT: That was exactly my next question, Senator Siewert. Can you provide the current number of child support payers who have outstanding tax returns?</p> <p>Ms Bridger: I would have to take that one on notice. [page 125]</p> <p>c) Senator PRATT: If someone has an outstanding tax return, they could still be paying child support but through another mechanism?</p> <p>Ms Leon: They could still be paying privately, yes.</p> <p>Senator PRATT: But you don't know.</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT: You do know because you know how many private arrangements there are.</p> <p>Senator PRATT: If you could provide how many people have an outstanding tax return and how that nonpayment of tax returns equates to a nonpayment of child support?</p> <p>Ms Bridger: I don't have those figures with me. I am not quite sure if my service delivery colleagues do. If not, we would need to take that on notice. [page 125]</p> <p>d) Senator SIEWERT: It causes a lot of distress to the people who get caught up because the tax returns aren't going in. It is causing them problems—and I understand what you've just said that you can still do notices and assessments and things—and that's causing a lot of personal distress. But we don't have an idea, by the sounds of it, of how many people are not putting in their tax returns, so we don't have an overall quantum.</p> <p>Mr Volkers: I don't think we've got that number. It would be a report that we have to go and find.</p> <p>Senator PRATT: Whatever information you've got on that would be good. [page 126]</p> <p>e) Senator PRATT: How many child support payers has the lodgement enforcement program successfully had paying tax returns? I think you gave me the figure in terms of the value, but I don't know if that was the number of people.</p> <p>Mr Volkers: I might have to come back with that number, I think.</p>

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			<p>Senator PRATT: ... Of those child support payers who routinely do not lodge tax returns, you are not able to tell us how many are in arrears of child support?  Mr Volkers: I don't have that data with me, no. <i>[page 126]</i></p> <p>f) Senator PRATT: In terms of the child support payers where there was an enforced lodgement, how many of those payers had their liability increased after their return and how many decreased? Do you know that?  Mr Volkers: I don't have those numbers with me, but we will take that on notice. <i>[page 126]</i></p>
12	Parenting Payment and Newstart Allowance recipients	Pratt	<p>a) Senator PRATT: Okay. This is a different set of questions about disclosures regarding single parents ...  ...  Senator PRATT: ... So that means you will, essentially, verify pretty much all single parents on that payment. I'm assuming that number relates to the fact that some people will come in and some will come off that payment, and that that's the cohort that you're trying to assess—the 256,000. Is that right?  Ms Deininger: The measure also applies to single parents receiving Newstart. So it's not just those on parenting payments.  Senator PRATT: That's what I was trying to work out.  Ms Deininger: So that's kind of the missing the figure.  Senator PRATT: Okay. So it's the 256,000 plus the Newstart for parents. What proportion of single parents receiving payments does that 370,000 over four years affect?  Ms Deininger: I don't have the number of Newstart single recipients. I'm happy to take that on notice. <i>[page 127-128]</i></p> <p>b) Senator PRATT: Is it foreseeable that taking written referees will save on processing time, because you no longer have to contact referees personally?  Ms Deininger: I don't have any data with me to claim that.  Senator PRATT: But you have data available that answers those questions?  Ms Deininger: I'm happy to take that on notice. <i>[page 129]</i></p>
13	National Disability Insurance Agency	Siewert	<p>a) Senator SIEWERT: Are we ready to go to the costs?  Mr McHardie: We can do that, if you like. If we look at costs that have been expended thus far, as I said there were two primary contractors: it was Eva AI and FaceMe. We had a contract between May 2016 and April 2017, which was a single contract with Eva AI to provide services and software licensing relating to the development of a virtual assistant avatar for NDIA at a total cost of \$1.942 million, all gazetted.  Senator SIEWERT: All gazetted?  Mr McHardie: Yes—gazetted on AusTender. Then, between April 2017 to present, FaceMe—under the previous Eva AI standing offer agreement—provided the department access to FaceMe platform, incurring software development kits, application-performing program interfaces, the customer experience framework, global real-time video distribution service, orchestration applications, telephony integration, conversational insights, computer vision, speech, avatar services and platform support at a total cost of \$150,000. That was gazetted on AusTender as well.</p>

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			<p>Senator SIEWERT: \$150,000?  Mr McHardie: That's correct.  Senator SIEWERT: Other costs?  Mr McHardie: Soul Machines, under two separate agreements, have also provided the department with specific software licensing associated with the Nadia virtual assistant platform. It will total costs of \$337,679. They're the core figures that you were after from your discussions today.  Senator SIEWERT: Are there additional costs on top of those?  Mr McHardie: They were the avatar costs.  Senator SIEWERT: That's the whole cost, but what about the whole cost for the system? Do those costs cover the whole of the provisions to date of the Nadia project?  Mr Sterrenberg: I believe so. We can confirm that for you. <i>[page 131]</i></p> <p>b) Senator SIEWERT: What period of time are you undertaking the new contract for?  Mr Sterrenberg: We already use the vendor that we were considering quite extensively across DHS, and so this would be in addition to that already existing contract.  Senator SIEWERT: And you can't tell me how much that's going to be now?  Mr McHardie: We're using it across virtual assistants. The platform that we've now signed up to we're utilising not only for Nadia, moving forward, but we're also using it for our own DHS internal virtual assistants.  Senator SIEWERT: But you will be able to tell me how much—you can't at the moment, but you will be able to tell me. I take on board what you're saying, it's dual use. Next estimates?  Mr Sterrenberg: If we need to, we could try and get it to you before then.  Senator SIEWERT: Could you take it on notice, then? I presume once you've signed the contract you can tell us.  Mr Sterrenberg: Of course. <i>[page 131]</i></p> <p>c) Senator SIEWERT: So if you're bearing extra cost, do you get that back from the company that you thought could provide the services onshore?  Mr Sterrenberg: No.  Senator SIEWERT: You don't recoup that?  Mr Sterrenberg: Not directly in the way that you've asked the question, no.  Senator SIEWERT: You don't?  Mr Sterrenberg: No, we don't.  Senator SIEWERT: And you've included extra costs?  Mr Sterrenberg: Yes.  Senator SIEWERT: And you can't tell me that yet, for the tender reasons?  Mr Sterrenberg: We'll come back to you. <i>[pages 131-132]</i></p>
14	Family and Domestic Violence Strategy – Risk Assessment	Singh	<p>a) Senator SINGH: I want to move to the department's family and domestic violence strategy. One of the aims is that risk identification is included in all service delivery channels. I'm interested in what risk identification</p>

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			<p>approach is used by DHS. Does it use a recognised risk assessment framework?</p> <p>...</p> <p>Mr Thiveos: It's one that's actually been developed by—we used a panel some years ago, a panel of experts, to come up with this particular question, given the environment that we work in and the touch points that we have with the Australian community.</p> <p>Mr Thiveos: ... I can probably take a question on notice to get you more information about how the actual question was developed.</p> <p>Senator SINGH: All right, and whether or not it's a recognised risk assessment framework. <i>[page 132]</i></p> <p>b) Senator SINGH: ... Who was involved in developing this? You're saying there was this panel. Who exactly was involved in developing the risk identification approaches that are now used by DHS staff?</p> <p>Mr Thiveos: I'll have to take that question on notice. <i>[page 132]</i></p>
15	Family and Domestic Violence Strategy – Referrals	Pratt	<p>Mr Thiveos: In 2016-17 our social workers responded to over 65,000 referrals to assist and support recipients affected by family and domestic violence. That's compared to 61,000 in 2016-17. It's an increase of approximately seven per cent. Between 1 July 2016 and 30 June 2017, our social workers granted 18,000 crisis payments for family and domestic violence consisting of more than 15,000 assisting people to seek safe accommodation away from home, 1,900 assisting people to remain in their homes, and 900 assisting people who were removed from their homes due to their use of violence against family members.</p> <p>Senator SINGH: That's interesting, but what about data regarding how many are referred by DHS onto men's behaviour change programs?</p> <p>Mr Thiveos: I'll have to take that on notice. <i>[page 133]</i></p>
16	Departmental Social Workers	Singh	<p>a) Senator SINGH: Senator Pratt has some more questions on social workers. I want to ask how many social workers currently work out of Centrelink offices and where they are located?</p> <p>Ms Brill: I can take the locations on notice, but I can indicate that we have social workers in many of our service centres across our network. We also have a virtual telephony service that we provide with our social work services. We have approximately 630 full-time social workers working in the department.</p> <p>Senator SINGH: Currently?</p> <p>Ms Brill: That's correct. <i>[page 133]</i></p> <p>b) Senator SINGH: What about in the last financial year?</p> <p>Ms Brill: I'll have to take that on notice. The number is roughly fairly stable but I can absolutely confirm that through taking it on notice. <i>[page 133]</i></p> <p>c) Senator PRATT: How many Centrelink referrals to each of those 630 social workers has occurred in each financial year for the last four years? <i>[page 133]</i></p> <p>Ms Brill: Certainly. I will have to take that on notice.</p> <p>d) Senator PRATT: Are you able to give us any data over this year and previous years in terms of face-to-face client contact versus client contact that's over the phone? Are you seeking to push more of that contact through your workload manager that would see more of that take place over to telephone?</p>

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			<p>Ms Brill: I'll have to take the data on notice. <i>[page 134]</i></p> <p>e) Senator PRATT: Could the workload manager be seen to be shifting social workers away from their face-to-face work towards more of those calls?  Ms Brill: Not at all.  Senator PRATT: If you've got some data on that, that would be terrific.  Ms Brill: Happy to take that on notice. <i>[page 134]</i></p> <p>f) Senator PRATT: How many management and EL2/EL1 social workers are employed within the department? Is it intended to reduce those numbers, and, if so, by how many?  Ms Brill: I'll have to take that on notice. I apologise—I don't have the breakdown of the staffing with me tonight. <i>[page 134]</i></p> <p>g) Senator PRATT: Just a couple more—have referral lines for social workers been cut in-house and replaced with external referrals? Does this include referrals for drug and alcohol addiction, domestic violence and suicidal ideation? How are external referrals funded?  Ms Brill: My understanding is that there has not been any change to the way that we do our referrals from our social work service, but I will be sure to check that. <i>[page 135]</i></p>
17	Debts – deceased estates	Siewert	<p>Senator SIEWERT: Do you have any understanding of the time of the person passing away, in terms of dates, in relation to the debt notice issued?  Mr McNamara: No, Senator. Our system will record that someone has passed away, but we don't record—so when we are notified, that's when our system will record that someone has passed away, but that's all we record.  Senator SIEWERT: Is it possible for you to take on notice the date the debts were issued and the date you were informed that the person had passed away?  Ms Harfield: Sorry; the date the account payable notice was issued?  Senator SIEWERT: And the date the person passed away. You have enough data to know that 13 were issued to people who had already passed away.  Mr McNamara: We can do that, Senator; that's not a problem. <i>[page 136]</i></p>
18	Taskforce Integrity	Siewert	<p>a) Senator SIEWERT: How do you decide who on DSP gets it—and, in particular, I have a very strong focus on psychosocial disabilities.  Ms Quinn: I will need to take that on notice and we can provide you the details of the exclusion rules that we have for who we do send the correspondence to and who we don't send the correspondence to. <i>[page 137]</i></p> <p>b) Ms Quinn: We have taken on notice what the list of conditions are, and I think that's helpful to look at. And then, perhaps, after you've received that, you'll be able to say, 'I think you did'—or didn't—'comply with that.' But if you do want us to comment on particular cases then we probably can't do that in open session.  Senator SIEWERT: No, I don't want to. I do want to see the exemptions. Thank you for taking it on board. But I don't want to wait for the next estimates to ask: if this occurred, and they were supposed to be exempt, how did that happen and is it continuing?  Ms Quinn: I'll take that on notice. <i>[page 137]</i></p>

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			c) Senator SIEWERT: That would be appreciated. Could you also take on notice ... how many letters and texts have been sent through the task force, and what has been the response rate in terms of people updating their figures, if that data is collected. Mr McNamara: We'll take that on notice. <i>[page 137]</i>
19	Secretary's seasonal messages	Abetz	Please provide the messages (if any) sent to staff (on the most recent occasions) of Christmas/New Year, Easter and Ramadan by the Secretary of the Department at the relevant time.
20	Enterprise Agreement negotiations	Abetz	In the most recent Enterprise Agreement negotiations, was/were any side-agreement/s, protocol/s, arrangement/s, agreement/s entered into? If so, please provide a copy.
22	Payment processing	Siewert	a) I refer to media reports of recent Centrelink delays and the Department of Human Services confirming there were short delays in the making of payments. How many people were affected? i) What payment types were affected? ii) How long was the delay in the making of payments? iii) How was the delay communicated to the individuals affected? b) How often has such a delay occurred in the past?
23	Telephony services	Siewert	a) Do individuals contacting Centrelink by phone have the right to insist on only speaking to a Centrelink officer? b) Will Serco have a policy and procedure for handling this request?
24	Jobactive Deed - compliance	Siewert	a) Does Centrelink check every compliance failure for compliance with the requirements of the Jobactive Deed? b) If not, why not?
25	Clinical psychologists	Siewert	a) Is Centrelink only accepting medical examinations or letters from clinical psychologists to establish eligibility for payments such as the Disability Support Pension? b) If so, when did Centrelink cease accepting such documentation from non-clinical psychologists, and why the change in policy?
27	Medicare Provider Numbers - midwives	Siewert	I have had correspondence from several midwives who are seeking a Medicare provider number, some for the first time and some for a new practice address who have alerted me to the fact that the Department are requiring evidence of a collaborative arrangement to be in place prior to the midwives obtaining a Medicare provider number. This has not been required in the past so can you let me know why it is being required now?
28	Midwives – provision of evidence	Siewert	Midwives with Medicare provider numbers have been required to be able to demonstrate a collaborative arrangement when a service is provided and an invoice with an associated Medicare item is generated. For the last seven years this has been required to be evidenced in post claims audit – why has that changed?
29	Midwives – demonstration of collaborative arrangement	Siewert	There are 5 ways to demonstrate a collaborative arrangement – three of them can only occur when the midwives are actually in practice – so in other words have a Medicare provider number. These are a referral for care from a medical practitioner, a process of communication between a specified medical practitioner and a midwife around a specific client and where a midwife is credentialed and has admitting rights to a hospital. So how can a midwife demonstrate any of these three ways prior to having a Medicare provider number?

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30	Home Care Packages – auditing of providers	Griff	<p>During Supplementary Estimates, I put questions to the Health Department regarding Home Care Packages and what happens to unspent funds after a person dies or moves into residential aged care (related to a previous QoN SQ17-000923).</p> <p>The Health Department advised that the onus is on the provider to return the outstanding home care package funds within specified timeframes, and that the Department of Human Services “run the payments to the provider. They actually have the system of identifying that somebody has left and so therefore we cease payment”.</p> <p>Can the Department please outline what, if any, auditing is done to assess that aged care providers have:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>acted within designated timeframes to advise that a person has left care;</li> <li>returned all unspent funds owed the client’s estate and the Commonwealth, and done so within designated timeframes; and</li> <li>accurately accounted for all unspent funds (and that there has been no siphoning or inappropriate spending).</li> </ol>
31	Home Care Packages – breaches by providers	Griff	<p>What action does the Department take if a provider breaches their obligations – for instance, has not advised of a client’s death or departure, or has not returned unspent funds as required? Are any penalties imposed?</p>
32	Home Care Packages – late advice from providers	Griff	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have there been instances where a provider has been late in advising that a recipient has left their care, and the Commonwealth has continued paying them?</li> <li>If so, please outline how many instances in the past three financial years, the total amount delivered to providers, and the total amount subsequently recovered.</li> </ol>
34	Home Care Packages – billing compliance by providers	Griff	<p>What process does the Department use to confirm that billing ceased on the date of death? How does it ensure that providers are compliant in this area?</p>
35	Nursing Home Providers – cross-checking	Griff	<p>Similarly, does the department cross check records of nursing home providers to confirm that billing ceased on the date of transfer to an aged care facility?</p>
36	Home Care Packages – checking of claims	Griff	<p>How does the department ascertain that a provider is appropriately charging for legitimately provided services? Does the department ever spot-check or cross check with recipients or their families?</p>
37	Home Care Packages – recovery of incorrect payments	Griff	<p>Can you please provide a breakdown if the total number of funds returned in 2016-17 and the amount still outstanding, and how many consumers this relates to? What are the trends in recovery of the last 3 years?</p>
38	Community Aged Care Providers – service packages	Griff	<p>Under the Aged Care Act, community aged care providers are able to offer a lower level of package than the consumer has qualified for where a higher level of services is unavailable. However, I am told that the Medicare system is only able to handle the set level package in their system. For example, if a person has been allocated a Level 4 package but is actually receiving a Level 3 Package, Medicare would treat this as a Level 4 package in their system, leaving providers open to significant risk.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What, if any, action is being taken to rectify this?</li> <li>Does Medicare communicate with ACAT or providers to ensure Level changes are established in the assessment process? (which could become increasingly common in the remote context when providers are</li> </ol>

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			unable to access resources to provide a Level 4 package)?
39	Community Aged Care Providers – access to Medicare website	Griff	Providers are also concerned that the Medicare website times out too quickly. a) How long can a person stay signed into the website before being timed out? b) Can the Department extend this time?
40	Community Aged Care Providers – enquiries by email and telephone	Griff	I also note concerns about enquiries to the hotline and emails going unanswered and enquiries needing senior level input failing to be escalated. a) What is Medicare’s policy with relation to responding to and escalating enquiries? b) How is this monitored? c) What options are available for escalating complaints or enquiries?
41	Community Aged Care Providers – remote subsidy	Griff	I understand for many years clients have not automatically received the remote subsidy, with providers having to address clients individually in the Medicare portal. a) Does Medicare now automatically apply this subsidy? b) If not, given clients provide addresses when they register, could this subsidy be applied automatically?
42	Community Aged Care Providers - payments	Griff	I note in particular for non-profit remote providers, payment turn-around can undermine financial sustainability. I understand providers receive a percentage upfront payment then are paid again after lodging documentation. a) Has the Department considered paying the entirety of the client’s package to the nominated provider up front p.a.? b) If not, why not?
43	Community Aged Care Providers – payment reconciliation	Griff	I also note the reconciliation between client statements and payments from Medicare needs to be done manually by the aged care provider. I understand Medicare pays a monthly block of funds and the provider then needs to cross reference against the client’s Medicare record to determine funding allocated for that client. a) Can Medicare provide reconciliation statements each month to services? b) If not, why not?
44	Centrelink – missed calls	Watt	How many calls take longer than 1 hr to answer - broken down by payment type?
45	Age pension application processing times	Watt	a) How many new claims take longer than 26 weeks to process? b) What has been the longest wait for an applicant to receive their age pension?
46	Centrepay – consumer leases	Watt	a) What was the average number of customers per month that related to consumer lease payments for the 16/17 financial year? b) What was the average number of deductions per month that related to consumer lease payments for the 16/17 financial year? c) What was the total deductions related to consumer leases for the 16/17 financial year?

HS No.	Broad topic	Senator	Question
47	Departmental staffing	Watt	<p>a) How many employees are currently employed by the Department, as of 31/10/17?</p> <p>b) How many employees are currently employed as ongoing employees as of 31/10/17?</p> <p>c) How many employees are currently employed as non-ongoing employees as of 31/10/17?</p>
48	Community Affairs References Committee inquiry - Government Response	Watt	<p>a) How many letters has the Department sent to recipients who received a debt related to the online system to remind them of their review rights?</p> <p>b) How many of these recipients have since requested a review?</p> <p>c) How many of these recipients have had their debt reduced or waived?</p> <p>d) How many of the above recipients have requested to have their recovery fee refunded?</p> <p>e) How many of these recipients have been successful in recovering their recovery fee?</p> <p>f) How many calls has the Department made to recipients who had been referred to an external collection agent to notify them how to ask for a review and how to ask for a review on recovering their recovery fees?</p> <p>g) Through all the above processes how much debt has been refunded or reduced?</p>
49	Community Affairs References Committee inquiry - Government Response	Watt	<p>a) How many discrepancy notice letters were generated this year?</p> <p>b) How many discrepancy notice letters sent this year?</p>
50	Community Affairs References Committee inquiry - Government Response	Watt	<p>a) Has the Government/Centrelink written to the 20,000 people who were incorrectly identified as owing money when they did nothing wrong?</p> <p>b) Did the Department apologise to these people?</p> <p>c) Do you think the Government owes these people an apology?</p>
51	Community Affairs References Committee inquiry - Government Response	Watt	<p>a) In Budget estimates in May, DHS said they would expand the debt recovery program from 1 July with info from the ATO to target pensioners. Did this happen? How is this going?</p> <p>b) How many pensioners have received letters from Centrelink?</p>
52	Community Affairs References Committee inquiry - Government Response	Watt	<p>Of the \$980 million identified as a savings burden from the government:</p> <p>a) How much debt has been raised through the OCI program since July 2016; and</p> <p>b) How much of that debt has been collected?</p>
53	Disability Support Pension – processing times	Watt	<p>a) What was the average wait time to process a new DSP application for the 2016/17 Financial year?</p> <p>b) What support is offered to applicants to ensure they can complete and submit the correct information to be processed?</p> <p>c) If an applicant is found to be ineligible for the DSP, are they informed of referred to other support and services available in communities and/or departments?</p>

HS No.	Broad topic	Senator	Question
			d) Are applicants advised that they are able to claim Newstart Allowance while their DSP application is being determined?
54	Carer Allowance – processing times	Watt	<p>a) What was the average wait time to process a new carer allowance application for the 2016/17 Financial year?</p> <p>b) What is seen as the optimum time for a claim to be processed?</p> <p>c) How many claims were not processed in the optimum or target time frame in the past financial year?</p> <p>d) How many claims are outstanding?</p> <p>e) What action can applicants take to speed up this process?</p>
55	Newstart - funding	Watt	How much does DHS receive to cover its own operations (ie not the income support money itself) for each Newstart participant?
56	Community Development Program and Jobactive	Watt	Can you confirm that CDP and Jobactive are Newstart programs?
57	Community Development Program - funding	Watt	<p>a) Does DHS get a different amount for Newstart participants depending on whether they are in CDP or jobactive?</p> <p>b) If so, is there a service level difference between these Newstart participants?</p> <p>c) Why is there a difference?</p> <p>d) If higher cost, is this because participants of CDP are in a remote area?</p>
61	Community Development Program - telephony	Watt	<p>a) We have heard many reports of people spending hours on the phone trying to get through to DHS. Can you tell me on average, how long is it taking for CDP participants to get through to the Participation Solutions Team?</p> <p>b) Do CDP participants get resolution with one call?</p> <p>c) Do you have specific figures for calls related to CDP?</p>
62	Community Development Program - compliance	Watt	There was a recent report on the ABC about a man in Santa Teresa waiting on the phone for the Participation Solutions team for an hour when there was actually an office in Santa Teresa itself. When you have an office right there, why wouldn't you get them to sort out compliance problems?
64	DHS Family and Domestic Violence Strategy - training	Watt	<p>In the DHS Family and Domestic Violence Strategy 2016-2019 one of the six strategic themes is 'training' and it states that "We will ensure that our staff receive appropriate training to support customers and staff affected by family and domestic violence."</p> <p>a) What family violence training is provided to DHS staff?</p> <p>b) Who developed this training?</p> <p>c) Does the training include information about responding appropriately to vulnerable clients (including CALD women, indigenous women, women with a disability, and LGBTIQ clients)?</p>

HS No.	Broad topic	Senator	Question
			<p>d) Is this training compulsory for DHS staff?</p> <p>e) To date, how many DHS staff members have completed the training (as a number and as a percentage of total staff)?</p>
65	DHS Family and Domestic Violence Strategy – safety flags	Watt	<p>In the DHS Family and Domestic Violence Strategy 2016-2019 one of the actions includes considering options for a safety flag which can be applied to the records of customers who have disclosed family and domestic violence concerns.</p> <p>a) Have safety flags been introduced?</p> <p>b) What does a safety flag prompt staff to do?</p> <p>c) Does a safety flag on a client's file make staff aware not to share sensitive information with other family members (e.g. a man enquiring about his wife's address)?</p>
66	Staff	McAllister	<p>Please provide as at 30 June 2017:</p> <p>a) ASL by state.</p> <p>b) Headcount of people employed as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Labour Hire,</li> <li>ii) Contractors, or</li> <li>iii) outsourced staff, and</li> <li>iv) the value of each of these contracts for the 2016-2017 financial year.</li> </ul> <p>c) The total number of people who have a log in to the departmental IT system, and the breakdown by category of these log-ins (permanent, non-ongoing, casual, labour hire, outsourced, contractors, and any other category that has access to the system).</p> <p>d) The total number of people who have a security/access pass into your departmental buildings, and the breakdown by category of these pass holders (permanent, non-ongoing, casual, labour hire, outsourced, contractors, and any other relevant category).</p> <p>e) A list of organisations/companies that have staff who can log into your departmental IT system.</p>
67	Departmental Operations	McAllister	<p>a) Does any part of your agency/department have a service delivery function, or which has face to face interactions with the public?</p> <p>b) If yes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Do you provide staff with training on how to deal with client aggression or customers experiencing mental illness?</li> <li>ii) Please provide the dates and locations that training has been run over the last 5 years.</li> <li>iii) How many of your staff have received this training? How many in the last 2 years?</li> </ul> <p>c) Who provides this training?</p>

HS No.	Broad topic	Senator	Question
68	Joint Projects with the Digital Transformation Agency	McAllister	<p>As at 31 October 2017:</p> <p>a) What projects are you undertaking in conjunction with the Digital Transformation Agency?</p> <p>b) For each project:</p> <p>i) What criteria are you using for assessing success?</p> <p>ii) What is the role of the DTA in the project?</p> <p>iii) What is the timeframe for completion?</p>
69	Cloud computing	Dastyari	<p>Does DHS use externally hosted and managed commercial computing (cloud computing) services to store or process data?</p> <p><b>(if yes)</b></p> <p>a) What is the specific nature and/or purpose of the cloud based data storage or processing services being utilised?</p> <p>b) Why are cloud based data storage or processing services being utilised?</p> <p>c) What was the process for tendering, evaluating, and selecting the cloud based data storage or processing services?</p> <p>d) How have cloud based data storage or processing services been customised to meet specific needs?</p> <p>e) How are the cloud based data storage or processing services being metered and billed? (Data usage? Flat contract? Build/maintain?)</p> <p>f) How much money (estimated) has been saved by utilising cloud based data storage or processing services? (annually, or over past five years if information is available)</p> <p>g) What security measures are the cloud based data storage or processing services subject to?</p> <p>h) What is the recovery or business continuity plan in the event of fault or failure of the cloud based data storage or processing services?</p> <p>i) What internal or external review, evaluation, or audit are the cloud based data storage or processing services subject to?</p> <p>j) Which company or companies are providing the cloud based data storage or processing services?</p> <p><b>(if no)</b></p> <p>a) Why aren't cloud based data storage or processing services being utilised, and what are the specific concerns, if any? ( security, business continuity)</p> <p>b) Are you considering, or in the process of negotiating to use, commercial cloud computing services to store or process data?</p> <p>c) How have conventional data storage or processing services been customised to meet any specific needs?</p> <p>d) How are conventional data storage or processing services metered and billed? (Data usage? Flat contract? Build/maintain?)</p>

HS No.	Broad topic	Senator	Question
			<p>e) How much money (estimated) is spent on conventional data storage or processing services? (annually, or over past five years if information is available)</p> <p>f) What security measures are conventional data storage or processing services subject to?</p> <p>g) What is the recovery or business continuity plan in the event of fault or failure of the conventional data storage or processing services?</p>
70	Disability Support Pension	Watt	<p>a) How many applications for the DSP have been received in the last 12 months? How many of these were successful, of those rejected - how many reviews were requested, and what was the outcome of these reviews?</p> <p>b) According to figures provided at estimates, the average processing time for the DSP is 39 days? How does this compare to other payments?</p> <p>c) For existing recipients of DSP who have had their payment reviewed, how many were moved to other payments? Can you provide that information by age group and payment type? For those that were moved to Newstart, how many have transitioned to employment and how many have sought a medical exemption from meeting activity requirements?</p>
71	Disability Support Pension medical review	Siewert	<p>How many DSP recipients have been medically reviewed as a result of the 2016 Budget measure?</p> <p>a) Please outline when these reviews took place i.e. how many per month since commencement of the measure.</p> <p>b) How many of those reviewed have ceased receiving DSP as a result of their review?</p> <p>c) How many have been moved onto another payment such as Newstart?</p> <p>d) Of those who were moved onto Newstart, how many have found work?</p> <p>e) Of those who were moved onto Newstart, how many went on to have medical exemptions from mutual obligation requirements?</p>
72	NASH certificate audit	Di Natale	<p>During the hearing for the Senate inquiry into the Medicare data breach, it became clear that some practices had lost and been re-issued with NASH certificates. Has an audit been undertaken of the re-issued NASH certificates, including dates of re-issue and cancellation dates of superseded certificates?</p>
73	My Health Record	Griff	<p>Regarding any improvements made to the MyGov website: The Siggins Miller Evaluation for the Participation Trials for My Health Record found participants had difficulty using and navigating the MyGov website – it cited the “unfriendliness” of MyGov, in particular the log in process and navigation of the website. Have these issues been resolved?</p> <p>a) What (other) improvements have been made to MyGov?</p> <p>b) Are these improvements completed or ongoing?</p> <p>c) Have they been dealt with internally or has some of this work been contracted out (to whom and for how much)?</p>

HS No.	Broad topic	Senator	Question
74	Carer Allowance – delays in processing	Brown	a) Can you advise the Committee of the average time it takes to process a claim for Carer Allowance? b) What is seen as the optimum time for a claim to be processed? c) How many claims were not processed in the optimum or target time frame in the past year? d) How many claims are currently outstanding? e) What action can applicants take to speed up this process?
75	Grandparent Advisers	Brown	a) Can you tell me how many Grandparent Advisers are employed at Centrelink? b) Can you describe the regional distribution of the Grandparent Adviser team – where each adviser is based and which region the Adviser has responsibility for? c) How many clients is each Adviser expected to service per year? d) How many clients has each adviser assisted this year? e) What services do Grandparent Advisers provide? f) What feedback mechanisms are in place to measure consumer satisfaction with this service? g) What are the results so far? h) What other client groups do Grandparent Advisers service?
76	SBE HS 76 Centrelink Call Centre Enhancement project – Serco - Wages	Singh	Senator SINGH: Are you aware of what Serco are going pay these employees? Mr Jackson: That's a matter between Serco and the employees. As I indicated, they do have an enterprise agreement that is registered with the Fair Work Commission. Senator SINGH: Is it not \$9 per hour less than DHS employees, on average? Mr Jackson: I'd have to take that on notice. Ms Leon: I don't know. Mr Jackson: That's a matter between Serco and the employees. <i>[page 117]</i>