

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

INQUIRY INTO THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Services Australia

Topic: Tuggerah - Staff

Question reference number: IQ20-000050

Member: Katy Gallagher

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 15 May 2020

Number of pages: 1

Question:

- a) How many staff were employed at the Tuggerah Service Centre as at 30 March 2020?
- b) How many were
 - i. Permanent staff of SA
 - ii. Staff engaged by SA on contracts
 - iii. Staff supplied by a contractor?

Answer:

- a) Services Australia had 244 staff employed at the Tuggerah Smart Centre as at 30 March 2020.
- b)
 - i. 226 permanent Services Australia staff;
 - ii. 18 staff engaged by Services Australia on contract; and
 - iii. 0 staff supplied by a contractor.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Services Australia

Topic: Tuggerah –Social Distancing

Question reference number: IQ20-000051

Member: Katy Gallagher

Type of question: Written.

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 15 May 2020

Number of pages: 1

Question:

Did the Tuggerah Service Centre site manager meet all the requirements for reporting the implementation of Social Distancing Workplace changes by 10.30 am on Monday 30 March?

Answer:

Yes.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Services Australia

Topic: Tuggerah – staff present

Question reference number: IQ20-000052

Member: Katy Gallagher

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 15 May 2020

Number of pages: 1

Question:

How many staff were present at the call centre on 30 March 2020?

Answer:

There were 156 Services Australia staff present at the Tuggerah Smart Centre on 30 March 2020.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Services Australia

Topic: Tuggerah – working from home

Question reference number: IQ20-000053

Member: Katy Gallagher

Type of question: Written.

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 15 May 2020

Number of pages: 1

Question:

How many staff were working from home on that day?

Answer:

There were two Tuggerah Smart Centre staff working from home on 30 March 2020.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Services Australia

Topic: Tuggerah – staff protection

Question reference number: IQ20-000056

Member: Katy Gallagher

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 15 May 2020

Number of pages: 1

Question:

What additional steps were taken to protect staff at TCC following this positive test?

Answer:

There were a number of additional steps taken to protect staff at Tuggerah Smart Centre following confirmation that a staff member had tested positive to COVID-19.

- The site was temporarily closed and deep cleaned in accordance with both the Federal and NSW Department of Health guidelines. The deep clean occurred on the evening of Saturday 18 April 2020.
- All staff received a call from a leadership team member on 18 April advising them of a staff member testing positive to COVID-19 and the temporary site. This included advice to seek medical guidance from either NSW Department of Health or a medical practitioner.
- The staff member who tested positive to COVID-19 provided NSW Health with a list of close contacts and NSW Health instructed staff identified as close contacts to self-isolate pending further instructions from them.
- Both Federal and NSW Departments of Health were contacted by Services Australia regarding the temporary site closure and required next steps to be undertaken for the site to be cleared to be reopened. A site inspection was arranged with NSW Health for Monday, 20 April 2020 as part of the NSW Health risk assessment process.
- Following the inspection on 20 April 2020, NSW Health placed all staff who had worked on site 5 – 14 April 2020 into a period of mandatory home self-isolation.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Services Australia

Topic: Tuggerah – test numbers

Question reference number: IQ20-000057

Member: Katy Gallagher

Type of question: Written.

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 15 May 2020

Number of pages: 1

Question:

How many staff at TCC have been tested for COVID-19 to date?

Answer:

As at 11 May 2020, 89 staff from the Services Australia Tuggerah Smart Centre have been tested for COVID-19.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Services Australia

Topic: Tuggerah – number of positive tests

Question reference number: IQ20-000058

Member: Katy Gallagher

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 15 May 2020

Number of pages: 1

Question:

How many staff at TCC have tested positive for COVID-19 to date?

Answer:

The Tuggerah Smart Centre has had one staff member test positive for COVID-19 as at 11 May 2020.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Services Australia

Topic: Tuggerah – self isolation

Question reference number: IQ20-000059

Member: Katy Gallagher

Type of question: Written.

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 15 May 2020

Number of pages: 1

Question:

How many staff have been required to self-isolate as a result of this outbreak?

Answer:

208 staff based at Tuggerah Smart Centre were required to self-isolate as a result of the one confirmed case of COVID-19.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Services Australia

Topic: Tuggerah – staff support

Question reference number: IQ20-000060

Member: Katy Gallagher

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 15 May 2020

Number of pages: 1

Question:

What steps have been taken to support those staff and their household?

Answer:

A number of steps were taken to support Tuggerah Smart Centre staff after one staff member tested positive to COVID-19.

- Tuggerah Smart Centre leadership team members maintained contact with all staff during the isolation period. Staff with medical related questions or concerns were advised to contact a medical professional or the Department of Health.
- Text messages were sent by the local leadership team to all staff with information from NSW Health.
- Staff were provided with mobile computing equipment to allow them to work from home for the period of their self-isolation.
- The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) was available to staff both during and after the isolation period.
- NSW Department of Health conducted follow up well-being phone calls throughout the isolation period to staff.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Services Australia

Topic: Tuggerah – use of leave

Question reference number: IQ20-000061

Member: Katy Gallagher

Type of question: Written.

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 15 May 2020

Number of pages: 1

Question:

Were any staff required to utilise annual leave or leave without pay while self- isolating?

Answer:

No.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Services Australia

Topic: Compliance Debt Numbers

Question reference number: IQ20-000062

Member: Katy Gallagher

Type of question: Written.

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 15 May 2020

Number of pages: 1

Question:

How many social welfare debts have been raised by Services Australia/Centrelink per month since January 2020?

a. How does this compare to data per month for the previous year?

Answer:

Services Australia is unable to extract the data required to response to this question within the time requested by the Committee.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Services Australia

Topic: Debt Types

Question reference number: IQ20-000063

Member: Katy Gallagher

Type of question: Written.

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 15 May 2020

Number of pages: 1

Question:

Could a breakdown be provided of the types of payments debts have been issued for in question 13 and 13a)?

Answer:

Services Australia is unable to extract the data required to response to this question within the time requested by the Committee.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Services Australia

Topic: External Debt Collectors

Question reference number: IQ20-000065

Member: Katy Gallagher

Type of question: Written.

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 15 May 2020

Number of pages: 1

Question:

How many debts have been referred to external debt collectors per month since January 2020?
a. How does this compare to data per month for the previous year?

Answer:

The number of referrals to External Collection Agents since January 2020 and the comparison to the previous year's referrals are as follows:

	2019	2020
January	34,644	14,503
February	22,362	11,555
March	22,334	11,938
April	21,111	911

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Services Australia

Topic: Active Payment Arrangements

Question reference number: IQ20-000066

Member: Katy Gallagher

Type of question: Written.

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 15 May 2020

Number of pages: 1

Question:

How many total social welfare debts were in active payment arrangements on 3 April 2020?

Answer:

Services Australia is unable to extract the data required to response to this question within the time requested by the Committee.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Services Australia

Topic: Debts on Hold

Question reference number: IQ20-000067

Member: Katy Gallagher

Type of question: Written.

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 15 May 2020

Number of pages: 1

Question:

How many debts have been placed on hold at the request of debt recipients following Minister Robert's media release on 3 April, 'Pausing debt activity during the coronavirus pandemic'?

a. Could a breakdown be provided by payment type (Family Tax Benefit, Youth Allowance etc)?

Answer:

Services Australia (the Agency) is unable to provide information about the number of debts paused at the request of a customer as providing this information would require manual checking of individual customer records as to the reason for their call, which would be an unreasonable diversion of Agency resources.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Services Australia

Topic: Debt Breakdown

Question reference number: IQ20-000068

Member: Katy Gallagher

Type of question: Written.

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 15 May 2020

Number of pages: 1

Question:

Could a breakdown be provided of the 'certain debt recovery' types referred to in Minister Robert's media release on 3 April, 'Pausing debt activity during the coronavirus pandemic'?

Answer:

Debt raising and recovery relating to fraud and serious non-compliance is continuing.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Services Australia

Topic: Repayment Plan Arrangements

Question reference number: IQ20-000069

Member: Katy Gallagher

Type of question: Written.

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 15 May 2020

Number of pages: 1

Question:

How many debts were subject to repayment plan arrangements prior to 3 April 2020? Could a breakdown be provided by payment type (Family Tax Benefit, Youth Allowance etc)?

Answer:

Services Australia is unable to extract the data required to respond to this question within the time requested by the Committee.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Services Australia

Topic: Repayment Plan Arrangements – post 3 April 2020

Question reference number: IQ20-000070

Member: Katy Gallagher

Type of question: Written.

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 15 May 2020

Number of pages: 1

Question:

How many debts are subject to repayment plan arrangements following the announcement on 3 April 2020? Could a breakdown be provided by payment type (Family Tax Benefit, Youth Allowance etc)?

Answer:

Services Australia is unable to extract the data required to respond to this question within the time requested by the Committee.