

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS LEGISLATION COMMITTEE
QUESTIONS ON NOTICE – ADDITIONAL BUDGET ESTIMATES – 24 FEBRUARY 2011
HUMAN SERVICES PORTFOLIO

Q No.	Outcome/Agency	Senator	Broad Topic	Question	Proof Hansard Page or Written Q
HS 1	Centrelink Medicare People Services	Fifield	Paid Parental Leave	<p>Senator FIFIELD—Could you advise what the total cost is to the Commonwealth of those arrangements in the financial year to date and the previous financial year?</p> <p>Ms Godwin—Do you mean of people taking their leave entitlements under the paid parental leave arrangements?</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD—Yes, under the—</p> <p>Ms Godwin—Their maternity leave or other sorts of—</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD—Yes, that is right—that predated the Paid Parental Leave scheme.</p> <p>Ms Godwin—Yes. Sorry; I should not use that phrase. I meant ‘taking maternity and other leave’. I would have to take that on notice.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD—If you could, yes—just how you quantify that and how you cost that; thank you.</p>	CA 79
HS 2	Medicare Australia People Services	Fifield	Paid Parental Leave	<p>Senator FIFIELD—How many staff availed themselves of the pre-existing arrangements—you might need to take this on notice—in 2008-09, 2009-10 and also in the financial year to date?</p> <p>Ms Briggs—We will take that on notice.</p>	CA 79
HS 3	Medicare Australia Workplace Relations	Fifield	CSA – unions	<p>Senator FIFIELD—I am just curious about whether any unions have sought to avail themselves of those processes.</p> <p>Mr Dunn—Yes; the CPSU has on several occasions.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD—To CSA sites?</p> <p>Ms Chapman—The union, the CPSU, has requested right of entry on occasion in all of our agencies; I cannot tell you how many times in child support. But we have protocols that we have established with them. They follow those protocols and are granted right of entry, as appropriate.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD—Would you be able to take on notice, if you need to, the occasions, the reasons, the days that that has occurred and the agencies?</p> <p>Ms Chapman—Certainly.</p>	CA 80
HS 4	Centrelink Network Capability	Humphries	Disaster payments	<p>Mr Tidswell—The total AGDRP number as of midnight last night is 636,725 and the total value paid was \$739,515,199 and—that figure again—99c.</p> <p>Senator HUMPHRIES—As a matter of interest, how do you get fractions of a dollar, because people are entitled to \$1,000, or \$400 for a child?</p> <p>Mr Tidswell—That is a very good question. We will take that on</p>	CA 82

				<p>notice and come back to you. You asked for the exact figure and I have supplied that.</p> <p>Senator HUMPHRIES—I appreciate the accuracy. Is it possible to get those figures in each case? I know on the website I can get the figures broken down by disaster episode. Can I also get them broken down by disaster episode for that 31 January snapshot as well?</p> <p>Mr Tidswell—Certainly. We will get what we have because obviously Cyclone Yasi had not eventuated at that stage.</p> <p>Senator HUMPHRIES—Of course.</p> <p>Mr Tidswell—There were also other declarations that had not been made at that stage.</p>	
HS 5	Centrelink Network Capability	Humphries	Cyclone Yasi	<p>Senator HUMPHRIES—It has been drawn to my attention that the population of Cairns—I assume this is an amalgamation of the Cairns local government districts that make up the city of Cairns—is a bit under 165,000 and under Yasi we have had 227,000 claims. Obviously Yasi would cover areas outside Cairns as well, like Cardwell.</p> <p>Mr Tidswell—That is right, and down into Townsville. There was a major impact in Townsville in terms of power outages there.</p> <p>a) Senator HUMPHRIES—Do you know what the population of the declared areas is?</p> <p>Mr Tidswell—I do not have that with me. We can get that for you. I am not sure if we can get that for you tonight, but it is sizeable. It is a sizeable part of the community there. We have cross-referenced with data sets and the payments seem about right.</p> <p>Senator HUMPHRIES—It is evident that a very large proportion of the affected population is, in fact, making the application for these payments. I suppose in places like Cardwell everybody was affected.</p> <p>Mr Tidswell—It would seem that way, but I do not have the figures to say what percentage of the population the 227,000 claims is.</p> <p>Senator BOYCE—Do you have that for the flood areas?</p> <p>Senator HUMPHRIES—The population totals?</p> <p>b) Senator BOYCE—What percentage of the population in south-east Queensland, for example, has claimed the AGDRP?</p> <p>Mr Tidswell—I do not have that with me. We can take that on notice. I am sure there is a data set there that tells us how many people live in the LGAs declared, but as you can see, there is a large list of LGAs that are included. As you all know, this was a</p>	CA84 - 85

				<p>significant and major event.</p> <p>c) Senator HUMPHRIES—Can you tell me what the average time is between application and payment</p>	
HS 6	Centrelink Business Integrity	Fifield	Fraud taskforce	<p>Senator FIFIELD—Would you be able to provide—and no doubt you will need to take it on notice—a breakdown of the operating costs of the Disaster Relief Fraud Task Force and associated costs?</p> <p>Mr Withnell—Certainly.</p>	CA 86
HS 7	Centrelink Business Integrity	Fifield	Fraud tip-offs	<p>Senator FIFIELD—Of those tip-offs, how many have been investigated?</p> <p>Mr Withnell—At this point in time 2,323 have been referred for further review or investigation.</p> <p>a) Senator FIFIELD—How many of these have been substantiated as fraudulent or incorrect payments?</p> <p>Mr Withnell—I do not have the figure that have actually been finalised, but I can provide that to you. I thought it was in this list. A number of these will take some time because evidence gathering will take some time. Some of them have been finalised already. Largely we would seek to recover the amount.</p> <p>b) Senator FIFIELD—In relation to tip-offs, could you provide a breakdown of how many you have had by phone, by website and through other means?</p> <p>Mr Withnell—I will see if we can do that. They go into one system. I am not sure if we record the source in terms of the type of communication as opposed just recording the information of the tip-off.</p> <p>Mr Withnell—The figure I would have to substantiate is a total figure, so I would need to take that on notice to break it down for you. There will also be a double-up between tip-offs and where we have identified the concern. Sometimes the two overlap.</p> <p>c) Senator FIFIELD—Could you take on notice how many of the claims being reviewed were discovered because of public tip-offs and how many were discovered because of Centrelink’s own investigations?</p> <p>Mr Withnell—Yes.</p>	CA 86
HS 8	Centrelink Business Integrity	Fifield	ANAO Audit on Fraud Investigations	<p>Senator FIFIELD—I asked the core department earlier: are you happy that you have taken all the appropriate action recommended by the 2010 ANAO report into Centrelink fraud?</p> <p>Mr Withnell—Yes. As you may recall, last time I mentioned there were some things we already had underway. A number of those have progressed further and a number of new actions are underway.</p>	CA 87

				<p>Senator FIFIELD—Have any of the ANAO recommendations not been given effect to?</p> <p>Mr Withnell—No, there is activity in relation to all of the recommendations.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD—Are you able to provide the committee with a summary of the ANAO recommendations and the activities you are giving effect to?</p> <p>Mr Withnell—I certainly have some material here that I could table. It is not—</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD—In table form? I am happy if you take that on notice and provide it in a format that is appropriate. That would be helpful; thank you.</p>	
HS 9	Centrelink Network Capability	Furner	DIRS payments	<p>Senator FURNER—Has it been possible to break down the 13-week maximum period in respect of days and weeks? I know some people were only affected for a few days; others were affected for a period of a week or so.</p> <p>Mr Tidswell—In terms of the disaster income recovery subsidy?</p> <p>Senator FURNER—Yes, that is right.</p> <p>Mr Tidswell—I do not know that I have that information here. We will have to take that on notice to see what we can do on that area.</p>	CA 88
HS 10	Centrelink Network Capability	Boyce	Disaster payments	<p>Senator BOYCE—could you provide to me on notice the number of recipients in each of the sectors?</p> <p>Mr Tidswell—The LGAs?</p> <p>Senator BOYCE—The local government areas, yes. That is an LGA split-up, is it not?</p> <p>Mr Tidswell—That is right. It is a local government area split-up.</p> <p>Senator BOYCE—At 31 January and as of today.</p> <p>Mr Tidswell—We will take that on notice.</p>	CA 89
HS 11	Centrelink Network Capability	Abetz	Disaster payments	<p>Senator ABETZ—Are you able to tell us the claims made in each of those areas on each day?</p> <p>Mr Tidswell—I would have to, again, take that on notice. Basically, we would run a data job that would go back and look at all the information and corral it into LGAs. Could we then get it day by day? It would be a very big document, but I am pretty sure we could do that.</p> <p>Senator ABETZ—I would imagine each claim would have the date impressed upon it somewhere and, therefore, a search of the date should not be a massive task, should it?</p> <p>Mr Tidswell—We will take that on. I think you are right. I think it should be achievable. It will be a big task.</p> <p>Senator BOYCE—Just to clarify something, it was LGA by date?</p>	CA 89

				Senator ABETZ —Yes, thank you.	
HS 12	Centrelink SFDC	Fifield	Paid Parental Leave	<p>Senator FIFIELD—Can you apportion the cost for that part of it which is required for the paymaster role, as opposed to the ongoing—</p> <p>Mr Salvage—Not at this point. It would be difficult. When we built this scheme, it was a bit of a job lot. We took the opportunity to combine our current processing for family tax benefit, maternity immunisation allowance and baby bonus with the PPL aspects of the claim process, which then also asked the question about the person’s employer, if required, and work test questions. We also took the opportunity to build up our third party, or our business related, portal and the methods by which we move with those businesses. We found ourselves building capability not just for PPL but also for the broader. It would be difficult to specifically identify that, but we can always give that a go.</p> <p>Mr Sandison—From the IT capability side and being able to split that out, we do not have those figures because it was, as we have said, an integrated build. Looking at the linkages and PPL by itself, there were a whole series of areas that were linked together, let alone looking at how it would link to other elements. The teams that worked on them were right across a number of our IT divisions, so we do not have separated costings for those for the employer related component by itself.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD—To the extent that you are going to have a stab, and it is reasonable to do so, could you take that on notice—and, obviously, to the extent you cannot, you cannot.</p> <p>Mr Sandison—Certainly.....</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD—As to any staff who have been specifically engaged for or are working specifically on the paymaster function, I assume that the nature of tasks that Centrelink staff have to perform will change when the paymaster function is no longer there. What will happen to the staff who are engaged in that activity when that task is no longer there?</p> <p>Mr Sandison—I would not be able to give you a specific answer. Again, every year Centrelink has to deal with the ons and offs of various government initiatives and new policies.</p>	CA 91
HS 13	Centrelink SFDC	Adams	Paid Parental leave	<p>a) Senator ADAMS—If a recipient is living overseas, can employers pay the entitlement into an overseas bank account?</p> <p>Mr Salvage—I do not know the technical answer to that question. We might have to take that one on notice.</p> <p>b) Senator ADAMS—If this is so, what arrangements are in place to protect employers from action taken against them by the</p>	CA 93

				<p>government if there is a delay in recipients receiving payments made through overseas banking institutions? Could you take that on notice too.</p> <p>Mr Sandison—Yes.</p> <p>c) Senator ADAMS—Do you have a list of the small business organisations that were consulted, or would that be FaHCSIA?</p> <p>Mr Salvage—FaHCSIA would have a more complete list. We have had a fair amount of dealings with COSBOA, the Council of Small Business Organisations of Australia, and also the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Again, we have had a fair amount of discussion with them about their members' needs and how we might best promulgate them, and we have sought suggestions from them on how best to ensure that their members know where to go to get the information. We see peak bodies as being very important in terms of their being able to supply their members with that information. FaHCSIA may have a fuller listing of some of the organisations they consulted before the legislation was actually framed. It was a bit of a tag team effort there.</p> <p>Senator ADAMS—Can you take on notice to give me that list?</p> <p>Mr Sandison—The list of who we engaged on the design of the service delivery?</p> <p>Senator ADAMS—Yes, and I will also ask FaHCSIA for theirs.</p> <p>Mr Salvage—Yes, we can.</p>	
HS 14	Centrelink Smart Centres	Fierravanti-Wells	Grandparent Adviser program	<p>a) Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—I have a question arising out of a referral to Centrelink this morning from human services. Can somebody help me with the grandparents adviser program? It was implemented through your customer service centres in December 2010. I understand there are five advisers. Can you give me the background or take on notice why these five particular locations were chosen and how you came to the decision to choose these five?</p> <p>Mr Sandison—In regard to the actual selection process I would have to take that on notice.</p> <p>b) Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—Could you also take on notice the data that was used to select these areas?</p> <p>Mr Sandison—Certainly</p>	CA 96
HS 15	Centrelink Smart Centres	Fierravanti-Wells	Grandparents as carers	<p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—Is there any way that you can determine statistics in relation to how many grandparents are now full-time carers or guardians of grandchildren?</p> <p>Mr Sandison—Do you mean just generally how many there are around the country?</p>	CA 96

				<p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—Yes. Do you have statistics that look at full-time carers or guardians of grandchildren?</p> <p>Mr Sandison—I would take that on notice. The issues link to our payment data, and FaCHSIA is primarily the owner of the sort of broader policy around support for them.</p> <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—I did go to them this morning and they told me to come here, so that is why I am here. I have one last question in this area: if you have any data on grandparents as full-time carers, can you provide me with information as to grandparents who care for more than one grandchild?</p> <p>Mr Sandison—Certainly.</p>	
HS 16	Centrelink Communication	Fierravanti-Wells	News for Seniors	<p>a) Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—Could you give me a breakdown of the costs? In terms of the production in other languages, do you outsource the translation?</p> <p>Mr Jongen—Yes. Unfortunately I do not have a breakdown of the costs, but I can take that on notice.</p> <p>b) Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—Please just take that on notice if you do not mind. How is it distributed?</p> <p>Mr Jongen—It is distributed via mail. We use the Centrelink age pension database. It is also distributed to veterans affairs pensioners. That was introduced some years ago as a result of the popularity of the publication. In addition to that we also run a public mailing list for people who request to be put on the mailing list.</p> <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—When you send the publication out to people in other languages is that at their request or does Centrelink look at the names and think, ‘Oh, that is a Chinese person’?</p> <p>Mr Jongen—It is left up to the individual’s request. But there is a message in languages contained in each edition. I might also add that we also produce an audio version for sight-impaired pensioners.</p> <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—Does it seek paid advertising for placement?</p> <p>Mr Jongen—Yes, it does.</p> <p>c) Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—Could you take on notice income from the advertising?</p> <p>Mr Jongen—I am afraid I will have to take that on notice. Off the top of my head—just to assist you—I think it is in the order of \$200,000 per edition.</p>	CA 97-98
HS 17	Centrelink Access Services	Abetz	Tasmanian Freight	<p>a) Senator ABETZ—If you could, I would be much obliged. Was a similar review done in relation to Compact Designs?</p>	CA 101-102

		Equalisation Scheme	<p>Mr Maloney—I am not aware of that particular organisation, but I am happy to take that on notice.</p> <p>b) Senator ABETZ—If you could take that on notice and if that assessment report could be made available, you could please forward that to me. I would be much obliged. In relation to times between lodgement of requests and payments, how are we going? In recent times there have been significant improvements and I have had no complaints, so I am assuming that things are going well. Take on notice the average time between lodgement and payment and also the one that has been outstanding the longest.</p> <p>Mr Maloney—I can provide you with some information, if you like, and I can take the rest on notice. As at the end of January this year, we had 295 claims outstanding. Some 95 per cent of those were less than 28 days old, which is inside the standard. We were seeking additional information on all of those that are outside the standard at the moment.</p> <p>Senator ABETZ—That there was some dispute or question about—good. You are administering the aspect in relation to Flinders Island and King Island as well?</p> <p>Mr Maloney—Our administration covers the Bass Strait Passenger Vehicle Equalisation Scheme, the Tasmanian Wheat Freight Scheme and Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme.</p> <p>c) Senator ABETZ—And there has been added to TFES, the freight equalisation scheme, as I understand it, an intrascheme in relation to reverse carriage of goods. As always happens when you interfere with the market, there are always perverse outcomes, and it then became beneficial to ship your cows and products from King Island to Victoria rather than to the mainland of Tasmania. To overcome that, both parties, at the 2007 election, instituted a special addition to the freight equalisation scheme, and of course my friends in the Labor party got the privilege of administering that because they happened to win the election. I am just wondering how that aspect is going and whether there have been any issues or problems associated with its administration given that it has now been running for what would be a couple of years or so now.</p> <p>Mr Maloney—I do not have any information on that scheme, but I am happy to take that on notice.</p> <p>Senator ABETZ—Could you provide me with information as to the number of claims and also the processing of those claims, because I would assume it is a subset of the total TFES claims.</p>	
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HS 18	Medicare Australia CSD&C	Adams	Co-location	<p>Senator ADAMS—Do you have a list of the offices that are going to be collocated?</p> <p>Ms Hogg—We could certainly ask the minister if it was appropriate to provide that, yes.</p>	CA 103
HS 19	Centrelink EESP	Furner	Job Expos	<p>Senator FURNER—Do you have a breakdown of what industries those jobs were in?</p> <p>Ms Drayton—I do not have that with me. On notice we can provide you with a list of who was attending each of the expos from a stall, participant or business perspective.</p>	CA 104
HS 20	Centrelink Smart Centres	Brown	Grandparent Adviser program	<p>Senator CAROL BROWN—I am just looking after my state. What was the answer or do I have to read it?</p> <p>Mr Sandison—We have the five locations at this stage. We are not aware of a decision to extend.</p> <p>Senator CAROL BROWN—Is there another hotline for grandparents outside of that area to call?</p> <p>Mr Sandison—There is a range of different service lines that are done through Centrelink that are not related to just a person on the ground in a particular location.</p> <p>Senator CAROL BROWN—Is it operating really well?</p> <p>Mr Sandison—That is part of our broader engagement overall for Centrelink. I would have to get some further information and can take on notice where it is specific to the particular group. I can add that to some of the other questions.</p>	CA 105
HS 21	Centrelink IRRS	Siewert	Income Management	<p>Senator SIEWERT—Have all the people that have applied for an exemption had their applications dealt with? Are there any pending?</p> <p>Ms Cartwright—As of 4 February we have 200 exemption claims awaiting information from the Northern Territory Department of Education and Training. The hold-up around that has been the confirmation of the attendance at the school, but the other exemptions have been processed.</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT—How long on average have you been waiting to deal with those claims? I appreciate I am asking a difficult question.</p> <p>Ms Cartwright—I will take that one on notice.</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT—That would be appreciated. I realise that probably not all of the 200 would have been there for the same length of time.</p>	CA 108-109

				<p>Ms Ramsey—It has also been a matter of working with the Northern Territory Department of Education and Training and getting that system operating to get the information back. It will be different for different cases, but we can certainly give you the average.</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT—I want to know whether people are having to wait eight weeks, four weeks or however long.</p>	
HS 22	Centrelink IRRS	Siewert	Voluntary Income Management	<p>Senator SIEWERT—Among those who have gone to voluntary management in the NT—and I am now talking about those that have moved from compulsory income management to voluntary income management—have there been people wanting to come off already?</p> <p>Ms Ramsey—I would need to take the numbers on notice, but I am aware that there are customers who have come back and wanted to have the conversation about coming off and they have come off. I do not have the numbers, but I can take that on notice.....</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT—I will ask next estimates how many people have received their \$250.</p> <p>Ms Cartwright—We have had some paid in Western Australia, because their period would have started prior to the Northern Territory customers.</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT—How many? You can take that on notice if you do not have those figures.</p> <p>Ms Cartwright—I will take that one on notice.</p>	CA 109-110
HS 23	Centrelink IRRS	Siewert	Child Protection Income Management	<p>a) Senator SIEWERT—In terms of the process of transition to date, can you tell me how much it has cost from the initiation of the new process to now?</p> <p>Ms Cartwright—Can I take that one on notice.</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT—Yes, that is fine.</p> <p>Ms Ramsey—Is that for the Northern Territory?</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT—It is for the new process, yes. I am sorry; I am jumping around here. I was about to make an assumption, but I probably should not. With the budget for the Western Australian trial, can you tell me how much you have spent against the budget?</p> <p>Ms Cartwright—We could take that one on notice.....</p> <p>b) Senator SIEWERT—Yes. The breakdown of the voluntary income management is on that sheet, so I will not go through that now. I will get to that in a second. That 211 is for the whole metropolitan area of the trial. What has been the total number of people under that measure over the period of the trial?</p> <p>Ms Cartwright—I will take that one on notice, too. I do not have that data in front of me, I am sorry.</p>	CA 110-111
HS	Centrelink	Siewert	School	a) Senator SIEWERT —Can you tell me the expenditure to date?	CA 113

24	EESP		Enrolment and Attendance Measure	<p>Ms Drayton—On the information that I have here, I might need to take the question on notice. But I can give you some of the information that I have here with me tonight if that will help.</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT—Yes, that would be great. Thank you.</p> <p>Ms Drayton—It is just in relation to Centrelink.</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT—Yes.</p> <p>Ms Drayton—For the year 2008-09, it was \$15,209,000; for 2009-10, it was \$3,934,000; and for 2010-11, it was \$2,366,000.</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT—I presume that the cost in the first year was the set-up cost?</p> <p>Ms Drayton—Certainly, and there was quite a bit of IT involved with that.</p> <p>b) Senator SIEWERT—I appreciate that. Thank you. This is probably a question that I need to direct at FaHCSIA. Have you been involved in any evaluation of the program yet?</p> <p>Ms Drayton—DEEWR is responsible, with FaHCSIA, for the evaluation and we have certainly had informal discussions with them, but not through a formal evaluation process at this point in time—though we would expect that there would be input from Centrelink in relation to that.</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT—Yes; that is why I was asking whether you have been. In terms of the 120, is it possible to tell me whether those children and families are cycling through?</p> <p>Ms Drayton—I have not got that with me tonight; I will take that on notice. I am certainly aware of at least one case where a customer has returned twice, but I do not have the totals so I would have to take that on notice.</p> <p>Mr Sandison—Senator, do you just want the number of customers with more than one suspension?</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT—Yes. I am trying to look at what this is actually accomplishing, if people keep cycling through—whether it is achieving its objective....</p> <p>c) Senator SIEWERT—Will that research be publicly available?</p> <p>Ms Cartwright—I am not sure if it is the usual procedure to publicise research.</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT—I do not know if it is usual procedure, but—</p> <p>Ms Hogg—We will discuss that with the minister's office.</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT—Thank you. Could you take it on notice, please?</p>	
HS 53	Centrelink IRRS	Siewert	Income Management	Senator SIEWERT —Thank you; it is much appreciated. I want to go back to the letter issue. Who is doing market testing and how? Sorry to	CA 113

			Letters	<p>make you jump up and down. I am keeping you awake!</p> <p>Ms Cartwright—You are. Colmar Brunton are doing the research. We have commissioned a project; it is called ‘research to support communication for income management’. We are market researching the income management BasicsCard, communication products and letters. The overall objective of this research is to evaluate the effectiveness of the communication activities and tools used to support income management, and that does include the letters. The market research—the actual engagement with the consultants—started in January of this year and field work, including focus groups with customers, our staff and third party organisations, will start in March and. We hope to get the final report back to Centrelink in late April.</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT—Will that research be publicly available?</p> <p>Ms Cartwright—I am not sure if it is the usual procedure to publicise research.</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT—I do not know if it is usual procedure, but—</p> <p>Ms Hogg—We will discuss that with the minister’s office.</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT—Thank you. Could you take it on notice, please?</p> <p>Ms Hogg—Yes.</p>	
HS 25	Medicare Australia eBusiness	Fierravanti-Wells	Deregistration of Doctors	<p>a) Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—The other evening we talked about figures of five to 10 per cent in terms of a normal figure, if I can put it that way. Ms Kruse, is that an accurate assessment?</p> <p>Ms Kruse—I would not like to say. All I can say is that, at this stage, we could get the figures for you.</p> <p>b) Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—Please take them on notice. In that case, can you give me some statistics in relation to the normal processes of deregistration that happen in the normal course of events, and the figures that have occurred since July so that we can make a comparison?</p> <p>Ms Golightly—Yes. We can take it on notice, but my information is that we have not experienced any increase....</p> <p>c) Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—You cannot tell how much of what is happening at the moment. You said to me before that you cannot say that it is one way or the other. My point is that obviously patients and persons who are entitled to a Medicare rebate for a particular service are inconvenienced as a consequence of a registration issue. How do you, in the normal course of events, deal with that person?</p> <p>Ms Golightly—As it is a normal course of events, I will take on notice what our normal script is. The medical professional could have been deregistered for any reason, including choosing,</p>	CA 116-117

				<p>themselves, not to register. I will take on notice what our normal script and advice is that we give over the counter....</p> <p>d) Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—Have you contacted some practitioners or medical professionals as a consequence of the problems with AHPRA?</p> <p>Ms Golightly—What we mentioned before is that as AHPRA lets us know, we let the medical professionals know. I am also aware that AHPRA has been contacting medical professionals as well.</p> <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—So it is only after AHPRA has contacted them as well?</p> <p>Ms Kruse—No. AHPRA send the information to us. As soon as we receive that information we send a letter immediately and we call them twice.</p> <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—Did you not just say that in this instance AHPRA has also been doing it?</p> <p>Ms Golightly—I can check, but that is what we do.</p> <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—As a consequence of this?</p> <p>Ms Golightly—No. I think it is the normal part of its business of letting people know how to register.</p> <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—Have you had some contact with practitioners in relation to concerns around the registration? Can you put a figure on that, or is it anecdotal?</p> <p>Ms Golightly—We can check, but I am not aware that any have contacted us with concerns.</p>	
HS 26	Medicare Australia eBusiness	Boyce	Rate of rebate refusal due to deregistration	<p>Senator BOYCE—What is the general level of refusals of rebates?</p> <p>Ms Golightly—I do not have that here. I took that question on notice.</p>	CA 117
HS 27	Medicare Australia Health Programs	Fierravanti-Wells	GP Super Clinics	<p>a) Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—I might say the areas where I have questions. I have questions regarding Medicare provider numbers and a question on the Medicare provider number legislation, some general billing questions and then the dental program. Ms McNally, you have details in relation to the location of the 64 GP superclinics that the government has announced at various stages in recent years?</p> <p>Ms McNally—No. I do not have that information with me. I could take that on notice.</p> <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—Yes. Do I have to give you a list of the 64 or can you procure that?</p> <p>Ms McNally—I can procure that.</p> <p>b) Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—For each of the locations where these GP superclinics are—and there are only eight that are</p>	CA 117-118

				<p>operational—can you tell me what the Medicare utilisation level is for each of those locations? Ms McNally—We would not have that information readily available. We would have to run a query to provide that level of information.</p> <p>c) Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—I will ask the questions and then I will let you deal with them appropriately on notice. Can you give me the average Medicare utilisation level? Do you have that statistic? Ms McNally—We can take that on notice.</p> <p>d) Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—I can then ascertain whether the utilisation level for each of those is above or below the national average. In relation to each of those 64 GP superclinic locations, can you tell me what the level of safety net benefits is as well and what the national average of safety net benefits is for each of those? Can you take that on notice? Ms McNally—Yes. One of the issues around providing that kind of data is that we have to run it on a postcode basis, so, in terms of where the services are delivered, people may come from other areas outside the actual postcode.</p> <p>e) Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—I appreciate that it will come to me with that qualifier and you will state that it is put on that basis. Those are my questions in relation to Medicare utilisation. In relation to Medicare provider numbers, obviously without identifying any individual medical practices or any individual medical practitioner, how many Medicare provider numbers have been issued in total to the nine GP superclinics that are operational? Do you have that? Ms McNally—No. Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—Will you take that on notice? Ms McNally—Yes.</p> <p>f) Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—And also could you provide the remaining 27 GP superclinics from the 2007-08 election commitment, which are still not operational, and the 28 GP superclinics which are the 2010-11 commitments? Could you also take on notice how many of the provider numbers that I have referred to have been issued to medical practitioners who are recognised as general practitioners by Medicare Australia? How many services have been billed to Medicare against the provider numbers and how many services have been billed to Medicare against the provider numbers issued to medical practitioners who</p>	
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				<p>are recognised as general practitioners by Medicare Australia? Do you understand that?</p> <p>Ms McNally—Yes. We will take those on notice. Again, we will have to add some qualifiers if that happens to identify individuals. pens to identify individuals.</p>	
HS 28	Medicare Australia Health Programs	Fierravanti-Wells	Medicare Billing	<p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—We will detail those through Health and Ageing. I have a few final questions. What areas of Medicare billing are expanding most rapidly? Can you give me the number of billings and dollar value? Is that something—</p> <p>Ms McNally—I will take that on notice.</p> <p>Ms Golightly—Do you mean the type of service?</p> <p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—Yes. What is on the rise and what is on the decline.</p>	CA 118
HS 29	Medicare Australia Health Programs	Fierravanti-Wells	Teen Dental Program / Seniors Dental Program	<p>a) Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—Do you have a breakdown across different jurisdictions across states?</p> <p>Ms McNally—I would have to take that on notice.</p> <p>b) Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—Would you take that on notice. Also in relation to the Senior Dental Program, could you give me some information in relation to the levels of uptake? Please take that on notice, if you could, and if you could also indicate to me whether you are aware of any inappropriate access to both these items?</p>	CA 118
HS 30	Medicare Australia Health Programs	Fierravanti-Wells	Medicare Items	<p>Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS... Finally, could you provide me with a list of Medicare items that have been removed or cancelled in the last financial year?</p>	CA 118
HS 31	Medicare Australia eBusiness	Boyce / Fierravanti-Wells	Individual Healthcare Identifiers	<p>a) Senator BOYCE—I may not be asking this in the right place, but could we put it on notice? What is the number of individual health identifiers issues in the three categories by Medicare?</p> <p>Ms Golightly—The three categories being individual, organisation and professional?</p> <p>Senator BOYCE—Yes....</p> <p>Ms Golightly—I do not actually have that particular figure here, but we would be able to get—or we will try to—the number of people who have looked on the website.</p> <p>Senator BOYCE—The number who have looked up their healthcare number.</p> <p>Ms Golightly—People can also ring up and come into a Medicare office and ask, so we will see what sort of statistics we can get.</p> <p>Ms Kruse—If you have a Medicare online account you can log on to your Medicare online account. You can see your IHI number and you can also see who has accessed it. If you see on there that a doctor or somebody has had access to your IHI</p>	CA 118-120

				<p>you can ring up and let us know if you do not feel that those people should have had access to it.</p> <p>Senator BOYCE—Has that occurred?</p> <p>Ms Kruse—Not to my knowledge.</p> <p>Senator BOYCE—Again, could you take that on notice, please. This is very early days and not many people have a reason to do anything about their IHI right now.</p> <p>Ms Golightly—We can certainly take it on notice. I know that a number of people have rung up and/or looked at what their IHI is. I do not know how many have asked for the log, but we can take that on notice and check.</p> <p>....</p> <p>b) Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—One of the issues that was raised at the inquiry, you would remember, was that because there was a compulsory issuing of numbers to everybody, and you have assigned 23 million, people had objections to having a number assigned to them. I do not want to traverse through all of that. Have there been instances of people who have objected to the fact that they have had this number issued to them? We did canvass that. Maybe it is just early days yet.</p> <p>Ms Golightly—I am not aware of any, but we can check that for you.</p>	
HS 32	Medicare Australia eBusiness	Boyce	Individual Healthcare Identifiers	<p>Ms Briggs—If I may supplement Ms Golightly’s answer: the IHI system has a full audit log associated with it that Medicare Australia is responsible for and that operates in the same way as our existing systems do. Anything peculiar in the operation of access to IHIs would be floated up through that system.</p> <p>Senator BOYCE—Is that audit system functioning now in terms of IHIs?</p> <p>Ms Briggs—Yes, it is.</p> <p>Senator BOYCE—On notice, would you be able to give any sort of activity report around what, if anything, has come up in that area, please?</p> <p>Ms Briggs—Yes.</p>	CA 120
HS 33	Medicare Australia eBusiness	Boyce	Individual Healthcare Identifiers	<p>Senator BOYCE—Again, is there a way of telling us how many, if any, are active as yet?</p> <p>Ms Briggs—I am sure we could do that, yes.</p>	CA 120
HS 34	Medicare Australia eBusiness	Boyce	Healthcare Provider Identifiers	<p>Ms Kruse—How many numbers can we issue for organisations?</p> <p>Senator BOYCE—How many do you expect would need to be issued?</p> <p>Ms Kruse—I think they are talking something around 800. I would</p>	CA 121

				have to take that on notice. I am not sure.	
HS 35	Australian Hearing	Siewert	Compatibility of technology	<p>Senator SIEWERT—I do not mean to harp on this but, no, that is not what they meant. They meant it was no longer compatible with their implant. I think it is very well known that your speech processors only last for a specific period. In fact, that is one of the issues that came up at the inquiry. The cost of replacing those can be prohibitive for some people. But that is a separate issue to whether the technology is actually compatible fully with the implant.</p> <p>Ms Clapin—As far as I know it is, and we will take that on notice and confirm that for you.</p>	CA 122
HS 36	Minister – Parliamentary Services	Siewert	DoHA Report	<p>Ms Clapin—As you know, the recommendations have not been tabled by the Department of Health and Ageing, and we are waiting for those to come out before we can finally plan to progress any of those implementations.</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT—I will wait for the government’s response to our committee report. Minister, do you know how far away that is?</p> <p>Senator Arbib—Sorry, I do not have any information about that. I can seek it for you.</p>	CA 123
HS 37	Australian Hearing	Siewert	Access by prisoners	<p>Senator SIEWERT—How many services have you been able to provide? I am looking at need versus what needs have been met?</p> <p>Ms Clapin—The numbers have been small. I do not have the actual number here. We have not actively developed any programs with any of the authorities to seek out those people and actively go out to prisons or anything like that.</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT—I have a couple of questions around that issue. Could you take on notice how many and in which state? Further, could you be proactive in talking to state authorities around addressing hearing impairments in prisons? Finally, if you could, do you have the funding or do you need the funding?</p>	CA 124
HS 38	Centrelink SFDC Transferred to FaHCSIA	Boswell	Paid Parental Leave - Commonwealth Public Servants	<p>For the period 2011-2012 -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> How many beneficiaries are expected to receive paid parental leave under the new government-funded paid parental leave scheme under the <i>Paid Parental Leave Act 2010</i> (referred to herein as "18 week PPL")? How many of those beneficiaries are expected to be Commonwealth public servants? Excluding scheme administration costs, what is the anticipated cost of 18 week PPL payments to be paid to all beneficiaries? Excluding scheme administration costs, what is the anticipated cost of 18 week PPL payments to be paid to beneficiaries who are 	Written

				<p>Commonwealth public servants?</p> <p>e. How many Commonwealth public servants who will receive 18 week PPL payments will also receive additional government-funded parental leave payments under existing awards, employment contracts or otherwise?</p> <p>f. What is the anticipated total cost (including a separate figure for administration costs) of government-funded parental leave payments, other than under the 18 week PPL scheme, to be paid to Commonwealth public servants?</p> <p>g. On average, how many weeks parental leave pay and superannuation would be funded by the government in addition to the 18 week PPL and at what rate of pay?</p>	
HS 39	Centrelink SFDC Transferred to FaHCSIA	Boswell	Paid Parental Leave – Means Test	<p>For the period 2011-2012 -</p> <p>a. If the means tests for 18 week PPL were based on combined family adjusted taxable income, rather than individual adjusted taxable income, how many people would become ineligible for 18 week PPL payments?</p> <p>b. Leaving aside administration savings, what would be the net savings in 18 week PPL payments?</p>	Written
HS 40	Centrelink SFDC Transferred to FaHCSIA	Boswell	Administrative Costs – Paid Parental Leave and Baby Bonus	<p>For the period 2011-12 -</p> <p>a. What is the estimate of the total number of recipients of 18 week PPL?</p> <p>b. What is the anticipated total cost to business of administering the 18 week PPL scheme? Please provide a breakdown of the various anticipated costs to large and small businesses.</p> <p>c. What is the anticipated total cost to government of administering the 18 week PPL scheme, excluding the cost of leave payments to recipients? Please provide a detailed breakdown of these costs including –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. under the <i>Paid Parental Leave Act 2010</i> (Part 2), the cost of determining whether 18 week PPL is payable to a person; ii. under the <i>Paid Parental Leave Act 2010</i> (Part 3), the cost of administering payment of 18 week PPL; iii. under the <i>Paid Parental Leave Act 2010</i> (Part 4), the cost of administering the compliance and enforcement provisions relating to PPL; and iv. any other costs to government. <p>d. What is the average cost to government of administering the 18 week PPL scheme per eligible person receiving this benefit (excluding the payments to beneficiaries)?</p> <p>e. What is the estimate of the total number of recipients of the Baby</p>	Written

				<p>Bonus?</p> <p>f. What is the anticipated total cost to government of administering the Baby Bonus (excluding the payments to beneficiaries)?</p> <p>g. What is the anticipated total cost to business of administering the Baby Bonus?</p> <p>h. What is the average cost to government of administering the Baby Bonus per eligible person receiving this benefit?</p>	
HS 41	Centrelink – SFDC	Ryan	Paid Parental Leave	<p>a. What is the total cost of building the paid parental leave scheme?</p> <p>b. How many Centrelink staff will work on the PPL scheme?</p> <p>c. What are the costs of shutting down costs for the Paid Parental Leave payment scheme?</p> <p>d. What are the expected redundancy costs for the shut down of the PPL scheme?</p> <p>e. How much has been/will be spent on training staff to operate the Paid Parental Leave payment scheme until June 30?</p>	Written
HS 42	Centrelink –	Ryan	Small Business Recovery Grants	<p>a. What role does Centrelink play in the administration of small business recovery grants?</p> <p>b. Does Centrelink know how many applicants have received small business recovery grants in each state?</p> <p>c. What is the total value of these grants?</p> <p>d. How many tier one grants have been issued?</p> <p>e. How many tier two grants were issued?</p>	Written
HS 43	Medicare – Business Division	Ryan	Small Business Superannuation Clearing House	<p>a. How many businesses have registered to use the Small Business Superannuation Clearing House?</p> <p>b. How many businesses do you expect to use the Small Business Superannuation Clearing House?</p> <p>c. To date, what is the operating cost of the Small Business Clearing House, per registered user of the Clearing House?</p> <p>d. Is Medicare Australia still on track to deliver the Small Business Superannuation Clearing House program on budget?</p> <p>e. Why weren't targets set for the Small Business Superannuation Clearing House program, as indicated in the DHS Incoming Government Brief (p. 143)?</p> <p>f. What is the total value of the payments made by the Clearing House on behalf of small businesses?</p> <p>g. How many employees are receiving the Clearing House service?</p> <p>i. What is the average cost per transaction?</p>	Written
HS 44	Medicare – Business Division	Bushby	Small Business Superannuation Clearing House	<p>a. How many employers have registered to send super contributions through the clearing house?</p> <p>b. What is the volume of funds which has been transmitted through the clearing house?</p> <p>c. What has the cost of the clearing house been:</p>	Written

				<p>i. This financial year? ii. Last financial year?</p> <p>d. Is funding provided for the ongoing operation of the clearing house in Medicare's future budgets?</p>	
HS45	Centrelink Employment/Education	Carol Brown	Newstart	<p>a. Is the Department aware of the problem faced by permanent and ongoing employees who are employed by the same continuous employer ie Teacher Aides who are forced to meet the Activity Test requirements under Newstart to receive payments during periods of non paid leave, for instance during school holidays, regardless if they have a job to return to? If so, what issues?</p> <p>b. During the last financial year how many people were affected by this problem and can you provide an occupational breakdown?</p> <p>c. Has any policy work been undertaken by the Department of Human Services to find a solution to this problem? Has any policy work been undertaken in conjunction with DEEWR to find a solution to this issue? If yes please detail.</p> <p>d. What input did the Agency have in alerting the Department to this issue and helping to find solutions to this problem?</p> <p>e. Have any policy solutions been developed to alleviate this issue?</p> <p>f. What is the process to deal with issues arising from income support policies?</p>	Written
HS46	Centrelink Network	Judith Adams	Cuts In Regional Offices	<p>I am concerned about the cuts in regional Centrelink Offices in Geraldton, Kalgoorlie and Albany in terms of the loss of professional development of staff and career structures to keep those skilled staff in regional areas and the subsequent benefit to their communities in doing so.</p> <p>a. I request the Staffing figures for the last three years for those offices.</p> <p>b. Is it correct that \$500,000 is being cut from the budgets of the above offices and if that figure is incorrect, please provide the correct figure?</p>	Written
HS47	Centrelink Smart Centres	Judith Adams	Distributed Virtual Network	<p>I am informed that Centrelink is using a model of a "distributed virtual network" for its claims processing where claims are sent to the most skilled persons and teams for assessment. Under those circumstances:</p> <p>a. why are skilled staff being centralised in Perth and those skills and opportunities for professional development not being distributed into regional & rural offices and is there any obstacle to that happening, and if so, what is it?</p>	Written
HS48	Centrelink	Judith Adams	Scanning and	I am informed that claims which have a 14 day response period are	Written

	Smart Centres		Distribution	<p>being sent to Canberra for scanning and distribution back to the teams that deal with them electronically.</p> <p>a) Is this correct, and if so what are the provisions for people in rural areas where a 14 day response period would be severely challenged because of the postal service restrictions (some have only a weekly service), and an individual's distance from the nearest town's postal service?</p> <p>b) To prevent people being unable to meet the 14 days deadline and therefore being in breach of the requirements, what are the difficulties arising from centralising the mail and are there any figures available on this situation since this process was introduced?</p> <p>c) If an important document, for instance a Tax Return, is sent to the central scanning area in Canberra and is scanned and the original lost, what are the legal implications of proceeding with a case relying on scanned documentation and not originals?</p>	
HS49	Centrelink Seniors/Families	Judith Adams	Disability Support	<p>I am informed there have been instances where the Disability Support Teams who assess clients and are specialists in that area, are not necessarily aware of the opportunity to provide other allowances, (including Newstart) to clients to 'tide them over' during the processing of their DSP claim (which can take up to 3 months) even if the clients do not necessarily meet all the requirements for the other allowances. I understand that in previous structures, the Teams would have been aware of those options for clients.</p> <p>a) Are you aware of this situation and have there been any complaints or reports of this lack of provision of information and assistance to clients?</p>	Written
HS50	Centrelink Education/Employment	Seiwert	Method of lodgement of continuation forms	<p>a) Can you please outline how job seekers lodge their continuation of payment forms and the numbers using various lodgement channels available?</p> <p>b) What lodgement changes have occurred between January 2010 to January 2011?</p>	Written
HS51	DHS Taskforce Transferred From DEEWR	Siewert	Local Connections to Work	Can you please provide the number of people who have accessed the local connections to work program by location for 1 July 2010 to 31 December 2010?	Written
HS52	Centrelink Education/Employment	Cash	Settlement Services for	a) With reference to refugees, supported through the Humanitarian Settlement Services program what is the total number of persons	Written

			Migrants and Refugees	<p>that arrived in Australia since November 2007 that are receiving Centrelink benefits? What is the percentage therefore of the number of persons working and those not?</p> <p>b) What is the total amount of payments received by these individuals?</p> <p>c) Provide a breakdown of the dollar value of payments in the following categories:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Unemployment Benefits; ii. Sickness Benefits; iii. Carers Allowances; iv. Youth Allowance; 	
HS54	Medicare People Services	Fifield	Unplanned Leave	<p>Senator FIFIELD—Given the stressful nature of the work, do you have any particular issues with excessive sick leave, absenteeism or—</p> <p>Ms Godwin—We certainly have unplanned leave, of course, as do all agencies. I guess I could say that we would always prefer the unplanned leave to be lower than it is; but it is certainly a feature of the program as well.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD—Would that unplanned leave be higher throughout the CSA than, say, the core department or—</p> <p>Ms Godwin—I would have to take that on notice.</p>	CA 80
HS55	Medicare People Services	Fifield	Paid Parental Leave	<p>Senator FIFIELD—We will do that when that comes. On paid parental leave, it is probably the same answer as for the core department as for the CSA, but DHS staff are entitled to parental leave as a result of their current agreement, separate to the PPL?</p> <p>Ms Hartland—Yes, that is correct. In fact, Child Support is seen as part of—and has been for some time—the core department. It is the same certified agreement that covers DHS and Child Support.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD—Again, I would ask for the total cost of DHS staff, in addition to the CSA?</p> <p>Ms Hartland—I would have to take that on notice.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD—Thank you. Again, it is exactly the same situation—that you could access the two schemes successively?</p> <p>Ms Hartland—Yes.</p> <p>Senator FIFIELD—Can you take on notice how many staff in the core DHS department used the pre-existing maternity leave arrangements for 2008-09, 2009-10 and the financial year to date?</p> <p>Ms Hartland—Yes, we will take that on notice.</p>	CA 81-82
Cross Portfolio Indigenous Matters – Question on Notice					

HS1	Siewert	Centrelink	Income management – number of vulnerable customers transitioning	<p>Senator SIEWERT—What is the number of people who have been classified as vulnerable who were transitioning from the old income management system to the new one?</p> <p>Ms Cartwright—The number of vulnerable welfare payment and child protection customers in the Northern Territory who transitioned from the old income management is 189.</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT—So there are 199. So there is only 10—</p> <p>Ms Cartwright—189.</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT—No, no, sorry. Overall there are 199, according to the list you gave me last night. So there are only, in fact, 10 new people classified as vulnerable who were not already on income management. Is that a fair assumption to make?</p> <p>Mr Tidswell—As we said last night, there is a lot of data here and we might need just to cross-reference with what you have and what we have here to make sure that we are on the same page.</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT—Okay. I am not trying to trick you; I am trying to work out—</p> <p>Mr Tidswell—We understand what you are trying to do.</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT—So 189 were transferred.</p> <p>Mr Tidswell—It might take us a few minutes just to double-check that figure.</p>	CA 17 / 18
HS 2	Chair - Moore	Centrelink	Centrelink datasets	<p>CHAIR—Senator, I do not want to take any of your time, but just on that basis to Mr Tidswell, in terms of the datasets that both Centrelink and FaHCSIA maintain, can we get the basic data that you keep on these things? I know that Senator Siewert goes through in great detail about the various figures, but there must be a standard dataset that the departments have, like on the pieces of paper that you are reading from to us. It would be useful if we could have some kind of agreement as to the basic datasets that you keep to see whether that meets the needs of the ongoing issues in this committee. Then if there is a gap in that we can identify it. That is something we could do after the estimates—to actually have a discussion about what they are—but it seems to me that we are asking the same questions and it would be useful if we just had</p>	CA 18

				<p>that basic set. Would that serve your needs, Senator Siewert?</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT—Yes, it would. Having said that, because this is a new set of data, because this is the first time—</p> <p>CHAIR—Absolutely. This is where we need to have it. So if we can put that on notice, Dr Harmer, and through Centrelink as well, we will have a discussion afterwards about how we do that. Is that okay?</p> <p>Dr Harmer—Very good suggestion.</p> <p>Mr Tidswell—Yes.</p> <p>Ms Cartwright—Yes.</p>	
HS 3	Siewert	Centrelink	Breakdown of vulnerable people	<p>Senator SIEWERT—Thank you. In terms of the number of Indigenous people who are vulnerable and non-Indigenous people who are vulnerable, have you got that breakdown?</p> <p>Ms Cartwright—That one I would have to take on notice.</p>	CA 18
HS 4	Siewert	Centrelink	BasicsCard – Op shops	<p>Senator SIEWERT—I think that is all the information I have on the breakdown of specific figures, thank you. Can I go to the BasicsCard very quickly. I have only a few questions because I know that we have asked about that quite a bit in the past. In terms of the expansion of the BasicsCard—and I know there is a huge list now where there is access to what I call opportunity shops; that is, the charity shops or second-hand goods stores—how many opportunity shops or second-hand shops now have access to the BasicsCard, if that information is easily accessible?</p> <p>Ms Hefren-Webb—I do not have that information. I do not know if Centrelink does.</p> <p>Ms Cartwright—The way the BasicsCard merchants approval framework works is that the merchant or BasicsCard provider would provide us with what their main business purpose is. One of the shops that you describe may well be clothing, for instance, so we would categorise that store as a clothing store. I will certainly take it on notice to see if we do have the data that you have specifically asked for, but it may be that they are categorised under their main source of business, and I imagine most of those would be clothing.</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT—Has that issue been raised with you? It has been</p>	CA 19

				<p>raised with me on many occasions— that is, people not being able to access their BasicsCard in opportunity shops.</p> <p>Ms Cartwright—I know that we do have some opportunity shops in the Northern Territory; I have actually visited some myself. There are some but, as I mentioned, we will need to get that data for you or have the names of those shops located. I have activated a store myself in the Northern Territory—a Red Cross store in Katherine—so they are there.</p>	
HS 5	Siewert	Centrelink	<p>Support for families with no income</p> <p>EESP to respond</p>	<p>Senator SIEWERT—I appreciate that this is also a DEEWR issue, but we are crossing over from DEEWR into general welfare for these families. Is there information on who has been referred to organisations? I presume here we are talking about NGOs that are coming in and supporting families. Is that what you mean?</p> <p>Ms Hay—That is correct.</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT—Do we have details on how those families are being supported and how they are putting food on the table?</p> <p>Mr Tidswell—Senator, we will take that on notice to get some advice about how that is occurring. It is important to note that family tax benefit is still provided. That is not suspended; it is the income support payment. The whole goal here for our staff is to get the customer to do what needs to be done to enrol their child or get their child to school. Now, one of the things we would look at is that the parent has to do whatever is reasonably possible, but if there is a difficult adolescent or child and they have taken all reasonable steps we would accept that. In that sense, the game plan here is to try to get kids at school—get them enrolled and attending. It is not the desired effect to suspend payment. We work hard with those families to get those kids at school or enrolled at school and that really is the process we use.</p> <p>Senator SIEWERT—I understand what you are intending. I disagree with it because of the approach that has been taken. I do not want to have an argument about that because we have had it, but what I am concerned about is what is happening with these families and whether it is creating more social problems.</p> <p>Senator Arbib—We will get you the answers on that. I have asked Centrelink the same questions because, obviously, I have an interest in the area. My understanding is that there are welfare workers who are involved throughout the process, obviously attempting to get the</p>	CA 20 / 21

				<p>children to engage in education but also looking at the welfare of the family and working in with the local school, of course, and the other agencies. So we will get you a more detailed answer on that, but we all agree that we are not just worried about the welfare of the children in terms of going to school but also their general welfare. The two matters are totally linked.</p>	
HS6	Siewert	Centrelink	<p>Centrelink Payments</p> <p>Edmund Tee – Payment and Income Mgmt Systems</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What obstacles, if any, prevent Centrelink from transferring electronic payments into people’s account at a designated time each week or fortnight? b. What steps has Centrelink taken or is in the process of taking to ensure payments to people who usually reside in a remote or very remote location arrive at a designated point in time? c. Does Centrelink currently provide staff and agents based in remote locations with a schedule for the timing of regular payments and, if so, how precise is the schedule and how and when is it distributed? d. Over the course of the past year, has Centrelink participated in any discussions with representatives of the banking industry aimed at improving the scheduling of payments to recipients living in remote Aboriginal communities? If so, when did these discussions occur and what were the key outcomes? 	