

## Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs

### ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES – 24 FEBRUARY 2011 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

#### Human Services Portfolio

**Topic:** Cuts to Regional Centrelink Offices

**Question reference number:** HS 46

**Senator:** Adams

**Type of question:** Written

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 8 April 2011

**Number of pages:** 2

#### Question:

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.

- a. I request the staffing figures for the last three years for those offices.
- 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?

#### Answer:

- a) The staffing figures for Centrelink staff working in the Geraldton, Kalgoorlie and Albany offices are:

<b>Staff numbers snapshot – Customer Service Centre Staff only</b>			
	<b>31/12/08</b>	<b>31/12/09</b>	<b>31/12/10</b>
Albany	30	30	24
Geraldton	33	26	19
Kalgoorlie	19	18	16

There are additional staff based at these locations who have transferred from Customer Service Centre positions to specialist positions and National Support Office out-posted positions. These additional staff are:

<b>Non-Customer Service Staff numbers snapshot</b>			
	<b>31/12/08</b>	<b>31/12/09</b>	<b>31/12/10</b>
Albany	5	7	10
Geraldton	4	4	8
Kalgoorlie	2	3	3

- b) It is correct that salary budgets have reduced. The reduction in the financial year 2010-11 is \$696,449 from the 2009-10 final budget.

Changes which have reduced workload and staffing requirements include:

- a reduction in customer numbers; and
- an increase in the uptake of self-service.

The reduction in salary budgets for Customer Service Centres has not resulted in a corresponding reduction in staffing numbers at each location, because:

- non-customer service work (such as processing) has been transferred to locations such as Albany and Geraldton;
- specialist and national support roles have continued; and
- in December 2008, the Geraldton Customer Service Centre was responsible for a number of short-term initiatives, which have since ceased, such as:
  - o servicing Exceptional Circumstances Relief Payment declared regions; and
  - o processing work for new initiatives such as the Pension Reform Asset Taper Test.