

## **Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs**

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

#### **Human Services Portfolio**

**Topic:** Scanning and Distribution of Claims

**Question reference number:** HS 48

**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 informed that claims which have a 14 day response period are being sent to Canberra for scanning and distribution back to the teams that deal with them electronically.

- 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?
- 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?
- 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?

#### **Answer:**

- a) All customer correspondence sent to Centrelink is sent directly to the Scanning Operations Centre and scanned upon receipt within 24hours. The choice of returning correspondence via mail remains with the customer along with other servicing options (e.g. Authorised Centrelink Agents) available to them depending on their location. Where a customer is likely to experience difficulties providing documentation by the due date, they are able to contact Centrelink to discuss.
- b) Centrelink is in regular contact with Australia Post and other providers of courier services to ensure timely delivery of mail services. Further work has commenced on identifying remote or rural areas where alternative arrangements may need to apply due to limited mail services.

- c) All original documentation is scanned within 24 hours of receipt at the Scanning Operations Centre and returned to the customer via registered mail or regular post depending on the type of document.

Scanned documents have been certified as sufficient for the purpose of evidence as a business record for Centrelink.