

## Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

### ADDITIONAL BUDGET ESTIMATES - 14 FEBRUARY 2013 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

#### Human Services Portfolio

**Topic:** Customer Online Services

**Question reference number:** HS 4

**Senator:** Fifield

**Type of question:** Hansard page 105

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 5 April 2013

**Number of pages:** 2

#### **Question:**

- a) Senator FIFIELD: You have taken me through the amount of customers that are registered online. How many report online rather than providing information across the counter?

Mr Rimmer: We can take that on notice. It is a large proportion of people who have to report their income to us on a fortnightly basis. It is something like 80 per cent, but I would rather give you the precise figure if I could.

Senator FIFIELD: On notice if you could. I guess that has been steadily increasing?

Mr Rimmer: Steadily increasing. There will always be a proportion of people who find it difficult to report online, for example, if there are serious challenges in their lives through mental illness or something like that, often in combination with some language issues. We do not expect that number to hit 100 per cent. We think that it may get to 85 per cent - something like that.

Senator FIFIELD: If you do not mind taking it on notice, I would be interested in seeing the trend, month by month since, say, 1 July 2011.

Mr Rimmer: We can provide that.

- b) Senator FIFIELD: Do you have any figures for how much postage has been saved by the department as online access to that sort of correspondence has gone up?

Mr Rimmer: It is complicated to work out the precise details of that, because postage prices are changing over time and those kinds of things.

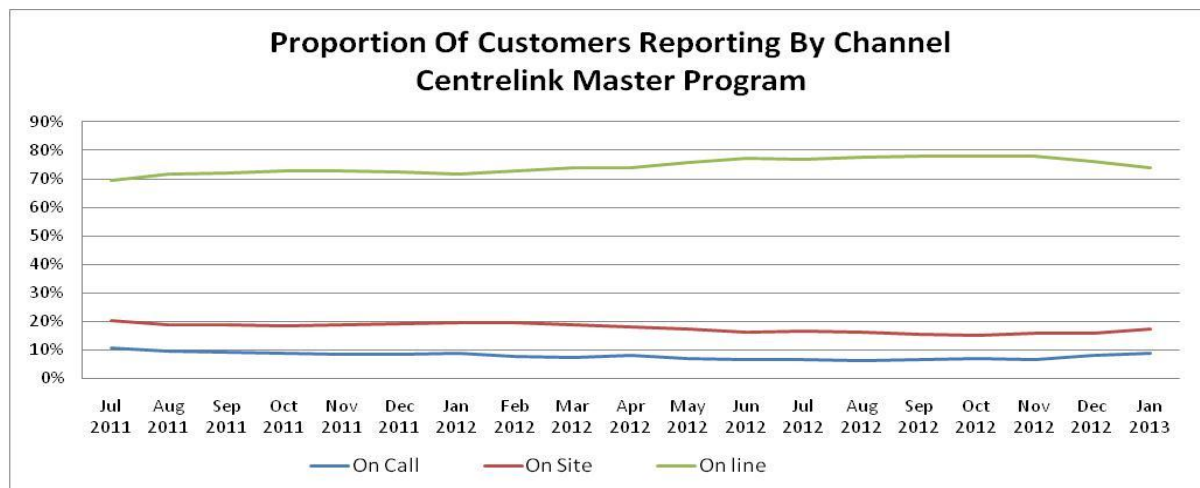
Senator FIFIELD: And the number of things that you send out vary year by year?

Mr Rimmer: Yes. Of the 135 million online letters my recollection is that we send something like 30 million online now, but I will check that number.

**Answer:**

a) As at 31 January 2013 over 74 per cent of all customers report online.

In this context ‘reporting’ includes any customer within any payment group who is required to make fortnightly contact with the Department to stimulate their income support payment. This can be done by either declaring employment income and or satisfying activity test obligations related to looking for work.



Note: The proportion of customers reporting online does not relate to the number of customers registered for Online Letters as shown in the response to question b).

b) The Department has projected a postage saving of approximately \$12.5 million for 2012-13. The data below reflects postage volumes and online letter distribution for the 2010-11, 2011-12 and 2012-13 financial years.

	<b>2010-11 (million)</b>	<b>2011-12 (million)</b>	<b>2012-13 (million, forecast)</b>
Number of Letters sent DHS	135.1	138.4	112.4
Number of Online Letters	12.5	21.1	30.2
Total	147.6	159.5	142.6