



SENATOR KIM CARR
MINISTER FOR HUMAN SERVICES

STATEMENT TO THE COMMUNITY AFFAIRS
LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE ROOM 2S1
PARLIAMENT HOUSE

14 FEBRUARY 2013

*****CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY*****

In my previous Statements to the Committee, I spoke of this Department as an asset for all Australians.

I want to reiterate that view today.

I particularly wish to acknowledge those officers who have put up their hands to serve in the wake of the floods and fires.

They have earned the respect and the gratitude of all sides of politics.

We see in their service the potential of the new Department.

Services have gone mobile, with apps for students, seniors, families and jobseekers.

Citizens are moving online, with more than 4 million - or one in four adults - registered for internet service.

Officers are getting out to more regions, with 53 new sites visited by the mobile services.

And services are coming together in genuine one-stop shops, with 70 completed in the second half of 2012.

We have boosted Medicare locations by more than 50 per cent; and Centrelink sites by more than a third.

Across the board, this agency is more accessible and convenient than ever before.

That is the service our citizens have a right to expect.

They ought to look to this Department with the highest of expectations. And it ought to deliver.

It is in that context that I wish to comment on a matter that has given rise to some concern in recent weeks.

This is the incorrect advice in a letter sent to parents moving to the Newstart payment.

I share the Committee's disappointment that such an error could occur, particularly in light of the efforts that were made to help families prepare.

I understand that Secretary Kathryn Campbell will provide a full outline of the facts in her opening statement today.

I am assured that a full inquiry has been conducted, and better safeguards are now in place.

Further, Associate Secretary Ben Rimmer is leading a wider renewal of the Department's approach to communicating with citizens, addressing both the letters and community consultation.

As Minister, I repeat my personal commitment to work for a better service, for the million citizens who look to this Department every day.

This error, and all that followed, is a reminder of the great trust this portfolio carries.

No matter the level of our authority or the functions we undertake, our actions have consequences in the lives of Australians.

I assure you that message has been received.

On that note, I seek leave to table my Statement.

