

# Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

## ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES - 27 FEBRUARY 2014 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

### Department of Human Services

**Topic:** Call Wait Times

**Question reference number:** HS 120

**Senator:** Cameron

**Type of question:** Written

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 24 April 2014

**Number of pages:** 4

#### Question:

- a) I refer to HS 79 concerning call and processing wait times and customer issues. Please update answers (a) and (b).
- b) Provide details of any outages or breakdowns since September 2013 in the call lines and the call back service? On what dates did they occur and what geographic areas were affected?
- c) Has there been any staff reductions in telephone service delivery? If so, what are the implications for performance of the service?
- d) Does DHS log the number of waiting calls that that are directed to the call back service? If so, how many by month in 2013–14 to date?
- e) Please provide the daily or weekly summary of call wait times for the period September 2013 to date?

#### Answer:

- a) a) i) Average Speed of Answer: Centrelink (minutes:seconds)

	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
2012–13	16:36	7:28	6:16	6:21	11:01	11:17	18:53	15:12	18:38	17:16	9:13	9:57
2013–14	14:26	14:02	11:05	18:58	25:22	19:10	23:32	17:29				

- ii) Average Speed of Answer: Medicare Customer Lines (minutes:seconds)

	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
2012–13	5:49	4:29	2:06	3:36	4:15	3:50	4:11	4:08	3:51	4:54	7:13	9:02
2013–14	9:01	4:32	4:14	5:02	3:45	2:40	6:30	5:05				

- iii) Average Speed of Answer: Medicare Provider Lines (minutes:seconds)

	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
2012–13	0:25	0:32	0:28	0:46	0:40	0:41	0:25	0:23	0:19	0:30	0:40	0:47
2013–14	0:44	0:46	0:43	0:51	0:55	1:09	1:07	0:53				

iv) Average Speed of Answer: Child Support (minutes:seconds)

	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
<b>2012-13</b>	0:44	0:48	0:45	1:01	0:45	0:56	2:23	1:59	0:41	1:19	0:38	0:57
<b>2013-14</b>	0:50	2:08	1:06	2:17*	1:34	0:54	2:13	1:59				

Note: following the integration of two reporting systems, the average speed of answer has been revised from 2 minutes 8 seconds as provided in HS79 Supplementary Estimates in November 2013.

v) Child Support – Percentage of Calls Answered Within 30 seconds

	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
<b>2012-13</b>	75.4%	76.7%	78.9%	72.6%	78.4%	73.4%	57.7%	60.5%	78.9%	66.0%	78.7%	74.8%
<b>2013-14</b>	74.5%	63.2%	64.2%	51.2%								

Note: This data is currently unavailable from November 2013.

vi) Average Shopfront Wait Time (minutes:seconds)

	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
<b>2012-13</b>	11:57	10:32	9:42	10:09	13:02	13:34	16:45	17:30	16:57	17:03	15:50	16:32
<b>2013-14</b>	18:55	16:41	14:41	15:25	16:27	17:08	20:11	19:52				

Note: With the introduction of co-located offices the Department now measures shopfront wait times at a departmental level rather than by programme.

vii) Refer to (vi) above.

viii) Customers can present at a service centre with multiple enquiries, some that can be handled at the time and others that are ongoing. Accordingly, data is not available for this measure.

ix) Customers can call with multiple enquiries, some that can be handled at the time and others that are ongoing. Accordingly, data is not available for this measure.

a) b) As outlined in the 2013-14 Portfolio Budget Statements (page 33), the processing key performance indicator is 82 per cent or more of all claims processed by the department within standard. This budget target was set with the creation of the Department of Human Services and performance information is therefore not available for 2011-12. The performance result was 97 per cent in 2012-13. This figure is reported on page 14 of the department's 2012-13 Annual report. The performance result for 2013-14 (as at 28 February 2014) was 98 per cent.

b) The following outages within DHS call lines and the geographic areas that these outages have occurred since September 2013 are listed below:

Medicare Provider Lines

Date	Outage commenced	Outage ceased	Geographical Location	Issue
5/11/2013	11.05am	11.30am	National	Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme calls were diverted to emergency message resulting in providers being unable to speak to a service officer.

### Child Support Contact Centres

Date	Outage commenced	Outage ceased	Sites impacted	Issue
25/11/2013	11:43am	12:53 pm	Melbourne	200 staff were receiving an error message when transferring some calls. Work around was put in place at 12:53 for agents to transfer using manual dialling.

### Smart Centres

Date	Outage commenced	Outage ceased	Sites Impacted	Issue
13/01/2014	8.45am	10.00am	National	Phone Self Service unavailable only.
15/01/2014	11.05am	11.25am	Online Self Service helpdesk sites	Callers to the Online Self Service assistance line received engaged signals.
20/03/2014	2.50pm	3.05pm	Predominately Liverpool Smart Centre	Multilingual service. 340 callers unable to get through to a service officer.
24/03/2014	7.00pm	8.00pm	All Medicare Public Smart Centres	Callers to these centres receiving congestion message.

### Place in queue (call back option)

This service does not have specific locations. Calls are presented to the next available customer service staff.

Date	Outage commenced	Outage ceased	Issue
30/10/2013	7.00am	10.00am	No 'expected wait time' message relayed, which impacted 'Place In Queue' offers during this time.
20/11/2013	12.20pm	1.15pm	No 'expected wait time' message relayed, which impacted 'Place In Queue' offers during this time.
20/03/2014	11.30am	3.00pm	No 'expected wait time' message relayed, which impacted 'Place In Queue' offers during this time.

- c) During the period September 2013 to February 2014, there was a 3.05 per cent (275 ASL) reduction in staff numbers across the Smart Centres which deliver Centrelink, Medicare and Child Support telephony and processing services. Due to the blended nature of telephony and processing work undertaken in Smart Centres, it is not possible to provide an exact staffing figure for telephony service delivery only. The reduction in staffing over the period was largely a product of the ceasing of the extra resourcing from the 2013–14 Budget measure 'Call Centre supplementation—reducing wait times' that ended in September 2013.

Through a focus on efficiently deploying resources, including engaging Intermittent and Irregular Employees to better match staffing levels with call arrival patterns, the department has been able to minimise the service delivery impact of the staffing changes. The department has a key performance indicator relating to telephony set out in the 2013–14 Portfolio Budget Statements—an average speed of answer for service users of ≤16 minutes. In

2013–14, as at 2 March 2014, the department was achieving this target with an average speed of answer for service users of around 14 minutes 45 seconds.

- d) The following table outlines the number of answered callbacks (by month) provided by the department’s Place in Queue service offer.

2013–14 Answered Callbacks by Month

	<b>Jul</b>	<b>Aug</b>	<b>Sep</b>	<b>Oct</b>	<b>Nov</b>	<b>Dec</b>	<b>Jan</b>	<b>Feb</b>
<b>2013–14</b>	221,415	215,574	191,388	235,609	238,977	193,090	263,987	222,986

- e) The following table provides the department average speed of answer by week as per the key performance indicator outlined in the 2013–14 Portfolio Budget Statements—‘Telephony: Average speed of answer – service users.

Average Speed of Answer by Week: (minutes:seconds)

<b>Week Ended</b>	<b>Average Speed of Answer</b>
08/09/2013	10:22
15/09/2013	09:40
22/09/2013	10:34
29/09/2013	11:00
06/10/2013	13:33
13/10/2013	16:03
20/10/2013	17:36
27/10/2013	17:11
03/11/2013	16:52
10/11/2013	17:42
17/11/2013	21:31
24/11/2013	22:04
01/12/2013	21:52
08/12/2013	21:00
15/12/2013	18:34
22/12/2013	13:20
29/12/2013	10:43
05/01/2014	16:05
12/01/2014	19:12
19/01/2014	19:20
26/01/2014	20:23
02/02/2014	21:49
09/02/2014	18:23
16/02/2014	14:41
23/02/2014	14:18
02/03/2014	13:31