

## Own Motion - Investigation into service delivery complaints about Centrelink – Recommendation Table

Update as at 31 December 2014

No.	Recommendation	Status as at 30 September 2014	Status as at 31 December 2014
<b>1. Telephone Services</b>			
1(a) Supports	Provide more affordable and equitable telephone access for customers. Investigate the possibility of extending 'place in queue' to all callers on all enquiry lines.	The department is consistently reviewing service offers to ensure that they are appropriate. For example, recent changes to telephony routing and prioritisation of inbound calls, full implementation of the skills pyramid approach and use of intermittent and irregular employees has seen a marked improvement to the customer experience on the Income Management and Indigenous lines. By aligning customer queries with the most appropriate skill level of Service Officers, shorter wait times are now a key feature of the Income Management and Indigenous lines.  Further refinement on the operation of Place in Queue (PiQ) technology has also provided the opportunity to better target call handling and maximise resources skilled in Income Management and Indigenous telephony.	The department continues the work of implementing the Managed Telecommunications Services (MTS). The department and Telstra are working towards completion of the implementation of the MTS by 18 June 2015. This work includes improving the department's Place in Queue capability. Initially, this capability is being deployed within the Centrelink telephony environment but this will ultimately be expanded capability to all departmental lines. Place in Queue is an important part of the department's customer service. However, it can have unintended consequences causing other customers to wait to receive telephony services and any extension needs to be carefully considered.  The department has undertaken a review of its estimated wait time messaging and adjustments have been made to ensure more accurate wait time messaging is being presented to customers. This messaging will be further improved with implementation of more modern infrastructure under the MTS.
1(b) Supports	Review the automated triage arrangements for incoming calls to identify and provide priority assistance to vulnerable callers and customers with urgent enquiries.	The department continues to review its telephony services to provide the correct assistance to callers. This includes identifying the most appropriate priority for calls.	On consideration, the department does not believe a review of its automated triage is required.  Within the department's current automated triage arrangements, there is a mechanism in place that allows prioritisation of calls for

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			<p>vulnerable customers and those with urgent enquiries.</p> <p>As previously advised, those callers that identify bereavement, urgent payments or hardship are prioritised and receive priority services.</p> <p><b>The department proposes this recommendation be closed.</b></p>
1(c) Partially Supports	In consultation with the Department of Social Services and other stakeholders, develop performance standards for speed to answer calls on each of Centrelink customer enquiry lines.	Refer to update of 30 June 2014. <b>The department proposes this recommendation be closed.</b>	As advised in the update of 30 June 2014, the department has developed a performance standard to answer calls on each of Centrelink's customer enquiry lines. The key performance indicator is included in the Portfolio Budget Statements. The target for this key performance indicator is an average speed of answer of ≤16 minutes. <b>The department proposes this recommendation be closed.</b>
1(d) Partially Supports	Publicise and regularly report Centrelink's performance against the performance standards developed under recommendation 1(c).	Refer to update of 30 June 2014. <b>The department proposed this recommendation be closed.</b>	Telephony data is reported to the Ombudsman's office as part of the update provided at the Quarterly Liaison Meetings. The quarterly data will only be publicised and reported to the Ombudsman's office. Annual data is publicised and reported through the department's Annual Report. <b>The department proposes this recommendation be closed.</b>
<b>2. Be more responsive to online enquiries via the DHS website</b>			
2(a, b, c, d) Supports	Improve the arrangements for customers to make online enquiries of Centrelink with the following aims: (a) Categorise and prioritise each enquiry. (b) Link the enquiry with the customer's	The webform that customers complete for an enquiry has been updated to include both an email and phone number to maximise contact opportunities. The triaging of enquiries is considered the best balance to optimising overall response times whilst identifying urgent enquiries. If sufficient information is provided by	The recommendations of the external review of the department's electronic communications channels span a 24 month period and include short (6 months), medium (12-18 months) and long term (24 months) initiatives. Reference and working groups have been formed to progress the recommendations with

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	<p>Centrelink record.</p> <p>(c) Acknowledge receipt and respond to each enquiry.</p> <p>(d) Develop a performance standard for responding to online enquiries.</p>	<p>the customer the department will link their enquiry with their record.</p> <p>An external review of the department's electronic communications channels, including Centrelink, has recently been conducted. Recommendations are currently being considered by stakeholders. Once recommendations have been accepted, actioning of these will progress over time.</p>	<p>a workshop conducted in December 2014.</p> <p>Further to improving the webform that customers complete for an enquiry and the information provided on the website to assist these customers, two automated scripts have been developed to improve the arrangements for online enquiries.</p> <p>The first is an internal statistics script which has been developed to reduce manual effort and provides reliable data aiding workload/resource management.</p> <p>The second automated script assists in linking enquiries to a customer's record, decreasing the number of enquiries that need to be manually matched.</p> <p>Where the script automatically links email enquiries to a customer record and the message contains predetermined keywords (indicating vulnerability/risk) these are prioritised. Emails that are general enquiries (such as appointments, reporting and change of contact details) are actioned in line with work of the same nature that comes into the department via other channels (telephone and processing channels).</p> <p>Where the automated script does not successfully link to a customer record the emails are triaged manually by staff who monitor the mailbox. Emails that require urgent/immediate attention are prioritised over general enquiries.</p> <p>An improved, standardised email process has also been introduced to increase resolution rates and provide a reduction in re-contacts and duplicated effort.</p> <p>Customers are issued with a receipt number</p>

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			<p>when an enquiry is lodged online. General enquiries are responded to by telephone or email.</p> <p>Consideration is being given to the feasibility of a performance standard for online enquiries. Further information regarding the progress on this will be available in the next update.</p>
<b>3. Written correspondence</b>			
<p>3(a) Partially Supports</p>	<p>Improve written correspondence: Develop a performance standard for responding to customers' enquiries sent by post or email.</p>	<p>PwC was engaged to examine email for the department. Part of this review was to include recommendations for the development of a performance standard.</p> <p>This review's recommendations are currently being considered by stakeholders. Once recommendations have been accepted, actioning of these will progress over time.</p>	<p>The recommendations of the external review of the department's electronic communications channels span a 24 month period and include short (6 months), medium (12-18 months) and long term (24 months) initiatives.</p> <p>Reference and working groups have been formed to progress the recommendations with a workshop conducted in December 2014.</p> <p>Consideration is being given to the feasibility of a performance standard for online enquiries. Further information regarding the progress on this will be available in the next update.</p>
<p>3(b) Supports</p>	<p>Commit to a process of continual review of correspondence, including by customer testing, to ensure that improvements flowing from the DHS Letters Taskforce are not undermined by consequential changes.</p>	<p>As at 30 June 2014, the department had completed the majority of the recommendations generated by the DHS Letters Taskforce. The remaining recommendations are being completed as part of business as usual and the continual processes of review as new programs come on board.</p>	<p>The department has committed to a process of continual review of correspondence, including by customer testing, to ensure that improvements flowing from the DHS Letters Taskforce are not undermined by consequential changes.</p> <p>The DHS Letters Taskforce made 1,223 recommendations for enhancing personalised customer communications generated by the department (including letters, emails and SMS across all service delivery brands).</p> <p>The recommendations broadly related to simplifying format, improving message clarity, consistency of standards and "look and feel" across products and service delivery brands,</p>

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			<p>removing obsolete messages, and reducing potential for contradictory messages across paragraphs.</p> <p>Recommendations were allocated against six levels of priority by the Letters Taskforce on the basis of risk and volume:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A=Immediate action</li> <li>• B=Actioned within 3-6 months</li> <li>• C=Actioned up to 9 months</li> <li>• D=Changes implemented as Business as Usual</li> <li>• E=No action required</li> <li>• F=Decommission at next available release.</li> </ul> <p>As at 31 December 2014, the department had implemented over 95% of recommendations. The outstanding recommendations are primarily rated D or lower, and will be progressively implemented as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• part of scheduled forthcoming ICT delivery</li> <li>• part of business as usual practice that ensures all letters are reviewed periodically, and</li> <li>• as new initiatives are delivered.</li> </ul> <p>The department will continue to ensure that the enhancements and improvements align with the recommendations arising from the DHS Letters Taskforce, including from customer testing changes.</p> <p>The remaining recommendations continue to be tracked to ensure completion.</p> <p><b>The department proposes this recommendation be closed.</b></p>

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<b>4. Income processing for customers who receive income support and Family Tax Benefit (FTB)</b>			
4(a) Partially Supports	<p>Improve the accuracy of payments made to customers (or couples) with earnings.</p> <p>Revise procedures for administering income reported by customers who receive both an income support payment and FTB to ensure that both payments are reassessed whenever new income information is received.</p>	<p>The department is in the process of obtaining data on customers who incurred an income/earnings related income support payment debt who also provided an FTB income estimate around the time of the debt start date. Customer records will be analysed to determine if income/earnings reporting procedures need to be revised.</p> <p>A report to establish how widespread the issue is and the circumstances when a debt may occur has been requested and we are awaiting the output. On receipt of the report the analysis of individual records will commence. The timeframe required for the analysis will depend on how well we can target the customer selection.</p>	<p>The department has obtained a report on customers who incurred an income/earnings related income support payment debt who also provided an FTB income estimate around the time of the debt start date.</p> <p>Customer records will be analysed to determine if income/earnings reporting procedures need to be revised to improve accuracy. Analysis of customer records will commence in late January 2015. The timeframe required for the analysis will depend on how well the department can target the customer selection.</p>
4(b) Partially Supports	<p>Improve letters sent to those customers to ensure that they clearly state what income is taken into account for each payment.</p>	<p>The department has commenced reviewing the content of letters sent to income support and family assistance customers in relation to income and earnings.</p> <p>A review of family assistance letters has been undertaken and the department considers that letters clearly state the income that is taken into account for family assistance payments.</p> <p>However we are currently seeking an enhancement to the 'About your Family's Income' information on the back of family assistance letters to explain the different notification requirements for income support payments. It is expected that this enhancement will be implemented in June 2015.</p>	<p>As noted in the September 2014 status update, an enhancement to the 'About your Family's Income' information on the back of family assistance letters has been developed and is now confirmed for implementation in June 2015.</p> <p>The 'About your Family's Income' information already includes an explanation of the income that is taken into account for family assistance.</p> <p>The additional text will remind customers that there are different notification requirements for income support payments and if the customer or their partner have a change in income they will need to update their income details for their income support payment separately.</p>
<b>5. Maintenance Income Test for FTB</b>			
5 (a, b) Partially	<p>Improve the information provided to FTB recipients whose FTB is (or may be)</p>	<p>The department considers that it not feasible to include on letters the amount of child support</p>	<p>Information regarding the Maintenance Income Test and how it is used in FTB rate</p>

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Supports	<p>affected by child support to explain the operation of the maintenance income test, including:</p> <p>(a) the actual amount of child support used to calculate the person's rate of FTB each fortnight</p> <p>(b) the method that Centrelink uses to project a person's child support income and to reconcile their FTB at the end of the financial year</p>	<p>used to calculate the person's rate of FTB each fortnight or the method used to project a person's child support income and to reconcile their FTB at the end of the financial year.</p> <p>However the department is investigating options to make this information available in the customer's online account where it would be possible to display more detailed information.</p>	<p>calculations, is publically available on the DHS website, the DSS website (Family Assistance Guide) and Comlaw, <i>A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999</i>.</p> <p>The Families IT system utilises child support payment information that is electronically transferred on a fortnightly basis from the child support system to adjust a customer's FTB entitlements/payments.</p> <p>The Families system receives both 'entitlement' (child support that customers are assessed as entitled to receive) and 'disbursement' (the amount of child support that has been collected and disbursed to a customer) files, with a customer's fortnightly FTB entitlement based on the higher amount to avoid customer debts. The FTB reconciliation is based on the actual amount of child support disbursed to a customer. Customers who have opted to collect child support privately are reconciled on the assessed 'entitlement' amount as it is accepted that the full child support entitlement has been collected by the customer.</p> <p>The Families and Child Support Policy Branch is currently in the process of establishing what information may be able to be included online for a customer from a technical, legal and privacy perspective once FTB reconciliation has occurred.</p> <p>The FTB reconciliation does not reconcile FTB entitlement for the full financial year as a single time period unless a customer's circumstance has not changed for the entire financial year.</p> <p>Each time there is a change of circumstance which will affect FTB entitlement, the system</p>

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			<p>reconciles the specific time period discretely across the full financial year.</p> <p>For example, if a customer receives FTB and child support for one child, gains care of another child for two months, and subsequently loses care of that second child, FTB reconciliation will be broken into at least three discrete periods for that particular financial year (depending on any other changes that impact upon the FTB rate over the year).</p> <p>Depending on the complexity of the child support case, including the individual's personal circumstance changes throughout the year, it is expected that a breakdown for certain periods within a financial year may be able to be displayed, indicating the child support payment amount and the resulting FTB payment amount.</p> <p>Subject to being able to provide detailed information online, the department will also progress the simplification of FTB reconciliation letters to provide an overview of the reconciliation result and direct customers to their online account for further details.</p>
5 (c,d) Partially Supports	<p>(c) the different treatment that will (or may) apply if the person changes their child support collection method (from Child Support collect to private collect, and <i>vice versa</i>).</p> <p>(d) the full range of options available if the amount of child support actually received is less than the amount taken into account to calculate FTB.</p>	<p>The department considers that the information provided is adequate.</p> <p>In terms of improving the information to customers about items c and d, the department provided details in its original response as to how it had updated its website with relevant information to address these issues.</p> <p><b>Note</b> – in terms of (c), if customers who are collecting their child support privately do not receive the full amount of child support, the website suggests that they contact the</p>	<p>As stated in the update of 30 September 2014, the department believes that the information contained on its website provides appropriate and relevant information to customers about the treatment that may apply when a customer changes their child support collection method; and the range of options available if the amount of child support received is less than the amount taken into account to calculate FTB.</p> <p>See for example,</p>



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		<p>department to talk about their options. There are also child support resources on the website to inform customers about enforcement options for child support. For customers whose child support is collected through the department, if their full entitlement is not collected the website explains that they may receive a top up payment of FTB.</p> <p><b>The department proposes this recommendation be closed.</b></p>	<p><a href="http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/enablers/child-support/compare-child-support-collection-options">www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/enablers/child-support/compare-child-support-collection-options</a>; and  <a href="http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/enablers/child-support-and-family-tax-benefit-part-a">http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/enablers/child-support-and-family-tax-benefit-part-a</a></p> <p><b>The department proposes this recommendation be closed.</b></p>
<b>6. Online services</b>			
6(a) Supports	<p>Increase support and assistance for customers to use online services.</p> <p>Research and address barriers preventing or limiting customer take up of online services, or causing people to stop using them.</p>	<p>Since the introduction of the department's first app in August 2012 there have been over 2.8 million downloads. Customers have used the Express Plus Centrelink Apps to undertake <b>49.9 million</b> transactions (9 August 2012 to 31 July 2014).</p> <p>The myGov online service was implemented in May 2013, providing customers the convenience of one username and password to access all of the department's online services as well as a number of other commonwealth agencies.</p> <p>As at 14 November 2014 there are over 5.9m myGov accounts making it easier for customers to access their government online services.</p> <p>The department is also testing an integrated service delivery approach with the myGov Brisbane shopfront, which is focussed on providing education and support to customers to help them use digital services.</p>	<p>Over 3.3 million downloads of Express Plus mobile apps have occurred since the initial launch of apps on 9 August 2012 to 31 December 2014.</p> <p>Over 1.2 million customers have used Express Plus Centrelink mobile apps to undertake 71 million transactions since the initial launch of apps to 31 December 2014.</p> <p>Assistance to customers is provided via a range of instructional materials, including online guides available through the department's website, and videos available via YouTube.</p> <p>The department is developing conversational insights training for customer facing staff.</p> <p>The training is designed to help staff in their interactions with customers to assist them to use online services.</p> <p>The myGov online service was implemented in May 2013, providing customers the convenience of one username and password to access all of the department's online services as well as a number of other Commonwealth agencies. As at 31 December</p>

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			<p>2014 there are over 6.1m myGov accounts making it easier for customers to access their government online services.</p> <p>The department undertakes regular design and usability assessments of the myGov service, for both new and existing functionality, to ensure that the service meets users' requirements.</p> <p>A myGov mobile app will be delivered later in 2015 to provide customers with additional convenience of accessing their online services 'on the go'.</p> <p><b>The myGov Brisbane site</b></p> <p>The site offers an integrated service approach and has a new 'look and feel' and service offer compared with other DHS and ATO locations.</p> <p>The fit-out of the site has been designed to promote positive customer behaviour and expectations and supports an integrated government, digital service approach and customer self-management.</p> <p>The digital service approach is the primary service and it is offered with every customer transaction that can be completed online or digitally. The service offer has been developed to align with the department's Service Delivery Operating Model by assisting and educating customers to take up digital services, and to move away from being serviced by staff toward being self-managed and accessing services at a time and place that suits them.</p> <p>Where transactions cannot be completed via the digital or online channels, staff are available for face-to-face servicing.</p> <p>Face-to-face servicing is divided into simple</p>

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			<p>and complex transactions.</p> <p>Longer, more complex, transactions are offered a sit-down interview and same-day service where possible, or by appointment, either onsite or at a more convenient service centre. Simple and shorter transactions are completed onsite at the stand-up access points.</p> <p>Research undertaken by the department to address barriers preventing or limiting customer take up of online services includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and analysis of customer feedback and complaints to identify issues that impact customer use of online services. This information is used to improve services and make them more intuitive to use.</li> <li>• Review of digital communication to enable customers to stay in the online channel to complete their transaction, and to also use other features available to them in the online channel.</li> <li>• Analysis of the findings of the Channel Optimisation project and its experiments in face to face and telephony environments as part of enhancing the support and assistance we offer to customers to use online services. Behavioural insights are being used in messaging and how to guides.</li> </ul>
6(b) Supports	Develop training packages and information products to assist customers to take advantage of online services to self-manage their business with Centrelink, such as online reporting, capturing and uploading documents,	The department is also testing an integrated service delivery approach with the myGov Brisbane shopfront, which is focussed on providing education and support to customers to help them use digital services.	A range of online guides covering a broad range of online services are available on the department's website under the "help" link. The department produces instructional videos, available via the department's YouTube

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	printing a payment summary and how to use the Centrelink statement	<b>The department proposes this recommendation be closed.</b>	<p>channel. Videos include tutorials on how to use online service and perform a range of transactions. Development and maintenance of these materials is ongoing.</p> <p>The department is developing a conversational insights training package for staff using the findings of the Channel Optimisation Project. It expected to finalise this package by May 2015. Behavioural insights are being used in communication materials including how to guides and other supports for staff and customers.</p> <p><b>The myGov Brisbane site</b></p> <p>The site offers an integrated service approach and has a new 'look and feel' and service offer compared with other DHS and ATO locations. The fit-out has been designed to promote a positive customer behaviour and expectations and supports an integrated government, digital service approach and customer self-management.</p> <p>The digital service approach is the primary service and it is offered with every customer transaction that can be completed online or digitally.</p> <p>The service offer has been developed to align with the department's Service Delivery Operating Model by assisting and educating customers to take up digital services, and to move away from being serviced by staff toward being self-managed and accessing services at a time and place that suits them.</p> <p>Where transactions cannot be completed via the digital or online channels, staff are available for face-to-face servicing. Face-to-face servicing is divided into simple</p>

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			and complex transactions. Longer, more complex, transactions are offered a sit-down interview and same-day service where possible, or by appointment, either onsite or at a more convenient service centre. Simple and shorter transactions are completed onsite at the stand-up access points.
6(c)  Supports	Promote the help facility for online services, capture data about the subject matter of enquiries and analyse it for use in ongoing service improvements.	<p>The department is currently developing further online claims which will feature 'Help' and 'Contact Us' icons on every page.</p> <p>The 'Help' icon takes the customer to help text for that page, and the 'Contact Us' icon takes customers to <a href="http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/contact-us/">http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/contact-us/</a> where they can email or call for further help.</p> <p>A short promotional video available on the departments' YouTube channel is being developed to show customers how to complete an online claim. Customers will be able to view this on their own devices. The department further intends to make its YouTube channel accessible from Self Service Terminals this financial year.</p> <p>The department has established processes in place to capture and analyse customer suggestions, complaints and feedback relating to its suite of online services. This information is actively incorporated in driving the department's ongoing improvements to online services, such as measures to optimise the customer experience and ease of use.</p>	<p>The department continues to log and analyse support requests, suggestions, complaints and feedback.</p> <p>This information is used when planning enhancements and future development of the department's online services.</p> <p>This information is also used to ensure any defects are quickly addressed to ensure stability, availability and performance of the online services.</p> <p>A variety of short tutorial videos are available on the department's YouTube channel showing customers how to complete online transactions. These are available at this link: <a href="http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/enablers/online-services/guides/#a">http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/enablers/online-services/guides/#a</a>. Customers are able to view this on their own devices. The department is investigating an ICT solution that will make its YouTube channel accessible from Self Service Terminals.</p> <p>The department is continuing to implement enhancements to the Centrelink Online Account landing page (entry point) in the current financial year utilising customer feedback in its design. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhanced look of the 'reminders' icon so it is easy for customers to navigate and understand the intent of the icon.</li> </ul>

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhanced 'next reporting date' icon so customers can clearly see the date they are next expected to report.</li> </ul>
<b>7. Service Centres</b>			
Partially Supports	Introduce a 'form drop' service for paper claims, renewal and reporting forms at Service Centres for use in periods of peak demand	<p>The department has assessed the drop box trial and is now preparing to put the 'Document Lodgement' process into all service centres in conjunction with two other processes designed to reduce customer traffic and wait times.</p> <p>The staff assisted Document Lodgement process is not a physical drop box but a first point of contact interaction. Customers who are lodging documents no longer need to wait.</p> <p><b>Next Steps:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Document Lodgement process will be launched in all service zones by 31 December 2014 in conjunction with: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reducing Customer Traffic process which focusses on streamlining the request and collection of rent certificates and medical certificates.</li> <li>Where the Work is Done process which is a definitive guideline streamlining the management and accountability for documentation received within the service centre environment.</li> </ol> </li> <li>Customers will be made aware upfront of the digital options for lodging documentation.</li> <li>The categories for uploading a 'Rent Certificate' and a 'Centrelink Medical Certificate' have been promoted to the top of the pick list on the Centrelink smartphone App.</li> </ol>	<p>Between 1 November and 18 December 2014 the department implemented a structured and streamlined Document Lodgement approach for receiving and actioning documents in face to face service centres to ensure a consistent customer service offer, and to reduce wait times for people 'lodging a document'. This was a part of the broader 'Reducing Customer Traffic' strategy. This action was completed by December 2014.</p> <p><b>The department proposes this recommendation be closed.</b></p>

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		4. Strategic Overview of the Reducing Customer Traffic process to be delivered to Service Zones and Smart Centres. 5. Operational Blueprint to be updated with the procedural direction. 6. All zones to implement the strategy by 31 December 2014.	
<b>8. Claim Processing</b>			
8(a)  Supports	Increase transparency and efficiency of claim lodgement and processing. In consultation with the Department of Social Services and other stakeholders, develop realistic performance standards for processing claims for Centrelink payments.	Negotiations with the Department of Social Services regarding key performance measures for specific payment types are still underway.	The 2014-15 Portfolio Budget Statements include a 'claim' key performance indicator for the Social Security & Welfare Programme (actual wording ' <i>Processing: Percentage of claims processed within standard</i> ') with the target being set at 82% for this financial year and future years. The negotiations with the Department of Social Services have been completed and the Bi-lateral Management Arrangement includes timeliness for claims key performance measures for many payment types included in the Social Security & Welfare Programme. The individual claim timeliness measures will be different for each payment type and will depend on a variety of factors which may include complexity of claim/payment type and/or third party involvement in assessing eligibility. <b>The department proposes this recommendation be closed.</b>
8(b)  Supports	Publicise and regularly report Centrelink's performance against the standards developed under recommendation 8(a) and actual average processing times.	Refer to update at 30 June 2014. <b>The department proposes this recommendation be closed.</b>	Processing performance data is reported to the Ombudsman's office as part of the update provided at the Quarterly Liaison Meetings. The quarterly data will only be publicised and reported to the Ombudsman's office. Annual data is publicised and reported through the

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			<p>department's Annual Report.</p> <p><b>The department proposes this recommendation be closed.</b></p>
8(c) Supports	Investigate ways to provide applicants with a receipt for their claim, details about the information and evidence required to support it and an estimate of the time that the claim will take to process (based on regularly updated and contemporary average processing times).	No further update.	<p>Online Claims provide a number of functions and messaging designed to provide a greater level of assurance to customers, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of a claim ID number on commencement</li> <li>• A message regarding intent to claim provisions, including the date by which the claim must be submitted</li> <li>• A list of 'what you must do' on submission of the online claim, which includes appointment requirements, additional forms and documents and important messages about what happens next. This page also includes warnings about the consequences of failing to complete the required actions.</li> <li>• Claim status of submitted (until claim is finalised)</li> <li>• Claim status of completed (once claim has been granted / rejected)</li> </ul> <p>Customers can also access the 'Next Steps' information again to view forms and documents requested as part of the claim. The department is able to indicate what stage a claim is up to and will intervene when hardship/vulnerability is noted, to fast-track a claim.</p> <p><b>The department proposes this recommendation be closed.</b></p>
<b>9. Service delays and interruptions</b>			
Supports	Proactively provide information through	Refer to update at 30 June 2014.	As advised in the update of 30 June 2014, the



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	all channels when there are any specific issues that affect customer service with an estimate of the likely timeframe for resolution and alternative means for accessing service in the interim, and special arrangements for urgent matters	<b>The department proposes this recommendation be closed.</b>	department continues to proactively provide information of this nature through a number of different channels, such as regular reports to affected service delivery business areas and business impact messages.  The department also publishes messages on the myGov website welcome page advising of any service disruptions to member services.  <b>The department proposes this recommendation be closed.</b>
<b>10. Records management</b>			
Supports	Introduce a system for storing copies of documents provided by customers on their record which ensures that the records are not lost and customers are not expected to provide the same documents multiple times.	The department continues to work with customers to ensure that information is provided when necessary and is attached to the customer's record and that documentation that is not required is not sent to the department.  For example, customers can now update their income and assets online, rather than sending in evidence of their income and assets, customers (or their authorised representative) can log in and change their information or complete a review. Previously the source information would have been needed to be transmitted to the department.  <b>The department proposes this recommendation be closed.</b>	The department has undertaken a number of improvement strategies to ensure that customer information is stored appropriately. For example, income stream reviews are no longer posted and are not able to be returned via the post.  Customers are given information so that they can lodge the information online (or so their nominee can lodge the information online). If this information is not lodged online then it will be taken over the telephone.  Under the 'reducing and managing customer traffic' (refer to Attachment A) process customers are offered the digital option of lodging documents upfront. This allows the customer to keep a record of documents lodged and instant upload of that document to the customer's record.  The process also outlines how scans should be managed onsite and a comprehensive guide as to what documents should be scanned. The process has also seen service zones create a 'gatekeeper' role.  This function serves to capture all of the scans

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			<p>that have come through face to face service delivery on a single business day and ensure they have been sent to the correct teams for processing.</p> <p><b>The department proposes this recommendation be closed.</b></p>
<b>11. Internal merits review</b>			
11(a) Supports	<p>Improve management of requests for internal review of Centrelink decisions. Continue to address the backlog of internal review requests.</p>	<p>The department continues to improve the existing internal review business model - including the commencement of a trial to provide better customer service by improving the existing internal review process.</p> <p>Over recent months there has been an explicit focus on aged and complex reviews. This has successfully resulted in significant decreases in aged and complex cases in the queue.</p>	<p>The department has completed a trial into improving the existing internal review process and is analysing the results. Early stages of the analysis indicate a better customer service through quicker resolution times.</p> <p>The department has successfully decreased aged and complex reviews, while also significantly reducing the number of reviews on hand.</p> <p>It is expected that the department will improve performance against key performance indicators by June/July 2015.</p>
11(b) Supports	<p>Triage all review requests to assess whether payment pending review is available.</p>	<p>The department continues to apply payment pending review (PPR) as the circumstances and policy allows. For reviews of a serious failure period or an unemployment non-payment period, PPR is mandatory.</p>	<p>As advised in the update of 30 September 2014, the department triages review requests to assess whether payment pending review (PPR) is available in accordance with DSS policy.</p> <p>For reviews of a serious failure period or an unemployment non-payment period PPR is mandatory.</p> <p><b>The department proposes this recommendation be closed.</b></p>
11(c) Supports	<p>Review the criteria for priority review of a decision to take account of urgency, vulnerability and the consequences of delay upon the individual applicant</p>	<p>The existing criteria has a level of flexibility due to one criteria being "when a customer is currently in crisis or is extremely vulnerable" (as set out in the Operational Blueprint at 109.02010000).</p> <p>Further, and as a result of this review of criteria</p>	<p>The department considered the criteria for priority review and concluded that there is sufficient flexibility in current procedures and that there is no need to change the criteria at this time. The department will continue to monitor the sufficiency of the criteria as part of</p>

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		<p>for priority review, in consultation with the customer feedback team, the Appeals Branch has implemented a secondary assessment of the need for a priority review. This second assessment is separate from the usual vulnerability criteria, which remains in place.</p> <p>This second assessment occurs where a customer contacts the department to enquire about any delay to their appeal. The contact officer asks questions about the customer's circumstances, and if it is considered that a priority review is appropriate for reasons other than vulnerability, the case is prioritised.</p>	<p>business as usual.</p> <p><b>The department proposes this recommendation be closed.</b></p>
11(d) Notes	Consult with the Department of Social Services about the possibility of suspending recovery of any debt where a customer has requested a review of the debt on reasonable grounds and the review has not been completed within the performance standard (currently 35 days).	<p>The department previously consulted with the policy owning department in January 2013, where it was decided that suspending recovery of any debt where a customer has requested a review not be pursued.</p> <p>Further discussion with the Department of Social Services shows that the position on this has not changed.</p>	<p>The department has approached DSS on two separate occasions who has advised that it is satisfied with the current policy. At the Quarterly Debt / ARO Review meeting on 2 February 2014, the department undertook to advise the Ombudsman's office if it is able to provide this advice in writing from DSS.</p> <p>The department recommends, that, as DSS owns the policy/legislation relating to this issue, it should be directed to DSS for further consideration and management.</p>
<b>12. Internal complaints service</b>			
12(a) Partially Supports	<p>Increase the profile of, and customer access to, the internal complaints service.</p> <p>Develop standard plain English text promoting the DHS complaints service for use in all written materials (online and in hard copy) which includes all the methods a person can use to make a complaint.</p>	<p>A publication titled 'How to make a complaint or provide feedback' was added to the department's webpage in July 2014. In collaboration with the Multicultural Services Branch this is available in 35 languages. A copy of this document is available here: <a href="#">Human Services Intranet - How to make a complaint or provide feedback</a></p> <p>Further work is progressing to make this publication available in brochure format. No</p>	<p>Content for the publication titled 'How to make a complaint or provide feedback' has been finalised and is available on the department's intranet for staff to print for customers. Work remains underway to make the publication available in a brochure format. No confirmation of delivery date is available at this time.</p> <p>Changes to simplify content were made to the Human Services webpage in December 2014. These changes incorporated the Child Support complaints information into the main Human</p>

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		<p>confirmation of delivery date is available at this time. Further changes to simplify content will be released in December 2014.</p> <p>Changes have been made to content on the department's webpage regarding complaints and feedback. Available here: <a href="#">Complaints and feedback - tell us what you think</a></p>	<p>Services Feedback and Complaints page, including information on how online customers can access support services and how vulnerable customers can contact the department in times of crisis.</p> <p>The link is available here: <a href="#">Complaints and Feedback – tell us what you think</a></p>
12(b) Supports	Encourage and train Centrelink staff to identify and escalate complaints which they cannot resolve themselves.	<p>Training in the integrated complaint approach, including first contact resolution and complaint escalation reasons, has been completed for all current users of the Complaints and Feedback Tool (CFT).</p> <p>This includes staff who answer the DHS Feedback and Complaints line and Service Recovery staff.</p> <p>Training is currently being planned for the Centrelink network.</p> <p>The implementation of the escalated complaints team is still in the planning stages.</p> <p>There is a small national team in place that is responsible for reference material, process and quality checking.</p> <p>The national team has released updated reference material and quality checking to support the effective management of complaints and early escalation of complex and sensitive complaints. Once released, a copy of the training material will be supplied to the Ombudsman's office.</p>	<p>Training for all Centrelink staff in how to manage a complaint as per First Contact Resolution and how to record a complaint in the Customer Feedback Tool is being scheduled for the second quarter of this calendar year.</p> <p>The training material is going through the final approval stages and once released, a copy will be supplied to the Ombudsman's office.</p> <p>Updated reference material for Centrelink complaints is available on <a href="#">Customer feedback and complaints received in Centrelink</a> and from the <a href="#">Customer Complaints and Feedback Management</a> page. This page has been accessed over 12,000 times since its publication in October 2014.</p> <p>The integrated complaints and feedback approach is operational for the Child Support and Medicare public programmes. This includes an escalated complaints team to manage all complex and sensitive complaints. Recruitment for the escalated complaints team for Centrelink has commenced.</p> <p>Training of the recruited staff in how to manage escalated complaints will occur in February and March 2015.</p> <p>A new option for Centrelink staff to warm transfer escalated complaints to this team via</p>

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			<p>phone will be operational from May 2015.</p> <p>Additional training is planned for Centrelink Customer Relations Unit staff on how and when to escalate complaints to the new team. This will occur prior to the new warm transfer option being implemented.</p> <p>Communication about the changes and to notify staff about the training is also in development.</p>
12(c) Supports	<p>Promote the DHS complaints service to Centrelink staff and customers as the primary means for resolving complaints.</p>	<p>Communication has been sent to the network about the integrated complaints model, with level 1 being first contact resolution and the use of the DHS Feedback and Complaints line.</p> <p>These communications also included instructions on how to record complaints in a web form pending the future release of the customer feedback tool.</p>	<p>Communication was sent in early December 2014 to all service delivery staff (refer to Attachment B), including face-to-face and smart centres, that the department's 1800 Feedback and Complaints line is now the one phone entry point for customer complaints and feedback. The same communication was sent to face-to-face service delivery staff via the weekly change email.</p> <p>Customers may make a complaint as part of a business as usual transaction or attend a service centre to make a complaint.</p> <p>Staff receiving this complaint manage it even if they require assistance from technical support or a team leader unless the complaint meets a specified escalation criteria. If a customer does not accept the proposed resolution then the complaint is also escalated to a national team.</p> <p><b>The department proposes this recommendation be closed.</b></p>
12(d) Supports	<p>Redesign the online feedback/complaint form on the DHS website to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• include the word "complaint" in the title</li> <li>• capture the nature of the person's complaint</li> </ul>	<p>Implementation of an online web form is now expected by June 2015.</p> <p>The online complaint page has been updated, pending a future release of a new online entry channel.</p> <p>This change includes:</p>	<p>A project to implement the new online complaint and feedback entry channel has now commenced. The new solution will allow better categorisation of the customer's issue and will automatically allocate the feedback to the correct business area for action.</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide more space to describe the complaint</li> <li>• allow supporting documents to be attached.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the page is now titled 'complaints and feedback'</li> <li>• asking for details of the remedy that the customer is seeking</li> <li>• increasing the word limit in the message details box from 250 to 1000, which will enable the department to capture the nature of the complaint</li> <li>• advising customers that where an immediate response is required they should contact DHS Feedback and Complaints line directly.</li> </ul> <p>The new online complaint and feedback entry channel is expected to be implemented by June 2015 and will have functionality for customers to attach supporting documentation.</p> <p>Changes can be viewed here:  <a href="#">Message us - Department of Human Services</a></p>	<p>Customers will also have the option to track the progress of their feedback and review any outcomes through the online channel. It is anticipated that the solution should be developed and implemented by June 2015.</p>