Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

BUDGET ESTIMATES - 29 MAY 2012
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Human Services Portfolio

Topic: Research

Question reference number: HS 48

Senator: Fifield
Type of question: Written
Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 27 July 2012
Number of pages: 21

Question:

a) Has the DHS engaged in any contracts relating to market research-type activities?

b) If so, what are the full details of each – including reports, and any video and audio recordings of focus groups?

Answer:

a) The Department of Human Services undertakes customer research activities.

b) The table below provides details of each research project contracted between 1 July 2011 and 31 March 2012 using a panel of suppliers.

   The department does not receive audio or video recordings of focus groups from its research suppliers.

   Executive Summaries for completed 'ad-hoc' research projects are provided at Attachment A. The full reports of completed projects are very voluminous and the provision of them would be an unreasonable diversion of resources.

Research Commissioned from 1 July 2011 – 31 March 2012 by the Department

Research Project	Purpose / Outcomes
Anti-aggression signage testing	Test reactions to two concepts for anti-aggression signage to ensure the language used in these signs is not likely to offend customers. The findings of this project will be used to inform decisions about the signage to be used in a dedicated trial of such signage in two service sites in each of the 16 DHS Service Zones throughout Australia.
Corporate wardrobe	To conduct focus groups across DHS to explore staff views on the introduction of a corporate wardrobe. To provide consultation on the content of an internally run online survey with staff and some analysis and evaluation of the survey results.
Local Connections to Work Communication Testing	To determine the effectiveness of existing Local Connections to Work communications products, identify gaps, and ways to improve communications overall. The findings will be used to inform the ongoing development and maintenance of Local Connections to Work communications products and strategies.

Research Project	Purpose / Outcomes
Small Business Superannuation Clearing House Campaign Development	The overall aim of the project is the development of communication products and materials and effective messages to increase take-up of the Clearing House. Specifically the objectives of this research are to: a) identify which methods perform well with the audience; b) identify which messages best reach the audience; and c) evaluate creative concepts developed.
Overseas Drug Diversion Program Communication Review	The overall purpose is to inform the development of a communication strategy aimed at maintaining, and ideally increasing, awareness of the rules about travelling overseas with Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme medicines. The findings will provide guidance as to: a) who our target audiences are; b) the appropriate tone for communication with target audiences; c) the level of detail required in communication collateral; and d) the most appropriate and effective channels for communicating with target audiences.
Bateman's Bay Community Hub (baylink) Evaluation	The purpose is to assess the effectiveness of the Batemans Bay Community Hub (baylink) design and look and feel. The evaluation will assess customer and staff attitudes towards the design, look and feel, and their experience of baylink. The findings will be used to inform a proposed business case for the national rollout of the successful design elements of baylink.
Theme Products and Rates Factsheet Testing	Test the new *Older Australian* and *Parent or guardian* Theme Products (previously Life Events) and the supporting Payment Rates factsheets to establish whether the products align with the external communication model and provide customers with the appropriate level of information at the relevant phase of the customer journey. The findings will assist us to: a) improve the products; b) determine whether customers understand how to use these printed products; c) determine if these print products clearly direct potential customers toward humanservices.gov.au in order to make a claim or access a service; and d) determine any barriers preventing customers accessing information online.
Communication with Medical Professional audiences	To understand the current perceptions of departmental information for medical and allied health professionals, practice nurses and midwives on medicare.gov.au, and measure effectiveness of mailouts, education and compliance communication. Key objectives include: a) understand awareness and reactions towards content on medicare.gov.au to inform the redevelopment of architecture and content for humanservices.gov.au; b) identify gaps in existing communication via all channels; c) identify what information the varied medical audiences expect to receive from Human Services, when and by which channel(s); and d) determine differences in policy information and operational requirements. The findings will be used to enhance and improve existing channels and develop new communication channels if appropriate.
Evaluation of the Family Violence Risk Identification and Referral Pilot	Independent research to support the evaluation of a Child Support program pilot. The research will explore the customers': a) experience of the pilot; b) response to the family violence risk identification screening questions; c) interactions with CSP staff (during the pilot) and d) experience with support services to which they were referred (in terms of meeting expectations of services described to them)
Evaluation of Local Connections to Work	Independent research to contribute to an evaluation of the Local Connections to Work program sustainability.
Provision of Services Related to Customer Satisfaction Surveys 2011-12 (Centrelink services)	Ongoing monitor of customer satisfaction with a very recent service transaction in a CSC or in a Call Centre. Reporting at various intervals by Business Line, by service channel and a rolling report via service site.

Research Project	Purpose / Outcomes
Child Support Customers Having a Say (CHAS) Mark II (child support services)	Monthly telephone survey seeking views on satisfaction with business lines.
Medicare customer satisfaction	Surveys customers, medical providers, aged care providers and general public to seek views on satisfaction.
2011-12 Post Complaints Survey program	The Post Complaints Survey program is undertaken to gather information on customer perception of the effectiveness and efficiency of the Centrelink customer complaints process.
2011-12 National Customer Satisfaction Survey	Annual survey used to support organisational reporting: a) Customer perception of Centrelink's corporate image and reputation b) Overall quality of Centrelink's service delivery c) Determine customer views on key and emerging issues d) Provide info on specific image &andservice measures for reporting.
Provision of recruitment support for various projects managed by Co-Design	Provide professional recruitment of members of the public (or other target groups) only for various projects. CoDesign using other consultancies or own staff to conduct fieldwork – most expected to relate to 'Customer Journey' development.
Usability Evaluation of Medicare Provider Line	Recruitment of participants for evaluation sessions.
Usability Evaluation of Deduction Services for Centrelink customers	Recruitment of participants for evaluation sessions.
Usability Evaluation of Parent Hub application for DHS customers	Recruitment of participants for evaluation sessions.
Usability Evaluation of View Payment History	Recruitment of participants for individual evaluation sessions.
Usability Evaluation of Carbon Pricing Household Assistance Package - Low Income Supplement - paper and online products	Recruitment of participants for group and individual evaluation sessions.
User Experience walkthroughs of Initial Service Offer	Recruitment of participants for individual user experience walkthrough sessions.
Clean Energy Future Household Assistance Package –Essential Medical Equipment Payment – Community Engagement	Recruitment of participants for individual evaluation sessions.
Usability Evaluation of RAET (customer facing) online product	Recruitment of participants for individual evaluation sessions.
Usability Evaluation – government staff recruitment	Recruitment of participants for individual evaluation sessions.

ATTACHMENT A

Abstract: Anti-aggression signage testing

Title	Anti-aggression signage testing
Author	TNS Social Research
Date	November 2011
Background	Prior to launching the trial of anti-aggression signage in Centrelink service centres, TNS Social Research was commissioned by the Department of Human Services to test the appropriateness of the language used.
Objectives	▪ To determine the likelihood that the proposed language in the concepts would offend customers; ▪ To understand whether the signs would be likely to reassure, rather than disturb, existing and potential customers.
Methodology	The research was conducted via an online survey with the sample drawn from the MyOpinions database targeting Australian panel members aged 16+. A total of n=512 respondents completed the survey at an average length of 8 minutes. The results were weighted back to the population based on ABS statistics on State / Territory, gender and age.
Key findings	▪ When reacting to the Centrelink anti-aggression messages, spontaneously, in-situ, in a service centre environment, less than one per cent felt offended by, or were angry at the messages. . ▪ A minority of people reacted to the images with a negative emotion (22%), however where this did occur, in the most driven by the Centrelink environment itself, rather than the signage in isolation. ▪ When prompted (and asked specifically whether they found the signs offensive), the vast majority of respondents were not offended by the signs (77% and 74% for each sign respectively). ▪ When asked to focus directly on the wording of the messages, the vast majority interpreted them correctly - that aggressive behaviour is not tolerated in Centrelink service centres (81% for both signs). ▪ There was a minority (11% and 13% for each sign respectively) for whom the messages triggered some anxiety with people questioning the actual need for a sign as prompting this. **Recommendations** • In both prompted and un-prompted testing, offence reactions by respondents to the sign messages were minimal and therefore it would be reasonable to employ them in Centrelink service centres.

Bateman's Bay Community Hub Evaluation

Executive summary

1.1. Introduction

Colmar Brunton Social Research (CBSR) was approached by the Department of Human Services (DHS) to evaluate the new baylink facility in Batemans Bay.

The objectives of this research were to evaluate the effectiveness of the baylink office marketing design and look and feel with staff and customers, especially their attitudes and experience of the new look and feel elements. The study will inform whether the Baylink concept is worth replicating on a national basis in terms of the new face to face service delivery channel for the Department and its range of portfolio agencies

The research captured a total of 120 customers and 9 staff through an intercept and self-complete approach. The research was conducted between the 21st and 22nd of May.

This report presents the findings of this research

1.2. Key findings

<u>Customers</u>

Frequency and reason of attendance

Of the 120 interviews conducted with customers, the majority were in the baylink Service Centre for Centrelink related business, while a further 13% were there for Medicare related business. Approximately one third (32%) of customers were in the baylink Service Centre for the first time on the day of interview. On average, customers had attended the baylink Service Centre three times (mean=3.0).

Features of customer Service Centres

Customers were asked to indicate how important six particular features were in a government customer service centre, followed by their level of satisfaction with these same six features in the baylink Service Centre. Across the six features, customers indicated that 'How clearly things are signposted' (92% total important, 8.5 out of 10) and 'The ease of getting around' (89% total important, 8.3 out of 10) were more important features in government customer service centres. Features such as 'The colours used in the centre' (51% total important, 5.6 out of 10) and 'The photos and graphics used' (57% total important, 5.9 out of 10) were generally considered less important in government service centres.

In terms of the baylink Service Centre, customers were most satisfied with 'The ease of getting around' (90% total satisfied, 8.1 out of 10) and 'The furniture, carpets & décor' (80% total satisfied, 7.3 out of 10). Customers were less satisfied with features such as 'The photos and graphics used' (60% total satisfied, 6.3 out of 10) and 'How clearly things are signposted' (69% total satisfied, 6.8 out of 10) in the baylink Service Centre.

baylink Service Centre experience

Most customers had a positive customer service experience in the baylink Service Centre. The key strength identified by customers was 'I prefer this environment to the office I had to go to previously' (78% total agreement, 7.8 out of 10). Encouragingly, most customers surveyed disagreed with the statement 'The layout was confusing' (59% total disagreement, 4.0 out of 10). However, with around 30% agreeing with this statement this is an aspect of the centre DHS should consider in terms of ensuring customers can readily navigate the centre to access the services they require.

The vast majority of customers (87%) had attended at least one if not both the Centrelink and Medicare offices previously, with approximately two thirds (67%) having previously been to both the Centrelink and Medicare offices. These customers revealed further positive experiences in the baylink Service Centre when compared to experiences in either the Medicare and/or Centrelink offices. The key positive comparison made by customers showed that they preferred 'The design of the office' (84% total better, 7.7 out of 10).

Although over two-thirds of customers indicated that they felt better when in the baylink Service centre compared to their experience at other service delivery locations ('How you feel when in the office'; 70% total better, 7.0 out of 10), a lower proportion felt better valued as a customer when compared to their previous experiences at the other locations ('Feeling valued as a customer': 58% total better, 6.6 out of 10). This measure also had the highest proportion (34%) of customers which indicated that their experience at the baylink Service Centre, compared to other locations, was the same.

The most frequent key strength of the baylink Service Centre identified by customers (on an unprompted basis) was the 'Size, design and layout' (43%) of the new centre. This was followed by 'Improved customer service' (32%) and 'Services under one roof' (16%).

Respondents were also asked to identify weaknesses or things for improvement in the baylink Service Centre on an unprompted basis. Encouragingly, over a third of respondents said 'Don't know / Nothing' (34%). Almost 30% said 'Waiting times / slow service' (27%) was an area for improvement. Other responses frequently provided included 'Improvement in atmosphere /colours/ amenities' (15%), 'Confusing set-up' (13%) and 'Clearer / better signage' (10%).

Staff

Features of customer Service Centres

Amongst staff, the key perceived strength of the baylink Service Centre's features were 'The photos and graphics' (total satisfied 100%, 9.2 out of 10), 'The furniture, carpets & décor' (100% total satisfied, 9.1 out of 10), 'The overall design of the centre' (100% total satisfied, 9.1 out of 10) and 'The colours used in the centre' (100% total satisfied, 8.9 out of 10). The perceived weaknesses amongst staff were 'The ease of navigation for clients' (33% total satisfied, 5.0 out of 10) and 'How clearly things are signposted' (38% total satisfied, 4.6 out of 10).

baylink Service Centre experience

The research revealed a number of positive responses by staff to the experience provided in the baylink Service Centre. The key strength identified by staff were 'Colours have been used well' (100% total satisfied, 8.8 out of 10), whilst the key weakness was 'The set-up allows customers to do what they need to do in a timely manner' (38% total satisfied, 4.6 out of 10).

Staff revealed a number of positive experiences in the baylink Service Centre when compared to experiences at other DHS Service Centre locations. The main positive comparison made by staff showed that they preferred 'The self-service options available' (100% total better, 9.2 out of 10), while the main perceived weaknesses amongst staff was 'Efficiency of service providers' (22% total satisfied, 4.9 out of 10). This measure also had the highest proportion of staff (44%) who indicated that efficiency at the baylink Service Centre, compared to other DHS Service Centre locations, was the same.

Staff were then asked to indicate to what extent the baylink design enables them to service customers better than via previous face to face channels. Just under two thirds of respondents (63% total better, 7.1 out of 10) indicated that the baylink design enables them to better service customers. However, similar to the comparison results provided to the statement 'Efficiency of service provision' at question 3, a large proportion of staff indicated that the service provided to customers via the baylink design was the same (38%).

The most frequent key strength of the baylink Service Centre provided by staff was 'Services under one roof' (56%), which was also the third highest responses provided by customers. Other key strengths mentioned by staff that were also mentioned by customers include 'Size, layout and design' (11%) and 'Accessibility and Parking' (11%). The most frequent weakness provided by staff (56%) of the baylink Service Centre was that 'Clearer / better signage' is needed. This is consistent with responses provided at other questions and the findings from the customer survey. Staff also identified that another area of possible improvement is 'Separate waiting areas' for Medicare and Centrelink customers.

The majority of staff (78%) recommend that DHS should replicate the model at other locations. Reasons provided by staff for this response indicate that it is good to have these services offered 'Under the one roof' (33%) as it is convenient for customers, while other responses received indicate a preference for the services to remain separate.

1.3. Conclusions and recommendations

The majority of customers felt that the baylink Service Centre is a pleasant space and an improvement over previous service delivery environments, however further improvement is required to signposting and ensuring customers can readily navigate the centre to get what they need. These findings were also consistent with the responses provided by staff.

Whilst the majority of customers have experienced a more efficient service experience, others feel there is still ground to be made on this. Customers in the baylink Service Centre for Centrelink related business generally liked the service experience better than those there for Medicare related business.

Centrelink customers more frequently identified more specific key strengths such as the 'Facilities / self-service', 'Reduced waiting times and queues' and 'Location', while these attributes were not mentioned by Medicare customers. Whilst mentioned by both Centrelink and Medicare customers, higher proportions of Centrelink customers identified key strengths such as 'Under one roof' and 'Parking'. Medicare customers more frequently identified specific weaknesses such as 'Confusing set-up', 'Clearer / better signage' and the 'Layout' as features that required improvements.

Age was also a contributor to the types of key strengths and weaknesses identified by customers. Customers from the younger age groups more frequently identified key strengths around the 'Facilities / self-service' options available and 'Reduced waiting times and queues'. It appears that the self-service options appeal to customers in the younger age groups and may have an impact on their perception of waiting times. Customers in the older age groups more frequently identified weaknesses such as 'Confusing set-up' and 'Clearer / better signage' as attributes that require improvements to enhance their experience in the baylink Service Centre.

In summary, the research findings suggest the baylink service centre model was preferred by the majority of respondents to face to face service delivery channels previously experienced. However, it is important to note that the relatively lower importance ratings respondents afforded design aspects such as colours and office décor suggest that these are more viewed as hygiene factors (e.g. you note them when they are absent, but they do little to excite or motivate people when present). Efficient service delivery – including the ability to navigate the centre easily, do what you need to do and get out of there in a timely manner – are likely to weigh far more heavily in a customer's overall assessment of their customer service experience.

Based on these customer and staff surveys, there appear sufficient gains in the perceptions of the service delivery environment to consider a wider roll-out of the baylink design. However, we would advocate DHS review the navigation of the centre, including the development of more effective sign-posting of services and guidance to users on how to get the service or information they need in a timely manner. There is also a need to consider that efficiency gains associated with the new format are not universally evident to users. For Medicare clients in particular, the findings suggest the joint service delivery environment may be seen as increasing the time taken to manage their Medicare affairs. We recommend DHS undertake further analysis of user experiences down to the transaction type level to understand efficiency drivers or barriers to ensure gains made in the perceived ambience of the service delivery environment are not undermined by a less efficient service experience overall.

Abstract: Corporate Wardrobe Research

Title:	Corporate Wardrobe Research
Author:	ORC International
Date:	February 2012

Background

The Australian Government Department of Human Services (the department) is intending to introduce a single corporate wardrobe as part of its integration program. As such, the department needed to evaluate staff attitudes towards customer facing staff wearing a single corporate wardrobe.

It is believed that a single corporate wardrobe will confer a number of benefits. A corporate uniform provides a staff member with a direct link to the organisation and has a positive relationship to the staff member's behaviour and performance, and contributes to customer perceptions of the quality of service received.

At present, Medicare and Centrelink each have their own corporate wardrobe, which is supplied by different vendors. The administration of respective wardrobes, including for whom the wardrobe is optional and the levels of subsidy provided to staff, differ between the two agencies. In both agencies, where staff purchase corporate wardrobe, the purchase is tax deductible. There are currently no provisions for corporate wardrobe in the Department of Human Services although the Child Support Agency has some "one-off" corporate wear.

Objectives:

The department wanted to undertake research for the purposes of evaluating attitudes towards customer facing staff (from Centrelink, Medicare and the child support agency) wearing a single corporate wardrobe. The primary purpose for the research was to evaluate staff attitudes, along with associated issues which would impact on implementation.

Methodology:

ORC International conducted mini groups with a cross section of staff from each agency (in terms of customer interaction and current use of a corporate wardrobe) and the full range of permutations for office configurations.

Research was apportioned across the relevant department master programs. The other key variables that were taken into account in the qualitative research design were categorisation by:

- Wearing a mandatory corporate wardrobe;
- Purchasing and wear a corporate wardrobe, by choice; and
- Do not wear a corporate wardrobe.

The final research design involved 20 mini groups with staff across a diverse number of locations. The mini groups were conducted from Monday February 6 to Friday February 10, 2012.

Key Findings:

Current Knowledge of New Corporate Wardrobe

Most staff know of the corporate wardrobe proposal, though not necessarily in detail. Awareness of, and participation in, the online survey is also high but not universal. The drivers for the introduction of corporate wardrobe are generally well understood and supported.

There is general support for the proposals to introduce corporate wardrobe, even amongst those for whom it will not be compulsory. A minority oppose it, with the strongest objections arising from staff that have fears of greater risk to their personal safety.

Perceived Impacts of the Introduction of Corporate Wardrobe

There was wide understanding and appreciation of the role that the new corporate wardrobe is intended to play in creating a new, unified Australian Government Department of Human Services identity. Nearly all staff were positive about this process of merger, even if they expressed other misgivings about corporate wardrobe.

Many staff expressed the desire for corporate wardrobe to be compulsory across the board, since this would further reinforce this sense of unity. Some participants, whose role was on the boundary between customer facing and non-customer facing, argued that they wanted to be deemed customer facing.

Several of the non-customer facing call centre staff also intended to purchase some corporate wardrobe from the new range (subject to design, quality and supply), and were strongly in favour of corporate wardrobe.

Where any preference was expressed, the move to a common Australian Government Department of Human Services branding, rather than an individual service branding, was seen as positive. This was particularly so for Centrelink staff, who said that they often felt some negative association with the Centrelink brand.

There was general agreement amongst the majority of group members that corporate wardrobe was likely to contribute towards professionalism in DHS Service Centres, both in terms of the way staff felt about themselves and their colleagues, and in the way that they were viewed by customers and service users.

There was general resistance to the idea that people will work harder or better, or feel significantly more positive about the work that they do, because of the introduction of corporate wardrobe.

Many thought that a compulsory corporate wardrobe would help to maintain standards of presentation, and this was another reason supporting more comprehensive coverage of corporate wardrobe.

One of the other advantages recognised by the majority who supported the idea of corporate wardrobe was that it allowed people not to have to worry about what to wear for work.

There was considerable support for the conclusion that corporate wardrobe contributed positively to relationships with customers. Another advantage of corporate wardrobe was that it indicated, particularly in open plan offices, who was a staff member and who was a customer or a visitor. It was not expected that a common wardrobe would cause confusion for customers in identifying the correct staff member to speak to.

Many of those in favour of corporate wardrobe wanted sufficient flexibility to allow staff to dress down or dress up according to the context in which they needed to work. In the case of field workers they also needed to be able to dress appropriately for work in rural and outback locations.

Where staff were concerned about the introduction of compulsory corporate wardrobe, the need to dress down was promoted more strongly, since some felt that corporate wardrobe would be a considerable hindrance to effective engagement with customers in some contexts.

Some staff felt that corporate wardrobe helped to support personal safety in prisons, particularly for female staff, and was in line with the advice given to prison visitors to dress carefully, whilst others expressed concern that it would create a barrier.

There were also concerns that corporate wardrobe would create a barrier when working with young people, and other groups of customers in particular contexts. There were similar concerns relating to Indigenous customers in urban contexts, but in rural contexts staff advised that it was good practice always to wear identifiable corporate clothing, preferably with a bold logo, since this was best for personal safety.

There was some indication that resistance to corporate wardrobe may be related to some degree of status anxiety.

There were many comments from both customer facing and non-customer facing staff warning of the potential divisions caused by the creation of two different groups of staff, with different corporate wardrobe offers.

There was some evidence of mild annoyance or irritation amongst those excluded from the compulsory offer – both because of the potential division, and also because the compulsory offer has a quantifiable and significant monetary value.

There was considerable discussion about the importance of the corporate wardrobe being suitable for all staff, regardless of size, shape and age, with many staff reporting less than positive experiences in the past, especially for staff that were larger in size.

There was wide concern that without considerable flexibility in design, style, sizing and options, many staff were going to feel unhappy.

Many group members also reflected on previous problems with issues relating to fulfilment of corporate wardrobe orders, for example long delays in delivery, variable and inconsistent sizing, and problems with systems for return and exchange. These issues significantly impacted on the views of many people around the corporate wardrobe offer.

Group members pointed out that what would be needed in cooler, seasonal climates such as Tasmania and southern Victoria would be very different to what would be required in tropical and hotter parts of the country. It was also recognised that acceptable or conventional dress codes varied across the country.

There was a very wide range of opinion about how great a threat to personal safety the introduction of a corporate wardrobe would be, and views tended to be directly related to support for or opposition to the idea of compulsory corporate wardrobe.

The main concerns expressed were that wearing corporate wardrobe would exacerbate existing risks to staff from irate customers, particularly those angered by decisions made by staff. Other staff suggested that whilst there were potential risks to personal safety these were not necessarily exacerbated by the introduction of corporate wardrobe.

In general, Centrelink staff expressed more concern to address issues of personal safety than did Medicare staff. Centrelink staff were keener to find ways to de-identify themselves upon leaving the office.

Discreet logos were widely supported, with a general wish for the Unity star to be used, to be small in size, and to be a similar colour to the material it is embossed on, so that it did not stand out.

A number of staff raised issues around freedom of expression in relation to corporate wardrobe, both as reasons for expressing doubt about the compulsory proposals and also as part of their wish to understand how corporate wardrobe would be implemented, both for compulsory and voluntary option staff.

A number of groups raised the issue of the need to cater for staff who are Muslim women, who might want the option to wear a full length skirt and a headscarf as part of the corporate wardrobe.

In some Indigenous communities, women are required to wear skirts below the knee, and cannot wear shorts. Likewise in many Indigenous communities, specific colours have a particular symbolic meaning, and staff working in such communities advised that red is typically seen as a 'men's business' colour, and hence could not be worn by female staff.

Advantages and disadvantages of the current corporate wardrobe proposals

There is little sense from the discussions that the subsidy offer is acting in any way as a barrier to take up or as a disincentive for those for whom corporate wardrobe will be optional.

For most people, most of the time, the number of garments of each type in the starter pack was sufficient. Identified exceptions, where staff might effectively need two full sets, or at least a partial second set, of corporate wardrobe garments, included:

- Field working staff;
- Staff who are required to dress down substantially for some circumstances; and
- Staff working in seasonal climates.

There was also comment from staff in warmer climates that there might need to be some customisation of the pack to different climatic conditions, certainly in terms of materials and styles of clothing.

For some staff a jacket was unnecessary both for climatic and work reasons, and was unlikely to be used or worn. Others saw the value of a jacket because it would provide an additional layer of clothing, or because it was important to them to be able to dress up for meetings. There was greater consensus about the value of some form of knitwear in the pack, with most staff, even in warmer locations, seeing some value in this.

Additional pack items suggested included a polo shirt, three quarter pants (for men and women), dress shorts (for women as well as men) and a dress other than the pinafore style dress.

Women were also concerned about the fit and style of skirts, being keen to ensure that the range included enough variation to fit different shapes and sizes. For men, the principal discussions were about the style and material used for long pants.

Part of the underlying reason for wanting greater flexibility in the corporate wardrobe options and the pack contents was the concern expressed by many staff, both men and women, that corporate wardrobe should be able to cope effectively with a broad range of body shapes and sizes. This would not just require broad variation in the sizes of garments offered, but also a broad range of styles.

Previous experience of corporate wardrobe had indicated that sizing was neither internally consistent, nor necessarily consistent with sizing of clothing elsewhere. This was particularly apparent for women, and had in some cases prevented staff from adopting corporate wardrobe previously.

There was little agreement or consensus about issues of colour, material and pattern, though there was agreement that quality was important, and that clothes should be sufficiently durable to last whilst still looking presentable.

There was no agreement on whether it was appropriate to have patterns on corporate wardrobe, or to go with plain designs. There was also little agreement on which colours people prefer, although the range of colours from the unity star was often suggested.

Preferred choices in fabrics and materials tend to be determined by a balance of factors, depending on how adverse staff are to ironing, their working location, and the climate of the locality in which they work.

Many staff also expressed the wish to be able to try on clothes before they ordered them, or in some way to assess the correct size to order before committing. Staff are happy with the principle of ordering clothing online, subject to some certainty about sizing, but they would appreciate the online offer being supplemented by a hard copy catalogue and fabric swatches.

Staff report long delivery times for current corporate wardrobe and no certainty about likely delivery schedules. There have been difficulties with current and previous replacement and return processes.

Staff working in field, in bush areas with Indigenous and rural communities, have very specific needs for corporate wardrobe, significantly different to staff working in urban and office environments. Such staff may need one set of wardrobe for field working and another for when they return to the office.

Abstract: DHS Family Violence Risk Identification Evaluation

Title	DHS Family Violence Risk Identification Evaluation
Author	instinct and reason
Date	June 2012
Background	This research report outlines the findings of an evaluation an initiative put in place by the Department of Human Services to identify any customers at risk of family violence and offer them assistance by way of a referral. This involved asking customers a set of three risk identification questions.
Objectives	▪ To test the overall reactions of Child Support Agency customers to the risk identification questions and to the referral process trialled between August and October 2011. ▪ To identify customers' thoughts, feelings and responses to the questions and evaluating the overall process.
Methodology	To answer these objectives **instinct and reason** undertook a total of six face to face interviews and fifty eight telephone interviews each of forty five minutes in duration with Child Support Agency customers who had telephoned during the trial period. The sample was split by customers who had previously been identified by the Child Support Agency as having family violence concerns and customers who had no known family violence concerns. It also took into account the views of customers who had accepted a referral offer as well as the views of customers who had declined a referral offer.
Key findings	**Positive** The overall reaction to the risk identification process and the questions was positive. ▪ Most customers found the questions to be appropriate and were comfortable answering them. ▪ The language used was seen to be clear and easy to understand. ▪ The Department of Human Services staff members were considered professional and most customers felt that enough was being done to assist them. ▪ Most appreciated that the Department of Human Services cares about their safety. **Negative/Scope for improvement** ▪ Some customers would have liked further clarification upfront as to the intent of the questions and the fact that there is help available. ▪ Some female customers needed reassurance that their response would not be passed on to the other parent or anyone else and some male customers needed reassurance that the other parent had not accused them of anything. **Recommendations** ▪ **Instinct and reason** recommends that the Department of Human Services leave the questions unchanged and continue asking them. ▪ However, the privacy of the customer's response and the reason for asking the questions (to enable an offer of assistance) need to be further emphasised to avoid any confusion. ▪ Perhaps the offer of assistance could be asked of all customers regardless of their response to the questions.

ABSTRACT: An evaluation of the Local Connections to Work communications materials, 2012

Title: An evaluation of the Local Connections to Work communications materials, 2012

Author: ORC International

Date: March 2012

Background

The Department of Human Services required the development and conduct of a qualitative research project to evaluate the communications products around the Local Connections to Work (LCTW) program. The research involved depth interviews in four sites with LCTW staff, co-located partners, non-partners, LCTW customers, and non-customers.

ORC International was commissioned for this evaluation. This section sets out the background, objectives and methodology for this project.

Local Connections to Work was launched in May 2010 and is an innovative approach to Service Delivery Reform (SDR), providing tailored assistance to the specific needs of people who are long-term unemployed, disadvantaged youth and their families.

Local Connections to Work (LCTW) brings a range of services under one roof for job seekers to access more conveniently. The target customers of LCTW are the long term unemployed, and disadvantaged youth, who live in the catchment area for a LCTW site. At the moment, nine sites provide LCTW services and these areas were selected specifically because of high unemployment rates as well as high levels of 'generational unemployment'.

Objectives:

The objectives of this research were to investigate the effectiveness of existing Local Connections to Work communications products, identify gaps and ways to improve communications overall. Specifically the research objectives were to:

- Review the effectiveness of the existing Local Connections to Work communications products.
- Review the effectiveness of existing digital communications solutions.
- Determine if communication gaps exist and inform about appropriate products or approaches to address these:
- Provide additional insight regarding communications in the relevant sites.

Methodology:

Qualitative in depth interviews were conducted, across four sites, with respondents representing LCTW staff, co-located partners (including employment service providers as well as other organisations), non-partners from the local community, LCTW customers, and, finally, non-customers.

The LCTW sites included in this research were **Campsie**, **Burnie**, **Elizabeth** and **Maroochydore**. The target audiences interviewed at each site were:

	Campsie	Elizabeth	Burnie	Maroochydore
Customers	7	7	7	7
Non Customers	3	1	1	3
Non Customers using co-located services	3[1]	2	2	3
Co-located partners	5	5	5	5

[1] All three of these interviews were conducted through a translator

Non Partners	2	1	2	2
LCTW site staff	2	2	2	2
LOTE customers	6	NA	NA	NA
Total	**28**	**18**	**19**	**22**

Key Findings:

Understanding of LCTW aims and objectives

- The LCTW 'brand' did not exist as far as customers and potential customers were concerned; they saw it, simply, as another Centrelink service.
- They did, however, recognise the concept of joint interviews between Centrelink and their employment services provider.
- They felt the overall objective of the program was to get them into work, by helping them to deal with any barriers they may have.
- Not surprisingly, awareness and understanding was much stronger among co-located partners than among customers, although the name LCTW was not consistently used.
- Partners were clear about the objectives of the program; whereas non-partners tended not to be aware of LCTW, as in most cases it had not been promoted to them.

Understanding of eligibility criteria

- Customers were not necessarily sure why they had been identified for the program; most just thought it was because they had been unemployed for a long period of time.
- Staff identified clear eligibility criteria, but partners tended to be less specific in their understanding of the criteria.
- Staff and partners felt that young people were not being targeted enough.
- There was a widespread lack of understanding, from customers and co-located partners and non-partners alike, that the co-located services could be accessed by anybody.
- Centrelink staff believed that customers and partners knew that individuals from the local community could make an appointment to use those co-located services.

Overall attitudes towards the LCTW program

- Overall, there was a strong positive attitude toward the program itself, and how it "focuses on the individual, rather than on the system."
- Partners acknowledged that the program had increased the number of people coming through to them, and used terms such as "collaborative", "holistic" "addressing the whole person", "cooperative."
- There was a sense that staff and partners alike found the partnership of LCTW more effective, and fulfilling, than working separately had been
- Many talked about the advantages for both the customer and service providers of "telling the story once."
- Both partners and many customers noted a very different atmosphere and attitude in the delivery of LCTW compared with their previous experiences of Centrelink in particular.
- Many employment service providers mentioned that compliance and engagement had improved through LCTW.

Levels of participation among community partners

- There was a sense that the number of community partners involved was decreasing. This seemed to be directly related to the number of referrals going from Centrelink to partners.
- This drop off in numbers was particularly concerning since partners and staff pointed out that the success of the program was, at least partly, dependent on the number and variety of partners involved.

- Retention of partners seemed to be, at least partly, dependent on good lines of communication. Some partners expressed a desire to be kept more up to date through regular emails or bulletins.
- Equally important in the success of the program is the need, expressed by LCTW staff, to keep Centrelink employees up to date with the list of partners on board, and the services they provide.

Use of current communications materials

- A general finding across the sites was that written material was *"not the be all and end all"* in terms of getting the information across to customers. The materials were seen as subsidiary to verbal explanation by Centrelink staff and partners.
- Most service providers pointed out that literacy was a big issue for many of the target group, and (in some sites) English language (both literacy and spoken) was also an issue.
- Also, many LCTW clients were not keen on reading written materials.
- The research also found that LCTW promotional material was competing with numerous other posters and products.

Communication objectives: expand or support?

- The research highlighted the need for higher level decisions to be made (or clarified) concerning the key objectives of the communication materials.
- The vast majority of LCTW placements came from referrals through Centrelink or by partners. This raises the question of whether the purpose of communications materials is simply to support the LCTW program in getting information across to people who would have been referred anyway (so to support referrals). Or is the objective to promote to a wider audience, and therefore to increase the number of LCTW customers.
- A related question concerns who is the target of communications materials (i.e. community partners or end users).
- The research found that Centrelink staff did not have a clear sense of which was the primary target group.
- The research suggests that promoting via partners is likely to be more effective in increasing the numbers of referrals than targeting end users. However, the current materials seem more targeted at potential customers than potential partners, and this was a view that was widely held by the partners themselves.
- Whether the primary target audience is partners or customers clearly drives the decisions around any marketing strategy. If the objective is to promote LCTW among end users, rather than partners, then the communications approach might be widened.
- Whichever strategy of publicity is seen as more crucial (partners or potential customers) it is important to clarify this to the LCTW staff, so they can focus their efforts, and competing demands on their time, efficiently and effectively.
- Since it clearly makes sense to have separate communications materials – and a different marketing strategy - for these two (very different) audiences, our recommendation would be that the strategy (and target) for promotion is decided, and communicated, before focusing on improving/revising the communication materials themselves (since the nature of those materials is dependent on their target audience).
- Moreover, irrespective of the communications objectives (supporting or promoting), and target group (partners or customers) it seems that the LCTW lacks a clear brand.
- Having a clear brand concept would help staff and partners to sell in the program to customers, and, potentially, increase collaboration of partners, thereby increasing referrals and (ultimately) improving outcomes.

The perceived role of written material

- Written material was not seen to be the primary focus of communications by staff, partners or customers.

  "*Would they stop and read them? Maybe the people in the waiting room who are stream ones and twos who are quite literate and really eager and keen, and can get work would probably read it. The people who need the help and need to be in LCTW they probably wouldn't.*" (Partner, Burnie).
- As well as verbal information from Centrelink staff and partners, word of mouth between customers and potential customers was seen to be an important factor in "spreading the word" about LCTW
- In terms of overall impressions of the communications products, there was a certain degree of weariness among some staff and partners, which came from the fact that the materials had been around for a while, the lack of belief in the role written materials.

Awareness and use of existing communications materials

- Existing communications materials had been used a great deal when the program was first launched but were now starting to become a little tired, and in need of updating.
- Partners no longer had these to hand, and were no longer advertising LCTW in their offices.
- Staff had put up the 'true story' posters, and the large blue banner, at the outset, in each of the sites but they were no longer displayed in two out of the four sites.
- Also, there was a degree of inconsistency across the sites in the extent to which there was a demarcated LCTW area in the Centrelink office, and materials tended to be dispersed around the office.
- There was a large degree of inconsistency, across the sites, in the awareness and use of different communications products when promoting LCTW, both to partners and to customers. In particular, there did not seem to be a single product that was consistently provided to customers across the sites, and this was an important shortcoming which could (relatively easily) be resolved.

Large posters and blue banners

- The large blue banners were used, and were visible, in two of the sites (Burnie and Campsie) but not in the others.

Business cards, appointment cards, flyers and the A4 folder

- Similarly, a business card, with bullet point information was used consistently by staff and partners for customers in Maroochydore. But this did not appear to exist in the other three sites.
- A consistent finding across the sites among customers was that they had not seen the LCTW appointment cards, though the staff tended to say that they used them.

LCD and touchscreen computer

- There were very low levels of awareness of the LCD slides among customers, and no customers had used the touchscreen computer.
- The TV showing the LCD slides tended to be on mute in each of the sites.

Evaluation of communications materials

- Partners felt that the communications materials were targeted at customers rather than partners.
- There were mixed views amongst staff about whether the A4 packs should be given to customers or partners.
- Majority of participants, across sites and respondent groups, were positive, overall, about the large banner, saying that it was eye-catching as well as being simple, short and easy to read.

- People were positive about the fact that the large banner was specific to the particular LCTW site and provided bullet point details of what the program actually offers (unlike the true stories).
- Respondents pointed out that the banner lacked any reference to the name of the program, and that '*community partners*' and '*service delivery*' are '*Centrelink jargon*'.

True story approach of A4 posters/larger poster

- The true stories were, on the whole, well received and many customers could relate to the stories. However, many partners and customers highlighted that they focus on outcomes rather than processes, and that they lack factual information about the program itself (what it is and what it does).
- Some customers said that there was "*too much writing*".
- Some participants (particularly LOTE customers and a non-partner) suggested reframing it into questions aimed at the individual.
- One staff member pointed out that it was important to update the stories regularly.
- Some customers thought that the photos were too '*actorly*', and too clean-cut for them to relate to.

Diversity of true stories

- Participants were polarised on whether there was sufficient diversity in the individual true stories. Many people, from each respondent group, started out by saying that they seemed "*mixed and multicultural*", but when they looked more closely, and reflected more, they began to think that there were gaps in representation.
- The groups that were missing representation were younger and older people (particularly older women), Aboriginal people, single parents, people with disabilities and mental health conditions, domestic violence victims, drugs and alcohol problems, and certain ethnic groups.
- Some participants suggested tailoring the examples to suit the local population, the profile of which differs in different areas.

Colour/appearance of communications materials

- Generally, people were relatively positive about the overall 'look' of the communications materials, and felt that they were "*professional looking*"," *bright and clear*".
- The blue colour on the whole was very well received, with many customers saying it was their "*favourite colour*" and describing it as "*calming colour*" and a "*warming colour*".
- Others pointed out that blue with white writing can be difficult to read, and also that the "*handwriting font*" on the A4 posters does not stand out.
- A number of participants, particularly customers, felt that it was easy to miss the information on where to go for more information, and thought that part of the A4 poster should be made bigger.

Whether the communications materials differentiate LCTW from 'regular' Centrelink services

- Customers themselves did not differentiate LCTW from 'regular' Centrelink services. This came down to fundamental issues such as low brand awareness as well as low levels of awareness that LCTW is a specific initiative within Centrelink.
- More superficially, in terms of the communications materials themselves, the fact that they are blue rather than green was deemed, overall, to achieve differentiation by staff and partners, but not by customers.
- There was inconsistency across the sites in the extent to which there was a demarcated LCTW area. However, one site even had a different LCTW floor, with the blue décor and roof hanging signage, and it was still not differentiated from "regular" Centrelink by customers.

LCD slides and touch screen computers

- There were very low levels of awareness of these two communications channels.
- The video was on mute in every site and competed with a TV showing commercial programmes, therefore was not watched.
- There were very low levels of use of the touchscreen computers in the two areas where they were available (Elizabeth and Campsie).

Gaps in communications products

- The most important gap identified in the research was a single, consistently used, product aimed specifically at customers or potential customers.
- As well as being handed out to new customers, others thought that this product could be available for all interested parties to take away.
- One partner suggested that customers should get a 'welcome pack'.
- None of the sites seemed to have found a solution for ensuring that the roster of partners available for each day was displayed and updated regularly, so they simply did not provide this information.
- LCTW staff, therefore, felt that customers and non-customers (and other Centrelink staff) did not know which partners are rostered on each day, who is available and when.
- Similarly, a number of partners said that they would like to be kept more up to date with what other co-located services were available, and when, through regular bulletins or emails along with more meetings between providers and LCTW staff. And this was also something that LCTW staff themselves thought would be useful – for non LCTW Centrelink staff.
- A common finding among customers was that they would like a phone number as a minimum, and ideally a contact name, where they could find out more about LCTW.
- Another clear gap was the lack of any translated materials. Participants felt that brochures for customers should be translated.
- Finally, a number of participants, across the different target participant groups and sites, pointed out the lack of a specific LCTW website.
- Some mentioned that this website could be tailored specifically to the local area, and could provide information on which community partners were on board, and when they were available.

Conclusions

- The research found that there is a very low level of 'brand awareness' of LCTW among customers, and that the name of the program is not used, and that it is not viewed as a separate initiative.
- There was inconsistency across the sites in terms of the way LCTW promotional material was displayed, and the extent to which there was a demarcated LCTW area.
- There was also an inconsistency, and lack of clarity, about which communications products should be used for which audience. Moreover, there was no single product that was routinely handed out to potential or new customers.
- This was compounded by a lack of clarity about the communications objectives themselves, and who was the primary target audience. For instance, is the aim of the communications materials to promote LCTW more widely, or to support the transfer of information to those who would have been referred anyway? Moreover, is the strategy to increase referrals through targeting and recruiting more community partners, or by targeting end users themselves?
- There was a general sense that the use of the materials was dwindling, and that (having been around for quite some time) they were no longer being used as widely as they had been at the outset.

- In addition, it was apparent that the number of partners on board was itself diminishing, and this has implications for future success of the program. Part of the reason for this was considered to be less than optimal communication, and sharing of information, between LCTW staff and existing partners, as well as with other (non LCTW) Centrelink staff.
- Nevertheless, there was an overwhelming enthusiasm for the program, and a good deal of support and positivity across the board.

Recommendations

Our recommendations in terms of the future of the communications materials are:

- Decide whether a clear LCTW brand is required – for both customers and partners.
- Perhaps reconsider the name of the brand, which is currently not widely used or recognised.
- Decide whether the marketing strategy is 'push or pull', i.e. is it to support referrals or to promote/increase referrals?
- Decide on who is the primary target audience of the communications strategy - end users or partners? We would recommend community partners, since they are more likely to have significant impact on referrals; and any 'advertising' strategy to them will be cheaper, and is more likely to be effective.
- Clarify the communications strategy, and primary target audience, to LCTW staff across the sites.
- Facilitate 'good practice' sharing across the sites regarding what works well in terms of communications (within Centrelink, with community partners, and with customers).
- Irrespective of the communications strategy, and the target audience, a single product is needed for customers – to supplement the information that is given to them verbally.
- Once the primary target audience is clear, revise the communications materials accordingly. The true story materials were, on the whole, well received, but improvements could be made to these, and their target audience seems to be more customers than partners.
- (Irrespective of whether they are the primary audience for the communications strategy) be more proactive in the recruitment and retention of partners, since they are the key gatekeepers to end users, and are crucial in the success of the program in achieving its objectives.
- Ensure ongoing, formal and informal, communication with partners in order to improve retention rates and reduce drop off, but also to ensure appropriate referrals, and, ultimately, that the program itself continues to run effectively.
- Ensure ongoing, formal and informal, communication with Centrelink staff – both LCTW and non-LCTW – to inform them of the partners that are on board, their services and rostered times.
- Aim for more consistency in the display and use of the promotional materials, and demarcation of LCTW areas in CSCs.
- Ensure that staff and partners are clear on how the different communications products should be used, and which product is aimed at which target audience.
- Finally, address the identified gaps in communications materials
  - regularly updated information on partners and their availability (for customers, Centrelink staff, and partners themselves);
  - LCTW contact details on the promotional materials;
  - translated materials; and
  - LCTW website.

Abstract: Small Business Superannuation Clearing House Communications Strategy Research

Title	Small Business Superannuation Clearing House Communications Strategy Research
Author	Hall & Partners | Open Mind
Date	August 2011
Background	Medicare Australia is looking to develop and put into place a communications campaign to increase uptake of the Small Business Superannuation Clearing House (Clearing House). Communications activity going forward will serve to help Medicare Australia increase its business registrations with the Clearing House in two ways: by raising awareness amongst small businesses and not for profit and community organisations about the benefits of registering with the Clearing House; and by encouraging public practicing accountants to recommend the Clearing House to small businesses.
Objectives	The study informs the development of a communications strategy, appropriate messages and suitable materials to support the take up of the Small Business Superannuation Clearing House (Clearing House). Scope awareness and understanding of the Clearing House amongst its target audiences, including drivers and barriers to take up and communications needs. Inform development of a communications strategy, including messages and suitable materials to support uptake of the Clearing House.
Methodology	A combined qualitative and quantitative research methodology was adopted. The qualitative research component comprised six discussion groups with small business and not for profit organisations over three locations (Sydney, Melbourne and Ballarat) and eighteen telephone depth interviews (with respondents from a mix of locations). Depth interviews included six interviews with small business (owner, internal accountant, HR or payroll specialist), two interviews with representatives from not for profit organisations (senior manager, HR or payroll specialist) and ten interviews with public practicing accountants who advise to a portfolio of small business clients. The quantitative research component comprised an online survey with n=209 small business owners throughout Australia. The sample included businesses of different sizes, across different industries.
Key Findings	• It is clear from this research that the Small Business Superannuation Clearing House (Clearing House) provides a solution to an administrative 'problem' for small businesses and small not for profits. For this reason, there is an overall positive response to the idea of the Clearing House amongst small businesses and accountants, with encouraging data regarding likelihood of take up upon initial awareness of the service. • However, this research has highlighted that awareness of the Clearing House, and other private sector clearing house providers, is low. The quantitative research indicates that 60% of small businesses are not aware of the existence of clearing house providers at all, with only 15% of small businesses aware of the Small Business Superannuation Clearing House. • Although the idea of the Clearing House is generally positively received, the research identified additional barriers beyond awareness that, if addressed, will serve to further maximise take up. These barriers are: o Medicare as the administrating organisation is not a logical fit, leading to a lack of confidence in Medicare's ability to deliver an effective service. o Uncertainty regarding implications of introducing a third party into superannuation transactions. o For those who are confident with current arrangements, or with minimal transactions, lack of perceived relevance of the service. o The term 'Clearing House' is not a familiar one to all small businesses. o Many small businesses are resistant to change, especially regarding electronic commerce. Implications for ongoing communications: 1. There is clearly a need to raise awareness of the Clearing House amongst the small business, small not for profits and accountant audiences. A multi-pronged approach will be most effective to create broad awareness.

	2. A key attitudinal barrier to overcome in communications is the scepticism and mistrust amongst the target audience regarding Medicare's involvement and the Medicare brand. 3. Communications will also need to address other identified barriers to take up. The most important of these is to address concerns amongst small businesses regarding introducing a third party into superannuation transactions. 4. It will be important to 'tap into' what this study highlights as key drivers to uptake and triggers for engagement. Communications will need to clearly articulate the actual benefits to be realised from take up, beyond blanket claims of 'saving time' and 'reducing red tape'. 5. Lastly, the term 'clearing house' is not necessarily a familiar one to a broad small business audience. It will be important to ensure that all communications clearly articulate upfront what the Clearing House is, and what it does.