

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

BUDGET ESTIMATES - 29 MAY 2012 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Human Services Portfolio

Topic: Centrelink – Payment Disruptions

Question reference number: HS 36

Senator: Fifield

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 27 July 2012

Number of pages: 2

Question:

- a) Has there been any disruptions to the deposit of Centrelink client payments in the last 12 months?
- b) If yes, please outline the cause of the disruption?
- c) If yes, please outline the duration of the disruption?
- d) If yes, how many clients have been affected by the disruption?
- e) If yes, please outline the nature of any action being taken by Centrelink to limit further disruptions?

Answer:

- a) Over the past 12 months there have been 12 reported disruptions to the deposit of Centrelink client payments.
- b) In 11 reported disruptions the delays were with financial institutions, resulting from issues they were having internally processing payment files. The other disruption was due to a financial institution's ATMs not displaying current account balances, although funds had been deposited. Customers were advised to use internet banking or attend their local branch to view current balances.
Centrelink staff were not required to render any technical assistance in any of the delays reported.

c)

Disruption	Duration	Maximum Potential Clients Impacted
1. July 2011	2 hours 40 minutes	10,091
2. July 2011	N/A	90,925
3. August 2011	1 hour 58 minutes	40,678
4. September 2011	7 hours	225,764
5. September 2011	8 hours	285,201
6. December 2011	1 hour	N/A

Disruption	Duration	Maximum Potential Clients Impacted
7. February 2012	1 hour	925
8. April 2012	N/A	71,032
9. May 2012	5 hours	9,708
10. June 2012	N/A	4,459
11. June 2012	7 hours	233,189
12. June 2012	5 hours	8,274

d) See answer (c) above.

e) Centrelink has processing in place internally and with the Reserve Bank of Australia to ensure customer payments are in their nominated bank account by 9.00 am on the day they are due. Any payments not credited by 9.00 am on the day they are due are treated as delays.

Delays are at times identified to Centrelink by customers; generally, though, the Reserve Bank of Australia advises of the delay.

Where a delay is notified, the Reserve Bank of Australia undertakes follow-up action with the identified financial institution to verify the delay and where possible the cause, expected resolution time and potential customers impacted. The Reserve Bank of Australia also advises when the delay has been rectified.

Where delays are anticipated to be significant, as per disruptions 4 and 5 above, Centrelink does work with the financial institutions to ensure that customers are not disadvantaged and can access their payments where they are in receipt of a regular social security benefit from Centrelink.