

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

BUDGET ESTIMATES – 5-6 JUNE 2014 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Customer Communications – budget measures

Question reference number: HS 7

Senator: Cameron

Type of question: Hansard page 119, 5 June 2014

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 25 July 2014

Number of pages: 1

Question:

Senator CAMERON: So they came in at 7 am and they were given a briefing on what was happening in the budget. How long was the briefing?

Mr Tidswell: I would have to take that on notice, but I would not think it would be much more than 30 minutes. It would have been: 'Here's the material, this is what's gone on, this is how you find the links, this is what you need to do, here's what we think the inquiry load might be, here's how we organise the messaging.'. That is the normal stuff we do with these things.

Answer:

The Department of Human Services provided staff briefings to staff located in Smart Centres and Service Centres to familiarise staff with budget measures that would have an impact on customers of the department.

Most staff were briefed during normal business hours. However, some Smart Centre staff and staff opening in busy service centres commenced work 30 minutes earlier or, in some instances, up to one hour earlier to ensure they were prepared to answer customer enquiries as soon as the department was open for business. The duration of the briefing and who was required to commence earlier were decisions made locally.

Given the detailed nature and the number of the budget measures, the briefings covered:

- the promotion of the website detailing the Budget measures, and in particular those that had an impact on customers of the department;
- the promotion of the Budget line with recorded messages on budget measures;
- the reinforcement to staff regarding the department's internal reference material to be used when responding to customer enquiries; and
- the opportunity for staff to seek further information if they required.