

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES - 21 NOVEMBER 2013 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Call Wait Times

Question reference number: HS 46

Senator: Siewert

Type of question: Written

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Number of pages: 5

Question:

- a) For each of DHS's customer specific call lines (and the fraud info line) for each month of 2012–13: how many people had to wait less than 10 minutes, 10-20 minutes; 20-30 minutes; more than 30 minutes; more than I hour, to talk to a Customer Service Adviser?
- b) For the Basics Card line for each month of 2012–13 how many people had to wait less than 10 minutes, 10-20 minutes; 20-30 minutes; more than 30 minutes; more than I hour, to talk to a Customer Service Adviser?
- c) For the National Participation Solutions Line for each month from of 2012–13 how many people had to wait less than 10 minutes, 10-20 minutes; 20-30 minutes; more than 30 minutes; more than I hour, to talk to a Customer Service Adviser?
- d) Provide a breakdown of all data sets that DHS collects about telephone wait times?
- e) How are the Centrelink call centres being prepared for the upcoming peak demand season of January to March?

Answer:

- a), b), c) The department manages over 50 Centrelink-related telephony lines. The lines that have been included in the response make up over 70 per cent of answered calls in 2012–13.

The following tables show 2012–13 Centrelink answered calls by month by time interval. Note: Place in Queue (PiQ) callbacks are not included in aggregated answered calls data in the following tables. Interval data is only available up to 30 minutes.

July 2012	Number of Answered Calls by Time Interval			
	Under 10 Mins	10 – 20 Mins	20 – 30 Mins	Over 30 Mins
Disability, Sickness and Carers	36,282	19,050	65,852	48,560
Employment Services	131,370	65,525	79,415	10,318
Families and Parenting	77,943	43,215	115,453	265,352
Indigenous	6,292	3,024	10,970	3,688
Older Australians	19,624	13,070	43,953	29,467
Youth and Students	46,165	36,687	57,901	8,829
Income Management - BasicsCard After Hours	30,642	611	49	1
Income Management - BasicsCard Enquiries	20,653	609	4	0
Tip Off Line - Centrelink	4,892	28	1	0
Participation Solutions	37,332	19,070	10,316	10,327
August 2012				
August 2012	Number of Answered Calls by Time Interval			
	Under 10 Mins	10 – 20 Mins	20 – 30 Mins	Over 30 Mins
Disability, Sickness and Carers	86,463	59,286	27,369	4,145
Employment Services	246,085	52,949	9,348	857
Families and Parenting	276,785	128,976	77,526	53,917
Indigenous	17,460	4,588	1,958	17
Older Australians	54,876	44,218	18,440	2,745
Youth and Students	103,758	33,695	7,163	1,188
Income Management - BasicsCard After Hours	28,195	208	10	0
Income Management - BasicsCard Enquiries	20,888	10	0	0
Tip Off Line - Centrelink	4,930	13	1	0
Participation Solutions	10,466	13,427	13,327	38,567
September 2012				
September 2012	Number of Answered Calls by Time Interval			
	Under 10 Mins	10 – 20 Mins	20 – 30 Mins	Over 30 Mins
Disability, Sickness and Carers	87,232	60,967	4,043	1,432
Employment Services	182,039	74,922	7,816	419
Families and Parenting	258,347	167,971	17,202	1,040
Indigenous	14,990	4,316	2,004	11
Older Australians	60,516	45,758	3,067	1,009
Youth and Students	68,000	39,886	5,386	508
Income Management - BasicsCard After Hours	30,691	99	2	0
Income Management - BasicsCard Enquiries	19,411	6	0	0
Tip Off Line - Centrelink	4,189	16	2	0
Participation Solutions	61,820	13,657	2,866	1,652
October 2012				
October 2012	Number of Answered Calls by Time Interval			
	Under 10 Mins	10 – 20 Mins	20 – 30 Mins	Over 30 Mins
Disability, Sickness and Carers	132,556	42,903	4,593	643
Employment Services	175,308	80,039	31,703	1,068
Families and Parenting	300,614	159,634	31,051	2,204
Indigenous	18,309	4,357	3,058	95
Older Australians	99,911	35,275	3,676	427
Youth and Students	59,407	48,523	20,071	1,052
Income Management - BasicsCard After Hours	29,155	32	7	0
Income Management - BasicsCard Enquiries	21,170	24	1	0
Tip Off Line - Centrelink	4,587	27	0	0
Participation Solutions	60,368	25,161	6,973	2,915

November 2012	Number of Answered Calls by Time Interval			
	Under 10 Mins	10 – 20 Mins	20 – 30 Mins	Over 30 Mins
Disability, Sickness and Carers	72,855	63,646	18,673	1,593
Employment Services	83,824	51,819	44,664	46,035
Families and Parenting	172,472	128,901	129,752	17,875
Indigenous	17,221	5,544	4,993	117
Older Australians	53,629	44,770	12,902	937
Youth and Students	26,326	21,080	32,280	41,350
Income Management - BasicsCard After Hours	25,701	168	8	0
Income Management - BasicsCard Enquiries	15,913	101	5	0
Tip Off Line - Centrelink	4,698	11	1	0
Participation Solutions	60,106	25,705	2,860	662
December 2012				
December 2012	Number of Answered Calls by Time Interval			
	Under 10 Mins	10 – 20 Mins	20 – 30 Mins	Over 30 Mins
Disability, Sickness and Carers	48,658	59,533	26,893	1,132
Employment Services	76,369	46,771	49,151	35,745
Families and Parenting	146,265	142,231	100,231	3,470
Indigenous	7,568	4,473	7,474	1,950
Older Australians	32,413	41,592	17,226	680
Youth and Students	29,730	18,218	30,612	33,128
Income Management - BasicsCard After Hours	45,944	942	743	354
Income Management - BasicsCard Enquiries	16,410	1,298	30	0
Tip Off Line - Centrelink	2,945	22	6	7
Participation Solutions	55,675	16,615	7,350	775
January 2013				
January 2013	Number of Answered Calls by Time Interval			
	Under 10 Mins	10 – 20 Mins	20 – 30 Mins	Over 30 Mins
Disability, Sickness and Carers	16,245	20,836	40,744	49,855
Employment Services	33,178	29,822	57,064	97,912
Families and Parenting	54,074	52,164	119,522	194,154
Indigenous	3,614	4,165	7,178	8,737
Older Australians	12,230	15,625	29,449	27,890
Youth and Students	19,127	9,172	24,489	61,402
Income Management - BasicsCard After Hours	40,083	1,361	182	139
Income Management - BasicsCard Enquiries	8,236	6,968	716	30
Tip Off Line - Centrelink	4,638	76	8	2
Participation Solutions	44,230	16,363	6,120	4,235
February 2013				
February 2013	Number of Answered Calls by Time Interval			
	Under 10 Mins	10 – 20 Mins	20 – 30 Mins	Over 30 Mins
Disability, Sickness and Carers	24,561	30,383	40,692	23,502
Employment Services	35,809	45,713	70,376	55,845
Families and Parenting	93,947	80,661	105,836	77,119
Indigenous	6,648	4,655	8,293	3,558
Older Australians	20,386	21,839	27,591	12,001
Youth and Students	21,502	16,839	35,989	50,936
Income Management - BasicsCard After Hours	30,770	2,215	184	29
Income Management - BasicsCard Enquiries	13,065	3,083	341	4
Tip Off Line - Centrelink	4,467	80	5	2
Participation Solutions	18,019	19,294	27,572	11,892

March 2013	Number of Answered Calls by Time Interval			
	Under 10 Mins	10 – 20 Mins	20 – 30 Mins	Over 30 Mins
Disability, Sickness and Carers	11,296	11,500	36,858	61,830
Employment Services	18,985	25,694	62,588	78,790
Families and Parenting	55,497	44,516	94,344	126,595
Indigenous	4,263	4,174	8,687	4,453
Older Australians	8,681	8,887	26,600	36,513
Youth and Students	14,772	7,441	30,092	60,774
Income Management - BasicsCard After Hours	45,129	1,042	313	26
Income Management - BasicsCard Enquiries	11,114	4,698	115	2
Tip Off Line - Centrelink	4,305	29	2	0
Participation Solutions	18,938	13,358	19,355	33,218
April 2013	Number of Answered Calls by Time Interval			
	Under 10 Mins	10 – 20 Mins	20 – 30 Mins	Over 30 Mins
Disability, Sickness and Carers	15,065	24,731	50,328	32,115
Employment Services	25,540	52,531	78,109	53,031
Families and Parenting	60,653	91,339	121,602	65,016
Indigenous	6,355	4,196	6,640	3,886
Older Australians	12,856	19,544	38,036	23,348
Youth and Students	13,788	19,454	41,901	32,525
Income Management - BasicsCard After Hours	39,702	1,247	233	29
Income Management - BasicsCard Enquiries	13,812	3,205	818	10
Tip Off Line - Centrelink	4,287	50	1	2
Participation Solutions	10,335	6,192	11,266	54,133
May 2013	Number of Answered Calls by Time Interval			
	Under 10 Mins	10 – 20 Mins	20 – 30 Mins	Over 30 Mins
Disability, Sickness and Carers	61,394	52,154	38,703	2,624
Employment Services	115,106	87,742	61,510	7,002
Families and Parenting	294,580	137,054	77,533	6,661
Indigenous	15,191	4,496	5,063	338
Older Australians	43,468	37,590	28,527	1,911
Youth and Students	41,943	39,186	37,231	6,367
Income Management - BasicsCard After Hours	37,299	1,803	56	0
Income Management - BasicsCard Enquiries	23,399	463	2	0
Tip Off Line - Centrelink	4,795	5	0	1
Participation Solutions	17,501	18,773	22,965	37,861
June 2013	Number of Answered Calls by Time Interval			
	Under 10 Mins	10 – 20 Mins	20 – 30 Mins	Over 30 Mins
Disability, Sickness and Carers	62,949	26,629	35,807	14,612
Employment Services	89,474	40,880	45,298	31,703
Families and Parenting	362,174	39,802	45,056	55,367
Indigenous	9,630	4,710	6,041	739
Older Australians	54,454	14,624	18,465	7,262
Youth and Students	30,301	16,542	26,216	25,706
Income Management - BasicsCard After Hours	40,470	1,166	101	2
Income Management - BasicsCard Enquiries	21,987	7	1	0
Tip Off Line - Centrelink	4,046	3	0	0
Participation Solutions	16,921	15,649	19,819	27,323

- d) The department routinely collects the following data on telephony wait times:
- **Average Speed of Answer:** the average time a caller is in the queue before being answered by a Customer Service Officer (CSO).
 - **Maximum Wait Time:** the maximum time a caller waited in the queue before speaking to a CSO.
- e) Access to planned leave, formal training and other off-phone activities is reduced during periods of peak demand to ensure more staff are available to answer the phones. The department also deploys staff to areas that are experiencing high demand to help improve call wait times where possible. The department has also engaged additional employees to help meet forecast seasonal peaks. These employees are engaged as irregular and intermittent employees to assist during peak times of demand.

These steps complement other initiatives designed to reduce call wait times. Customers who can self-manage are encouraged to use online and phone self-services and the Express Plus apps, which allow them to conduct their business 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The department also has a call back option where customers can request a call-back, hang up their phone and maintain their place in the call queue. When their call gets to the front of the queue, the customer will receive a call back. This service is available on both landline and mobiles for most of the department's main business lines and is automatically offered during business hours when demand reaches a pre-determined level.