

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES – 22 OCTOBER 2015 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Research

Question reference number: HS 141

Senator: Cameron

Type of question: Written

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Question:

Please provide details of outcomes and initiatives arising from collaborative research in the last two years.

Answer:

The Department of Human Services has undertaken six collaborative research partnerships over the last two years, as per Table 1. These have included collaborations across government, with academic institutions and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs).

Table 1: Combined collaborative research partnerships

Type of Collaboration	Research Partner	Project	Completion Date
Government	CSIRO	Channel Optimisation Project (COP)	30 June 2014
Government	CSIRO	Log Analysis Tool for Trend Evidence (LATTE)	30 June 2014
Government	CSIRO	VIZIE - Connecting with customers on social media	30 June 2014
Government	CSIRO	Emergency Response Intelligence Capacity (ERIC)	30 June 2014
Academic	RMIT	Making a Difference for Children and Families	31 Dec 2015
Government / NGO	SA Government / SYC	Playford 1990 Project	30 June 2016

Channel Optimisation Project (COP)

COP was a series of experiments that used behavioural economics techniques. The experiment provided insight into customer behaviour, assisting the Department to make services easier to access and more efficient. This helped move transactions away from face-to-face and call channels to self-service channels, to free up intensive channels to focus on customers who need these services the most. It was designed to equip customers to manage their own business with the Department.

CSIRO helped design and quantify the effectiveness of these messages, with Department workers providing invaluable insights on how to test these theories in real-life service centres. The Department is now using messaging and other communications with customers as part of the ongoing improvements to the way that services are delivered.

Log Analysis Tool for Trend Evidence (LATTE)

The Department sought to optimise its website to ensure customers could easily find information to meet their needs. The research partnership with CSIRO developed LATTE, a tool which analyses the sequence and duration of page visits to measure user experience. LATTE compares patterns in how users interact with websites (such as the sequence of pages they click on) to identify when and where they might be struggling to find what they need. LATTE is now a part of the Department's workflow. It allows the departmental web developers to detect common website issues and make changes to content and structure based on this knowledge. For customers, this means web experiences that are more informative and intuitive – based on feedback from how they and others are using the site.

VIZIE - Connecting with customers on social media

The Department wanted a platform that would allow its communications team to better monitor trends and engage with customers in social media forums. The research partnership with CSIRO created Vizie, a web-based platform that monitors customer feedback across social media channels. Vizie uses natural language processing to group content according to topic, as well as providing features directly tailored to the Department's auditing and reporting requirements.

The Department continues to use Vizie for social media management.

Emergency Response Intelligence Capacity (ERIC)

The Department needed rapid access to accurate, comprehensive situational awareness in the event of a natural disaster or other emergencies. To improve the process, the research partnership with CSIRO developed Emergency Response Intelligence Capability (ERIC) software to automate information gathering and situation reporting during large-scale emergency events.

The software integrates data from a range of authoritative state and federal sources into a single web-based map interface.

The Department now has improved situational awareness to support workers in responding to emergencies in a timely and effective way. A prototype of the ERIC system was successfully tested during bushfires and demonstrated the opportunities for government agencies to leverage data from emergency services agencies.

Making a Difference for Children and Families

The Department has been working with the RMIT University to investigate which forms of service delivery best support customers with complex needs who live in areas of high disadvantage. The study is based in Bridgewater, Gagebrook and Herdsmans Cove, all in Tasmania, and is due to conclude and provide final recommendations for the Department to consider in December 2015.

Playford 1990 Project

The Playford 1990 Project is a collaborative research project exploring the economic and social participation trajectory of young people born and/or living in Playford Local Government Area (LGA) in South Australia.

The Project is in the preliminary stages and involves collaboration between Playford Council, South Australian state government departments, Commonwealth Agencies and some non-government agencies.