

Senate Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Treasury Portfolio

Budget Estimates

2017 - 2018

Division/Agency: Australian Taxation Office

Question No: 124

Topic: ATO IT Outages

Reference: Written

Senator: Ketter, Chris

Question:

1. Has the Australian Tax Office been following the recent IT failures with the ATO websites and portals?
2. Why are IT failures continuing? What is the nature of ongoing outages at the ATO?
3. Can the ATO please provide a breakdown of IT failures since February by duration, type of failure, and associated complaints?
4. How many complaints has the ATO received?
5. Has the ATO received correspondence to the effect that tax practitioners and taxpayers generally are losing confidence in the ATO's processes?

Answer:

1. The ATO is aware of the impact that our recent IT issues have had on our clients and we are committed to delivering systems that have minimal disruption to the community.
2. We manage a large and complex IT environment and given this complexity, we will occasionally encounter unplanned issues with our systems that result in a degradation, and in some cases outages, to our services.

Our real-time monitoring aims to detect and resolve issues before they have an impact on the services that we provide to the community. The nature of these unplanned outages are varied and there is no single systemic or underlying cause of these issues.

3. Outlined below are our critical incidents that have been identified as an IT outage from 1 February 2017 to 30 June 2017 (see question 4 for associated complaints).

| Date | IT Critical Incidents | Duration |
|-------------|---|-------------------|
| 2 February | ATO Online, Portals, Australian Business Register (ABR), Standard Business Reporting (SBR) channels unavailable to all users. | Two business days |
| 19 April | Users could not access ato.gov.au. | Five hours |
| 1 May | Users could not access ato.gov.au. | 8 minutes |
| 8 May | Intermittent issues for ATO Online, ato.gov.au, Portals, ABR, SBR channel users. | Several hours |
| 15 May | Users were unable to use SBR channels. No impact to Portals or ATO Online. | Two days |
| 17 May | Portal users experiencing errors with the Client Correspondence List. | Several hours |
| 2 June | ATO Online and Portal users experience intermittent issues. | 7 hours |
| 22 June | All internal and external systems unavailable. | 3.5 hours |
| 26 June | Partial degradation for users of ATO Online | 1.5 hours |
| 29 June | ATO Online, SBR channel and Portal users experienced significantly degraded service. | Several hours |

4. The ATO has received 18 complaints since February 2017.
5. The ATO has received 7 letters/emails since February 2017.