

**Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace
Relations**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates 2010-2011**

Outcome 4 - Employment & Participation Policy

DEEWR Question No. EW0189_11

Senator Siewert asked on 31/05/2010, Hansard page 67.

Question

INCOME SUPPORT PAYMENTS

Senator SIEWERT—Could you also tell me on notice how much money is then spent by those agencies in extension of those services? Is that possible? Mr Griew—We may or may not be able to access that information, because that would essentially be a decision for those non-government agencies, who may or may not have a relationship with us at all. Senator SIEWERT—I beg your pardon, I do not mean those agencies, I mean going back to the issue around DHS. Is it possible to get a breakdown on what the expenditure is to target those particular areas? Mr Griew—We will pass that on.

Answer

Centrelink has provided the following response:

Centrelink communicates directly with its customers through a range of strategies, including:

- Brochures, fact-sheets and other printed information material in English and a range of community languages. These are distributed to Centrelink offices and community organisations on Centrelink's mailing list. A number of these publications may be targeted specifically at intermediary organisations such as welfare agencies, however these costs are not readily identifiable as the project costs will include the range of customer and third-party information design, printing and distribution costs. Centrelink has not conducted any communication campaigns in 2009-10.
- Centrelink's website (www.centrelink.gov.au), details of which are published in all Centrelink print products. The website has sections of specific relevance to customers, community groups, businesses and other stakeholders.
- Active engagement with the media. This includes both responding promptly to media enquiries for comment and/or information about issues affecting Centrelink customers and such activities as live question and answer sessions on talkback radio and morning television. This is an important opportunity to inform Centrelink customers about their rights and responsibilities. It is not possible to provide an overall figure on the cost of these media activities as Centrelink does not record which program sessions stem from direct media requests and which were negotiated to tie in with existing spokesperson travel arrangements.
- The Multicultural Services Branch within Centrelink manages programs that promote awareness of Centrelink payments and services at local, state and

federal levels. In particular:

- The Prison Servicing program provides a visiting service to most adult prisons and juvenile facilities to assist people being released to access Centrelink payments and reduce the risk of re-offending. Information and support is also provided to prison welfare officers.
- Multicultural Service Officers assist the development of effective relationships with communities and their representatives, and to forge links with local government and non-government agencies. They also work with local multicultural communities and the Centrelink service delivery network to help ensure that customers from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds receive the same level of service as other Centrelink customers and to ensure delivery of information to those customers.
- Australian Government mobile servicing units travel around rural Australia to let farmers and other residents in rural communities know about the services that Centrelink and other Government agencies provide. Farmers and rural residents are able to speak to experts about drought and other assistance that is available. The mobile servicing units are staffed by Rural Services Officers, Customer Service Advisers and Social Workers and are fitted out with laptops, printers, self service computers, satellite phones and a priority line to Rural Call Centres.
- Rural Services Officers assist farming families, small businesses and rural communities in accessing Government services and payments through an effective outreach service.
- The Indigenous specific outreach service is a key component in the range of service delivery channels offered by Human Services Portfolio agencies. Linkages to Indigenous communities are maintained, in part, through regular and ongoing outreach services undertaken in urban, rural and remote locations. Indigenous specific outreach services, facilitated by Centrelink's specialist Indigenous Servicers Officers, provide a high quality connection point to assist Indigenous communities in accessing services delivered by Centrelink and Department of Human Services agencies.