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Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

TOPIC: **SERVICES AUSTRALIA 2024-25 BUDGET OVERVIEW**

WITNESS: Danielle Regeling
Acting Chief Operating Officer

Strategic Narrative

- Services Australia's (the Agency's) goal is to make government services simple, so people can get on with their lives.
- The 2024-25 Budget process has provided the Agency with additional funding of about \$0.5 billion since the 2023-24 financial year.
- The Agency's funding in 2024-25 is \$5.9 billion, reflecting a significant investment in the Agency's capabilities.
- Additional measures funding in 2024-25 of \$1.5 billion comprises:
 - Services Australia – additional resources – \$1.2 billion, which involves:
 - Additional Agency resourcing (\$843.8 million).
 - Government response to the Security Risk Management Review for the Agency by Graham Ashton AM APM (\$185.6 million).
 - Operating and enhancing myGov (\$170.1 million).
 - Improving Aged Care Support – \$85.5 million.
 - Strengthening Medicare – \$57.7 million (3 measures).
 - Digital ID – \$35.4 million.
 - Other measures – \$164.2 million
- The Agency's Average Staffing Level (ASL) in 2024-25 will be 30,236.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- The Agency 2024-25 Budget will be \$5.9 billion.
- The Agency 2024-25 Budget measures total \$1.5 billion in 2024-25 and \$3.3 billion from 2023-24 to 2027-28.
- The Agency's ASL in 2024-25 will be 30,236.

Talking Points**Services Australia 2023-24 Portfolio Supplementary Additional Estimates Statements (PSAES) and 2024-25 Portfolio Budget Statements**

- The Agency's departmental resourcing in 2024-25 is \$5.9 billion.
- Additional measures funding in 2024-25 of \$1.5 billion comprises:
 - Services Australia – additional resources – \$1.2 billion, which involves:
 - Additional Agency resourcing (\$843.8 million).
 - Government response to the Security Risk Management Review for the Agency by Graham Ashton AM APM (\$185.6 million).
 - Operating and enhancing myGov (\$170.1 million).
 - Improving Aged Care Support – \$85.5 million.
 - Strengthening Medicare – \$57.7 million (3 measures).
 - Digital ID – \$35.4 million.
 - Other measures – \$164.2 million.
- The Agency's ASL in 2024-25 is 30,236, an increase of 1,717 ASL from 2023-24.
- The major cost driver of expenditure within the Agency is the workforce budget, which includes both Australian Public Service staff and contractors.
- The Agency's workforce budget in 2024-25 is \$4.2 billion, which represents 72 per cent of the Agency's overall budget.
- The Agency's remaining budget of about \$1.7 billion relates to:
 - \$1.4 billion in supplier expenditure, which includes ICT maintenance, leases, property costs, communications, and other minor expenditure; and
 - \$0.3 billion in purchased capital.

Background

2024-25 BUDGET MEASURES

Budget measures led by Services Australia

Services Australia – Additional Resourcing

- The Government is investing \$2.8 billion into the Agency from 2023–24 to 2027–28 to:
 - increase service delivery capability;
 - improve safety for staff and customers; and
 - operate and enhance myGov.

Increasing service delivery capability

- The Agency will receive \$1.8 billion over three financial years to 2025–26 to:
 - maintain a customer service workforce to deliver timely services and payments to Australians experiencing vulnerability in the midst of a cost of living crisis;
 - sustain emergency response capability; and
 - support other aspects of the Agency's operations.
- This will improve claim processing times, which will help decrease call wait times for customers.
- The measure will fund an additional 4,030 staff in 2024–25 and 3,530 staff in 2025–26.
- The additional staffing includes continuing current emergency response capability of 850 staff.

Improving safety for staff and customers

- The Government will invest \$314.1 million in 2024-25 and 2025-26 in improving safety for Agency staff and customers.
- The Agency will significantly improve security, as well as safety systems and practices. This will include:
 - increased use of security guards;
 - upgraded and enhanced security features in all service centres;
 - enhanced service centre design; and
 - improved technical data and capability.
- Through this measure, the Agency will continue to implement recommendations of the Security Risk Management Review to curb the unacceptable incidents of violence occurring at Agency sites.

- The Government is also legislating additional penalties for addressing acts of aggression or violence towards frontline Commonwealth employees and a Commonwealth Workplace Protection Order Scheme.

Operate and Enhance myGov

- This measure provides the Agency with ongoing resourcing to operate and maintain myGov, and to deliver targeted improvements.
- From 2024-25 over four years, the Agency will receive \$629.5 million.
- This will fund the ongoing operation and maintenance of myGov to keep it available, secure, safe, and contemporary.
- This includes funding for the continuation of the Independent Advisory Board through to June 2028, and to deliver a whole-of-government approach to designing and prioritising initiatives with partner agencies, which extend or enhance the myGov platform through to June 2028.
- This funding will:
 - support people to better secure their myGov accounts;
 - strengthen myGov fraud prevention;
 - improve digital communications through myGov; and
 - through enhanced staff tools, support the Agency staff to deliver critical assistance to customers when they contact myGov.

Other budget measures

- In addition to the Agency-led measures, the Agency is supporting implementation on behalf of other agencies' measures. The most significant of these measures for the Agency are:
 - Improving Aged Care Support (led by Department of Health and Aged Care), with total funding of \$159.6 million over 5 years from 2023-24, including \$85.5 million in 2024-25.
 - Disability Employment Services Reform (led by Department of Social Services), with total funding of \$86.2 million over 5 years, including \$16.7 million in 2024-25.
 - Strengthening Medicare (led by Department of Health and Aged Care), with total funding of \$60 million over 5 years from 2023-24, including \$52 million in 2024-25.
 - Digital ID (led by Department of Finance), with total funding of \$57.4 million over two years from 2024-25, including \$35.4 million in 2024-25.

Budget Measures led by The Attorney General's Department

Establishment of the Administrative Review Tribunal

- The Government has introduced legislation that will abolish the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. It will establish a new, fit-for-purpose federal administrative body to be named the Administrative Review Tribunal (ART).
- The Agency will receive \$43.9 million over three years to 2025-26 to support the Agency's readiness to engage with the new processes when the ART commences.
- This measure is subject to legislation passing.

Budget Measures led by The Australian Bureau of Statistics

Delivering Census and modernising operations

- The Agency will receive \$9.1 million over three years to 2026-27 to support the 2026 Census through myGov.
- This measure will provide myGov users access to the Census online through myGov and complete the Census on behalf of their household.

Budget Measures led by The Department of Education

Child Care Subsidy Reform – further measures for strong and sustainable foundations

- This measure will:
 - enable the Agency to build and enhance information in the Child Care Subsidy System;
 - help safeguard child care from fraud and non-compliance; and
 - provide funding to support a wage increase for the early childhood education and care sector.
- The Agency will receive \$9.4 million over four years to 2027-28 to provide payments.

Australian Universities Accord – tertiary education system reforms

- This measure will introduce a cap on indexation of Higher Education Loan Payments (HELP) debts. From 1 June 2024, HELP debts will be indexed at whichever is the lower of Consumer Price Index and Wage Price Index.
- The Agency will receive \$0.5 million over 2023-24 and 2024-25 to ensure existing ICT systems support the indexation change.

Budget Measures led by Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

First Nations Prison to Employment Program

- This measure will introduce a new program designed to achieve stronger prison to work transitions for First Nations people. It will replace the Time to Work Employment Service from 1 July 2025.
- On 1 July 2025, the new program will start in 27 select prisons and juvenile justice facilities, in every state and territory.
- From 1 July 2026, it will be expanded to all prisons and juvenile justice facilities, across both remote and non-remote areas. It is estimated that over time, more than 6,000 First Nations people will participate in the program each year.
- The Agency will receive \$16.5 million over four years to 2027-28 to support participants in the program.

Reforming Employment Services

- This measure supports initial changes to Workforce Australia employment services and will:
 - strengthen the integrity of employment services; and
 - better recognise individuals' circumstances with more appropriate and consistent mutual obligation.
- The Agency will receive \$16.9 million over four years to 2027-28 to support this program.

Budget Measures led by The Treasury

Digital ID

- The measure will allow:
 - the continuation of the Agency's Digital ID system administrator role; including ongoing delivery of the Oversight Authority Response System; and
 - ongoing funding for delivery of the Digital ID Exchange.
- The Agency will receive \$57.4 million in 2024-25 and 2025-26 to continue to contribute to the Government's vision for Digital ID.

Budget Measures led by Department of Home Affairs

Support to Individuals from Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories affected by the Hamas-Israel conflict

- The Agency will receive \$0.7 million in 2024-25 to implement the extension of Medicare eligibility to people from significantly affected areas of Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories who have been granted a

Bridging Visa E with work rights by the Department of Home Affairs. This includes their immediate family members on a Bridging Visa E.

Reforms to Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services

- The Agency will implement a new Humanitarian Integration and Settlement Program which is being led by the Department of Home Affairs, as the current humanitarian settlement service arrangements expire in June 2024.
- This measure also extends Medicare eligibility for Ukrainian nationals granted a Bridging Visa E by the Department of Home Affairs on or after 1 August 2022. This includes their immediate non-Ukrainian family members. Access to Medicare will extend for a further three years, from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2027.

Budget Measures led by Department of Social Services

Impact of the Douglas Decision on Social Security Means Testing

- This measure will ensure the Federal Court of Australia's decision in *Commissioner of Taxation v Douglas (2020)* doesn't change income support entitlements for veterans who get a military invalidity payment and are affected by the decision.
- The Agency will receive \$11.9 million over four years to 2027-28 to implement a new income stream category called a 'military invalidity pension income stream', and a new means test.

Commonwealth Government-funded Paid Parental Leave – enhancement

- This measure will add a superannuation guarantee payment to Paid Parental Leave. It will also improve how employers interact with the Agency when they provide Parental Leave Pay to an employee on behalf of the Australian Government.
- The Agency will receive \$25.5 million over four years to 2027-28 to implement these changes.

Endorsement of the Social Security Agreement between Australia and the Oriental Republic of Uruguay

- The Agency will receive \$11.9 million over 4 years to 2027-28 to assist in the implementation of a Social Security Agreement with Uruguay, which will assist people to qualify for and claim pensions from Australia and Uruguay.
- The agreement will also exempt employers and employees who are temporarily seconded to work from Australia to Uruguay or vice versa from paying into both their host and home country pension or superannuation schemes. This will apply for the duration of the secondment.

Disability Employment Services Reform

- The Agency will receive \$86.2 million over five years to 2027-28 to support the implementation of this measure, which will replace the existing Disability Employment Services with a new specialist disability employment program from 1 July 2025.
- The new program will help more people prepare for and find suitable employment, and more people will be eligible, including those with an assessed work capacity less than eight hours per week who are not on income support.
- The current two-year service limit will also be removed.
- There will be increased flexibility and tailored supports to help people with disability to find and keep a job. Employers will also be supported through a revised wage subsidy program.

A higher JobSeeker Payment rate for recipients with a partial capacity to work (0-14 hours)

- The Agency will receive \$21.5 million over five years to 2027-28 to support this measure, which will extend eligibility for the higher rate of JobSeeker Payment to single recipients who have an assessed partial capacity to work up to 14 hours per week.
- This cohort will also become eligible for the higher rate of Energy Supplement, which is currently \$9.50.

Commonwealth Rental Assistance – increase the maximum rates

- This measure will increase the maximum rates of Commonwealth Rent Assistance by 10 per cent. Regular indexation will also be applied on top of the increase.
- The Agency will receive \$18.2 million over four years to 2026-27 to support this measure.

Carer Payment – increase flexibility

- The Agency will receive \$12.2 million over five years to 2027-28 to support changes to the 25 hour per week rule, allowing carers to work up to 100 hours over a four-week settlement period.
- This measure will also remove education, volunteering activities and travel time from the participation limit, and allow carers to use single temporary cessation of care days.

BUDGET MEASURES LED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND AGED CARE

Improving Aged Care Support

- The Agency will receive \$159.6 million over five years to 2027-28 to deliver key aged care reforms and continue to implement recommendations from the Aged Care Royal Commission.
- This includes \$87.2 million in 2024-25 and 2025-26 to further develop ICT infrastructure needed to implement the new support at home program.

Health Workforce

- This measure streamlines the process for internationally qualified health practitioners to get a Medicare provider number. The reduced wait time will allow appropriately credentialed internationally qualified health practitioners to start providing services sooner in the Australian health system.
- The Agency will receive \$15 million over three years to 2025-26 to establish required system and business capabilities to automate issuing of Medicare provider numbers.

Pharmaceutical Benefit Scheme (PBS) – new and amended listings

- The PBS provides subsidised access to medicines to Australian residents and overseas visitors from countries under Reciprocal Health Care Agreements.
- The Agency will receive \$1.4 million from 2024-25 through to 2027-28 to list new medicines on the PBS and expand access to others. It will provide better treatment and improved health for Australians.

Strengthening Medicare

- The Agency will receive \$58.3 million over four years to 2027-28 to deliver the following work to strengthen Medicare.
- Health Delivery Modernisation:
 - enhancements to MyMedicare;
 - improve healthcare provider authentication;
 - explore the expansion of the healthcare identifier service;
 - examine use of the healthcare identifier service across the care sector to identify improvements and support greater use; and
 - enhance authentication within the Provider Digital Access system.
- Improve integrity of the Medicare Benefits Scheme:
 - introduce claiming restrictions for specific surgical items; and
 - remove the ability for health care providers to submit bulk billed claims more than 12 months after the date of service.

- Wraparound primary care for frequent hospital users to reduce unplanned hospital attendances for patients that have complex, chronic conditions and frequently present at hospital.
- Reforming pathology application charging arrangements by repealing the *Health Insurance (Pathology) (Fees) Act 1991* (Pathology Fees Act), from 1 July 2025.

Strengthening Medicare – an effective and clinically appropriate Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS)

- This measure introduces a reform to diagnostic imaging to both strengthen and provide increased affordability and access to Medicare.
- The Agency will receive \$4.1 million in 2024-25 to introduce annual indexation of MBS amounts for nuclear medicine imaging services, and remove the current magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) equipment eligibility requirements in the Diagnostic Imaging Services Table.
- This measure will also list new and amended services on the MBS.
- The measure involves a net saving of \$1.5 million over four years to 2027-28.

Strengthening Medicare – Medicare Urgent Care Clinics (Medicare UCC) – additional funding

- The Agency will receive \$3.2 million over three years to 2025-26 to support a boost to the Medicare UCC program.
- This measure will:
 - expand the program with a further 29 Medicare UCCs (taking the program to 87 clinics nationally);
 - cover Medicare Benefit Schedule (MBS) flow-on costs and authority associated with the additional clinics, where required; and
 - include MBS flow-on costs for the addition of appropriate non-vocationally registered general practitioner, echocardiogram, and pregnancy MBS items to the Medicare UCC program.

Women's Health

- Under this measure, the Government will cover 100 per cent of the cost of claims for low-risk home births and intrapartum care outside a hospital. This will allow greater choice for women seeking access to low-risk home births and intrapartum services at home.
- The Agency will receive \$2.7 million over four years to 2027-28 to implement ICT and operational changes to support this measure.

Mental Health

- The Agency will receive \$1 million over four years to 2027-28 to improve the Better Access Initiative to better meet the needs of individuals and improve equity of access. It expands the range and reach of free mental health services available.

Securing Cheaper Medicines

- The Agency will receive \$1.6 million in 2023-24 and 2024-25 to:
 - introduce a temporary freeze on the indexation of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) co-payment and remove the \$1 discount; and
 - expand access to the Closing Gap PBS co-payment program.

BUDGET MEASURES LED BY THE NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE AGENCY

National Disability Insurance Scheme – getting the NDIS back on track

- The Agency will receive \$23.5 million in 2024-25 and 2025-26 to extend the Agency's involvement in the Fraud Fusion Taskforce until 30 June 2026.
- This funding will be used to continue the work of Fraud Fusion Taskforce staff to gather intelligence, conduct fraud investigations and provide forensic services capability to member agencies.
- This includes funding for Australian Federal Police officers embedded within the Fraud Fusion Taskforce to support investigations.

BUDGET MEASURES LED BY THE NATIONAL INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS AGENCY

Remote Jobs and Economic Development Program

- The Agency will receive \$11.2 million over four years to 2026-27 to support the implementation of this measure, which was announced as part of the Closing the Gap Implementation Plan on 13 February 2024.
- The Remote Jobs and Economic Development Program is being developed in partnership with First Nations people. It will start in the second half of 2024.

	Name and Role	Group/Branch/Organisation	Phone (w)	Phone (mob)
Cleared By	Angela Diamond Chief Financial Officer	Chief Operating Officer Group	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Contact Officer	Doug Rutherford National Manager	Budget and Financial Management Branch	s47F(1)	s47F(1)

Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

TOPIC: **CONTRACTOR AND CONSULTANCY SPEND**

WITNESS: Danielle Regeling
Acting Chief Operating Officer

Strategic Narrative

- Services Australia (the Agency) predominantly relies on its APS staff to deliver outcomes.
- The Agency has contractors and very few consultancies to supplement its workforce for expertise and requirements that are not readily available.

Contractors

- The use of contractors allows for a more flexible workforce to meet operational requirements by assisting with:
 - project work where the need only spans the life of the project, including transformational projects such as Health Delivery Modernisation and Veteran Centric Reform;
 - Service Delivery Partners (SDPs) and labour hire to complement the Agency's workforce to meet operational requirements;
 - regular business tasks where there is a temporary shortage of ongoing staff to meet business demands; and
 - expertise that is not readily available or accessible across the Agency.

Consultancies

- The Agency only engages consultants where it requires specialised professional services, independent research, review or assessment, or other necessary skills to supplement the Agency's capabilities. This has been particularly important to help the Agency deliver on key projects.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES**CONTRACTORS**

Description	31 Mar 2024 YTD \$ million	2022–23 \$ million	2021–22 \$ million
Contractors expenditure (excluding GST)	295.23	762.42	1,194.28

- The YTD 2023–24 expenditure of \$295.23 million includes:
 - \$7.19 million for labour hire (\$20.65 million in 2022–23);
 - \$39.61 million for Service Delivery Partners (\$121.12 million in 2022–23); and
 - \$248.43 million for contractors, including \$192.02 million on ICT contractors (\$620.65 million in 2022–23).
- The key driver of contractor expenditure in previous years related to Service Delivery Partners, the COVID-19 pandemic and surge response.
- These contractor numbers exclude expenditure on consultants.

CONSULTANTS

- Consultants have predominantly been engaged to support the programs, projects and initiatives undertaken across the Agency to transform the way the Agency works and to improve service delivery for customers.
- Consultancy expenditure for the 2023–24 financial year to 31 March 2024 was \$3,900,627 (including GST).
- Consultancy expenditure for 2022–23 was \$9,151,020 (reported in Table 44, page 196 of the 2022–23 Annual Report).
- This is compared to expenditure of \$13,591,424 for 2021–22, \$13,291,131 for 2020–21 and \$18,476,477 for 2019–20 (reported in Table 44, page 189 of the 2021–22 Annual Report).

Talking Points**Contractors**

- Total contractor expenditure to 31 March 2024 of \$295.23 million was driven by expenditure against the following:
 - IT contractors in Technology and Digital Programs (\$192.02 million);
 - Service Delivery Partners (\$39.61 million);
 - Child Support, Indigenous and Tailored Services to meet telephony and processing services (\$20.04 million); and
 - other contractor expenditure (\$43.56 million) consisting of low value contracts across the Agency to meet operational requirements.

- Total contractor expenditure to 30 June 2023 of \$762.42 million was driven by expenditure against the following:
 - IT contractors in Technology and Digital Programs (\$533.74 million);
 - Service Delivery Partners (\$121.12 million);
 - Child Support, Indigenous and Tailored Services (\$23.46 million) to meet telephony and processing services; and
 - Other contractor expenditure (\$84.10 million) consisting of low value contracts spread across the Agency to meet operational requirements.
- The Agency continues to review its workforce mix, with an increased surge in workforce requirements in the prior years needed in response to COVID-19 and natural disasters.
- Funding of significant ICT projects resulted in higher levels of contractor expenditure to deliver major transformation projects in prior years, which has reduced in 2023–24.

Consultants

- The Agency engages consultants when:
 - certain skill sets are required that are not available within the Agency;
 - there is a need for an independent review or advice; or
 - a temporary increase to existing specialised or professional skills is required.
- The engagement of consultants fluctuates annually depending on programs, projects and initiatives being undertaken.
- The Agency applies the Department of Finance consultancy guidance criteria when assessing and reporting consultancies.
- Consultancy expenditure for the 2023–24 financial year to 31 March 2024 was \$3,900,627 relating to three consultancy contracts.
 - 2023–24 consultancy expenditure is trending below the \$9,151,020 (including GST) expenditure for the full 2022–23 financial year.
- The three consultancy contracts with expenditure in 2023–24, as at 31 March 2024, are:

Supplier	Description	2022–23 Expenditure (GST inc.)	Business Area
KPMG (ongoing consultancy)	Independent Assurance for the Major Transformation Programs, WPIT, Health Delivery Modernisation and Veteran Centric Reform Programs	\$1,406,620	Assurance Capability and Engagement Branch

Supplier	Description	2022–23 Expenditure (GST inc.)	Business Area
Sententia Consulting Pty Ltd (non-ongoing consultancy)	Independent assurance to support the Agency's response to the Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme, including supporting and participating as a member of the Agency's Steering Group.	\$16,910	Royal Commission Response Branch
KordaMentha – (non-ongoing consultancy)	Independent review to assess the Agency's funding position and provide updated advice on its service delivery capacity and capability to meet agreed program metrics.	\$2,477,097	Procurement Branch
Total consultancies expenditure 2023–24 (to 31 March 2024)		\$3,900,627	

Budget

- As at 31 March 2024, the budget for contractor and consultant expenses for 2023–24 is \$437.70 million (\$593.74 million in 2022–23). The budget excludes any planned spend for internally developed software.

Background

Contractors

- The contractor expenditure related to the Agency's operating budget is outlined in the table below:

Description	2023–24 31 March YTD \$ million	2022–23 \$ million	2021–22 \$ million	Change \$ million	Change %
Labour Hire	7.19	20.65	119.70	(99.05)	(83%)
Service Delivery Partners	39.61	121.12	269.85	(148.73)	(55%)
Contractors ¹	248.43	620.65	804.73	(184.08)	(23%)
Total expenditure contractors only	295.23	762.42	1,194.28	(431.86)	(36%)

¹ Contractors includes capitalised amounts of \$77.75 million in 2023–24, \$297.60 million in 2022–23 and \$228.13 million in 2021–22.

- Labour hire panels provide administrative functions from vendors such as Chandler Macleod, Hays and Compas.
- Service Delivery Partners outsource providers such as Concentrix, TELCO and Serco.
- Contractors provide more professional skills from vendors such as Infosys, IBM, SAP and KPMG.
- Payment to the top 10 vendors in the current and previous financial year:

Current financial year	
Vendor	2023–24 31 March YTD \$ million
Akkodis Australia Talent	19.94
Concentrix Services Pty Ltd (SDP*)	16.66
Ernst & Young	12.88
TELCO SERVICES AUSTRALIA (SDP*)	12.30
Compas Pty Ltd	12.05
FinXL Professional Services Pty Ltd	9.86
Talent International (ACT) Pty Ltd	7.09
INDEX Consultants Pty Ltd	6.50
PAXUS Australia Pty Ltd	6.18
SYPAQ Systems Pty Ltd	5.82
Sub-Total	109.28
Other contractors expenditure	185.95
Total Contractors expenditure	295.23

*SDP – Service Delivery Partner

SERVICES AUSTRALIA

SB24-000143

Prior financial years		
Vendor	2022–23 \$ million	2021–22 (rank) \$ million
Serco Citizen Services Pty Ltd (SDP8)	48.12	73.13 (2)
Akkodis Australia Talent	45.08	
Ernst & Young	42.10	
Concentrix Services Pty Ltd	36.65	69.95 (3)
Probe Asia Pacific Pty Ltd / Stellar Asia Pacific Pty Ltd (SDP8)	29.67	46.29 (7)
Compas Pty Ltd	24.93	
Infosys Technologies Limited	24.66	46.92 (6)
FinXL Professional Services Pty Ltd	20.77	
SAP Australia Pty Ltd	20.57	37.01 (9)
Talent International (ACT) Pty Ltd	20.55	
Datacom Connect Pty Ltd (SDP8)		80.48 (1)
Modis Staffing Pty Ltd		56.28 (4)
Chandler Macleod Group Limited		47.03 (5)
Hays Specialist Recruitment Aust PL		41.00 (8)
ADECCO Australia Pty Ltd		32.89 (10)
Sub-Total	313.10	530.98
Other contractors expenditure	449.32	663.30
Total Contractors expenditure	762.42	1,194.28

*SDP – Service Delivery Partner

- The Agency also uses contractors for projects, utilising the capital budget. Major programmes with contractor expenditure include:

Current financial year	
Programme Name	2023–24 31 Mar YTD \$ million
GovERP Programme	11.55
Health Delivery Modernisation	10.74
Technology and Digital Programs	10.05
Support at Home	8.53
DVA Modernisation	8.45
Other Projects	28.43
Total Capitalised Contractor Expenditure	77.75

Prior financial years		
Programme Name	2022-23 \$ million	2021-22 \$ million
GovERP Programme	72.60	4.97
Welfare Payments Infrastructure Transformation	67.83	100.25
Enhanced myGov and Digital Identity	52.63	13.13
Residential Aged Care Funding Reform	31.33	23.46
Veteran Centric Reform	13.21	10.31
Health Delivery Modernisation	8.05	17.29
Other Projects	51.95	58.72
Total Capitalised Contractor Expenditure	297.60	228.13

Media coverage

Date	Source	Item
16 June 2023	<i>The Mandarin</i>	Services Australia dumps \$343 million Serco call centre deal, 610 staff to be sacked
15 February 2023	<i>iTnews</i>	Services Australia revises IT contractor cuts to "around 1245" - Training & Development - iTnews
30 November 2022	<i>The Mandarin</i>	Services Australia contractor cull cuts 1,000 positions
19 September 2022	<i>The Canberra Times</i>	Labour hire bill soars but Katy Gallagher promises she will fix Coalition's 'systemic dismantling' of APS
12 June 2022	<i>The Guardian</i>	Warning over Centrelink call centres as Services Australia slashes contracts Welfare The Guardian
25 May 2022	<i>Financial Review</i>	Labour won't cancel big four consulting contracts
23 May 2022	<i>The Mandarin (similar content in other publications)</i>	Public Sector contracts set to be scrutinised under Albanese government

Questions on Notice

Estimates QONs

Hearing	Date	Senator - Question #	Broad topic
Budget Estimates	4 June 2021	Senator Nita Green SQ21-000163	Contractor expenditure excluding labour hire 2020–21 (provided YTD 31 May 2021)

Other QONs

Committee Inquiry	Senator/MP - Question #	Broad topic
Committee Inquiry/Parliamentary	Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher PQ20-000001	Spend on external contractors for each year from 2013–14 to 2018–19

Freedom of Information (FOI)

Request Date	Who	Relating to	Documents released
7 April 2021	s47F(1) Next Media	Total amount spent on IT contractors for the 2019-20 financial year.	No documents released. Decision notified on 7 June 2021. Refusing the request on the basis all reasonable steps have been taken to find the documents and they do not exist.
24 February 2021	s47F(1) Next Media	Total amount spent on IT contractors for the 2019-20 financial year, as well as total number of external contractors employed in 2019-20.	No documents released. Matter deemed withdrawn by operation of the FOI Act on 20 March 2021.

	Name and Role	Group/Branch/Organisation	Phone (w)	Phone (mob)
Cleared By	Name: Angela Diamond Role: Chief Financial Officer	Chief Financial Officer Division	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Contact Officer	Name: Adrian Bernroider Role: National Manager	Corporate Enabling Group, Chief Financial Officer Division, Financial Accounting Branch	s47F(1)	s47F(1)

Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

TOPIC: **WORKFORCE SIZE AND STRUCTURE (HIGH LEVEL)**

WITNESS: Danielle Regeling
Acting Chief Operating Officer

Strategic Narrative

- The bulk of Services Australia's (the Agency) workforce are Australian Public Service (APS) employees with a mix of ongoing, non-ongoing, and casual employment.
- The Agency's non-APS workforce (comprising of labour hire personnel, contractors, and outsourced providers) provide additional flexibility to engage short-term specialist or surge services, to support day-to-day operations and workload requirements.
- The Agency is focused on workforce affordability and stability, ensuring recruitment is keeping pace with separations in order to maintain staffing levels, to reduce or eliminate impact on service delivery.
- Between 27 November 2023 and 15 January 2024, the Agency has recruited approximately 3,100 new service delivery staff in response to the supplementation of \$228 million received in 2023-24, as announced by the Honourable Bill Shorten MP on 6 November 2023 (SB24-000056).

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- As at 31 March 2024, the Agency's workforce headcount totalled 35,721, made up of an APS (34,197) and non-APS (1,524) workforce.
- The Agency's Service Delivery Partners (SDPs) also contributed the equivalent effort of an additional workforce headcount of 755 (699 FTE).
- The Agency's APS employee headcount increased by 1,873 between 31 March 2023 (32,324) and 31 March 2024 (34,197); the largest increase is in the ongoing workforce (from 28,639 to 33,000).
- Approximately 68% of the Agency's workforce are in customer contact roles.

- The Agency had 6,478 APS ongoing commencements from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 and 4,587 ongoing separations.

Talking Points

Headcount workforce

- The Agency’s current and historical workforce headcount data is at [Attachment A](#).
- [Attachment B](#) provides a Customer Service Delivery Group overview.

Commencements and Separations

- The Agency has seen significant growth in ongoing commencements, which can be attributed to the targeted recruitment in Customer Service Delivery Group.
- The average historical ongoing commencement rate (July 2018 to June 2023) was approximately 5 per cent. In the 12 months to 31 March 2023, this has increased to 20 per cent.
- The average historical ongoing separation rate (July 2018 to June 2023) was approximately 10 per cent. The rate during the 12 months to 31 March 2023 is approximately 14 per cent.
- Below is a summary of ongoing commencements and separation headcount and rates for the Agency for 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023, comparing to 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

	Ongoing Commencements and Rate	Ongoing Separations and Rate
1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024	6,478 (19.6%)	4,587 (13.9%) 5.4% ongoing separations are due to employees taking up roles in other APS agencies.
1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023	2,363 (8.3%)	3,503 (12.2%) 3.8% ongoing separations are due to employees taking up roles in other APS agencies.

Longitudinal Ongoing Separation Rates

- Ongoing separation rates for the Agency from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 was 13.9 per cent.
- When comparing Agency separation rates with other APS agencies, the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) excludes those employees that leave the Agency to join another APS agency.
 - The Agency’s ongoing separation rate of 13.9 per cent for the 12 months to 31 March 2024 is comprised of 5.4 per cent that left for another APS agency, and 8.5 per cent that separated for other reasons (including retirement or resignation).

- 8.5 per cent for the Agency is well within normal separation rates for Australia when compared to:
 - o Overall APS¹ was 6.9 per cent.
 - o On average 7.0 per cent for other APS extra large agencies¹.
 - o The Australian workforce sector² was 14 per cent.
- As reported in the Australian Human Resource Institute (AHRI) Quarterly Australian Work Outlook², a quarter of organisations reported annual separation to be 20 per cent and above².

Agency Tenure

- Of the Agency's actual ongoing workforce, 86.5 per cent of the APS 5 and 6 cohort and 92.9 per cent of the EL1 and EL2 cohort have been with the Agency for more than 3 years.
- As at 31 March 2024, the Agency's tenure for ongoing staff by actual classification is outlined in the table below.

	Entry Level (e.g. Grads/Trainees) to APS4 (% of overall cohort)	APS5 and APS6 (% of overall cohort)	EL1 and EL2 (% of overall cohort)
Less than one year	6,207 (33.9%)	199 (1.9%)	51 (1.2%)
>=1 and <3 years	3,426 (18.7%)	1,201 (11.6%)	242 (5.9%)
>=3 and <5 years	1,464 (8.0%)	978 (9.4%)	260 (6.3%)
>=5 and <10 years	1,647 (9.0%)	1,595 (15.4%)	374 (9.0%)
>=10 years and over	5,551 (30.3%)	6,393 (61.7%)	3,208 (77.6%)

Working from Home

- As at 31 March 2024, the Agency's working from home (WFH) status is outlined in the table below.

APS Headcount WFH	Non-APS Headcount WFH	Total APS and Non-APS Headcount
6,941 (20.3%)	570 (37.4%)	7,511 (21.0%)
Of these 347 (5.0%) WFH 100%	Of these 21 (3.7%) WFH 100%	Of these 368 (4.9%) WFH 100%

Background

- Headcount represents the number of individual employees on the HR Information System at a point in time, irrelevant of whether they are full time, part time or on leave without pay.

¹ APS sourced from APS Employment Release Tables – 31 December 2023

² Australian Human Resource Institute (AHRI) March 2024 Quarterly Australian Work Outlook Report

- Total headcount will always be higher than Average Staffing Level (ASL) or paid Full Time Equivalent (FTE) (the data is provided by the Chief Financial Officer). This is because:
 - paid FTE and ASL are financial approaches. It reviews employees, their worked/paid hours over a period, and excludes any periods not worked or not being paid a salary. For example, if an employee commences or leaves part way through a month, or if an employee was on unpaid leave for the entire month. Paid FTE and ASL are based on a defined period. ASL does not currently capture the Agency's non-APS workforce.
- The Agency's other workforce includes non-APS Labour hire, which is a subset of contractor expenses, engaged under specific panel and contract arrangements.
 - From 7 August 2023, labour hire is engaged by using the Department of Finance People Panel.
 - The Agency supports Indigenous business and economic development, by contracting with several Indigenous enterprises for the provision of labour hire services.
- The Customer Service Delivery Group utilise SDPs to help deliver services to the community through a fee-for-service arrangement, whereby they provide workload seconds. SDPs determine the workforce required to deliver their contracted workloads.

Media enquiries

Enquiry date	Source	Response provided
2 August 2023	<i>The Canberra Times</i> (Miriam Webber) about FOI officers	2 August 2023
6 July 2023	<i>Hobart Mercury</i> (Robert Inglis) about staffing in Tasmania	6 July 2023

Estimates Questions on Notice (QONs)

Hearing	Date	Senator - Question #	Broad topic
Additional Estimates	14 February 2024	Senator the Hon Jane Hume SQ24-000052, SQ24-00006, SQ24-000067, SQ24-000063, SQ24-000064, SQ24-000065, SQ24-000070, SQ24-000089, Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash SQ24-000096, SQ24-000097, SQ24-000098 Senator Janet Rice SQ24-000114	Working from Home (WFH) Flexible Work Arrangements, Days WFH and by State, Vacant positions, Recruitment, Acting Arrangements, Public Holiday Working Arrangements, Staff Turnover, Additional WFH, Staff Attrition

Hearing	Date	Senator - Question #	Broad topic
Supplementary Budget Estimates	25 October 2023	Senator Maria Kovacic SQ23-000719, SQ23-000844, SQ23-000904, SQ23-000950 Senator Janet Rice SQ23-000778, SQ23-000812, SQ23-000822 Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds SQ23-000878	Various topics on APS and non-APS headcount for Customer Service Delivery Group/Smart Centre Operations Division, Staff Related Issues, Satisfaction and Attrition, Staffing Levels, People Employed, Property Headcount and Labour Hire Personnel

Other QONs

Committee Inquiry	Senator/MP - Question #	Broad topic
House of Representatives	Senator Jacqui Lambie QiW 115 PQ23-000040	Average Speed to answer the Older Australians Line
House of Representatives	The Hon Paul Fletcher MP QiW 462 PQ23-000208	Service Officer Commencements

Attachments

- Attachment A – Agency Current and Historical Workforce Headcount Profile.
- Attachment B – Customer Service Delivery Group Current and Historical Workforce Headcount Profile.

	Name and Role	Group/Branch/Organisation	Phone (w)	Phone (mob)
Cleared By	Name: Goran Stojanovski Role: A/g General Manager	Corporate Enabling, Workforce Capability Division	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Contact Officer	Name: Jade Cordell Role: National Manager	Corporate Enabling, Workforce Capability Division, Workforce Strategy & Planning	N/A	s47F(1)
Consultation (SDPs Data)	Name: Chris Flinders Role: National Manager	Corporate Enabling/Chief Financial Officer/Procurement Branch	s47F(1)	s47F(1)



Agency Current and Historical Workforce Headcount Profile

	WHOLE OF AGENCY 30 June 2020		WHOLE OF AGENCY 30 June 2021		WHOLE OF AGENCY 30 June 2022		WHOLE OF AGENCY 30 June 2023		WHOLE OF AGENCY 31 March 2024	
APS Ongoing Headcount	27,549		26,932		27,547		27,849		33,000	
APS Non-Ongoing Headcount	805		3,897		1,321		2,491		333	
APS Irregular/Intermittent Headcount	3,399		3,220		3,442		2,072		864	
TOTAL APS Headcount (excluding Secondees)	31,753		34,049		32,310		32,412		34,197	
Total Secondees (Commonwealth employees including APS and non-APS)	741		91		34		18		45	
Non-APS Labour Hire	3,622		967		1,090		47		24	
Non-APS Contractor	3,371		3,302		3,517		1,780		1,455	
TOTAL End of Period Headcount Secondees and Non-APS	7,734		4,360		4,641		1,845		1,524	
TOTAL End of Period Headcount APS and non-APS	39,487		38,409		36,951		34,257		35,721	
Not included in workforce totals > Non-APS Outsourced - Service Delivery Partners (SDPs) Headcount not FTE	6,092		5,350		3,603		1,321		755	
APS Workforce Internal Promotions, Engagements and Separations										
	1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020		1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021		1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022		1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023		1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024	
Ongoing Engagement Rate	1,096	4.0%	896	3.3%	1,613	5.9%	1,950	7.0%	6,478	19.6%
Non-Ongoing Engagement Rate	3,036	72.2%	5,945	83.5%	2,558	53.7%	4,043	88.6%	1,523	127.2%
TOTAL APS Engagements (excluding Secondees)	4,132		6,841		4,171		5,993		8,001	
Ongoing Separation Rate	2,019	7.3%	2,076	7.7%	2,854	10.4%	3,707	13.3%	4,587	13.9%
Non-Ongoing (Inc. Intermittent/Irregular) Separation Rate	925	22.0%	2,435	34.2%	3,031	63.6%	2,164	47.4%	1,532	128.0%
TOTAL APS Separations (excluding Secondees)	2,944		4,511		5,885		5,871		6,119	

Below is a summary of ongoing separation headcount and rates for the Agency for the last 10 years

	1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015	1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016	1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017	1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018	1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019	1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020	1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021	1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022	1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023	1 Apr 2023 to 31 Mar 2024
All Ongoing	1,818 5.8%	2,231 7.1%	2,338 7.7%	2,546 8.5%	2,838 10.1%	2,019 7.3%	2,076 7.7%	2,854 10.4%	3,707 13.3%	4,587 13.9%
Movements to other APS agencies	217 0.7%	620 2.0%	347 1.1%	392 1.3%	421 1.5%	496 1.8%	520 1.9%	863 3.1%	1,244 4.5%	1,767 5.4%



Customer Service Delivery Group Current and Historical Workforce Headcount Profile

Attachment B

	WHOLE OF AGENCY 30 June 2020		WHOLE OF AGENCY 30 June 2021		WHOLE OF AGENCY 30 June 2022		WHOLE OF AGENCY 30 June 2023		WHOLE OF AGENCY 31 March 2024	
APS Ongoing Headcount	18,673		17,354		16,699		17,066		23,044	
APS Non-Ongoing Headcount	724		2,725		778		2,236		230	
APS Irregular/Intermittent Headcount	3,397		3,153		3,425		2,072		864	
TOTAL APS Headcount (excluding Secondees)	22,794		23,232		20,902		21,374		24,138	
Total Secondees (Commonwealth employees including APS and non-APS)	676		30		0		0		0	
Non-APS Labour Hire	2,458		506		923		1		1	
Non-APS Contractor	572		487		126		141		58	
TOTAL End of Period Headcount Secondees and Non-APS	3,706		1,023		1,049		142		59	
TOTAL End of Period Headcount APS and non-APS	26,500		24,255		21,951		21,516		24,197	
Not included in workforce totals > Non-APS Outsourced - Service Delivery Partners (SDPs) Headcount not FTE	6,092		5,350		3,603		1,321		755	
APS Workforce Internal Promotions, Engagements and Separations										
	1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020		1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021		1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022		1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023		1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024	
Ongoing Engagement Rate	433	2.3%	299	1.7%	679	4.1%	1,396	8.2%	6,082	26.4%
Non-Ongoing Engagement Rate	2,920	70.9%	4,638	78.9%	2,407	57.3%	3,846	89.3%	1,412	129.1%
TOTAL APS Engagements (excluding Secondees)	3,353		4,937		3,086		5,242		7,494	
Ongoing Separation Rate	1,196	6.4%	1,202	6.9%	1,661	9.9%	2,318	13.6%	3,036	13.2%
Non-Ongoing (Inc. Intermittent/Irregular) Separation Rate	899	21.8%	2,205	37.5%	2,560	60.9%	1,948	45.2%	1,412	129.1%
TOTAL APS Separations (excluding Secondees)	2,095		3,407		4,221		4,266		4,448	

Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

TOPIC: COMMONWEALTH OMBUDSMAN MATTERS

WITNESS: Danielle Regeling
Acting Chief Operating Officer

Strategic Narrative

- Services Australia (the Agency) has a productive working relationship with the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman (Commonwealth Ombudsman).
- The Agency works closely with the Commonwealth Ombudsman to address customer complaints.
- The Agency appreciates the Commonwealth Ombudsman's advice in relation to investigations and other matters, as this enables the Agency to continually improve services to our customers.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- This financial year to 31 March 2024, the Commonwealth Ombudsman has notified the Agency of 66 new s8 investigations and two new s5(1)(b) own motion investigations.

s47E(d)

Talking Points

Commonwealth Ombudsman Investigations

- If the Commonwealth Ombudsman decides to investigate a customer's complaint or administrative action of the Agency, the Agency is formally advised of the investigation in accordance with the provisions of the *Ombudsman Act 1976 (Cth)* (the Act).
- The Agency provides comprehensive responses to the Commonwealth Ombudsman, in relation to particular specific questions posed by the Ombudsman during investigations.

s47E(d)

myGov Identity theft and fraud

- On 8 April 2024, the Commonwealth Ombudsman notified the Agency of a decision to initiate an investigation under section 5(1)(b) of the Act. The investigation seeks to examine Services Australia's (as the delivery owner of myGov) response to the unauthorised access of customer accounts through myGov.
- The Ombudsman has directed 15 questions to the Agency, in its capacity as a service delivery owner and member service (Centrelink, Child Support, Medicare).
- Ten of the questions pertain to the Agency's role as a service delivery owner of myGov, and focus on:
 - the adequacy of myGov security controls and the rationale for multiple myGov accounts; and
 - what actions the Agency is taking to enhance myGov against cyber threats and coordinate cyber controls across member services.
- Five of the questions pertain to the Agency's role as a member service, and focus on:
 - controls for high-risk transactions within myGov accounts, support channels for customers impacted by fraudulent activity; and
 - compliance with legislative requirements.
- The Agency provided the formal response to the Ombudsman on 30 April 2024.

Customer complaint investigations and themes

- In the Financial Year (FY) 2023–24 (to 31 March 2024), the Agency received notice of a total of 66 new customer complaint investigations commenced under s8 of the Act.
- The top 3 themes from Commonwealth Ombudsman Investigations in the period FY 2023–24 (to 31 March 2024) related to:
 - Debt;
 - Child Support; and
 - Formal review processes.
- In FY 2023–24 (to 31 March 2024), 90% of Agency responses met the Commonwealth Ombudsman’s timeframes.
- In FY 2023–24 (to 31 March 2024), the Agency has observed a 52 per cent decrease in s8 investigations compared to the same period last year:
 - FY 2023–24 (to 31 March 2024), 66 s8 investigations received; and
 - FY 2022–23 (to 31 March 2024), 138 s8 investigations received.
- Statistics relating to Commonwealth Ombudsman customer complaint investigations conducted over the past three financial years are at Attachment A.

Commonwealth Ombudsman initiated own motion investigations

s47E(d)

Commonwealth Ombudsman Statements and Reports published about Services Australia

- In FY 2023–24 (to 31 March 2024), the Commonwealth Ombudsman released two public statements and one public report in relation to Agency matters:
 - On 4 December 2023 the Commonwealth Ombudsman released his public report on the Part 2 income apportionment investigation, titled *Accountability in Action: identifying, owning and fixing errors*.
 - On 28 August 2023 the Commonwealth Ombudsman released his public statement on a separate child support matter titled *Making things right: Insights into Services Australia’s handling of the impact of a system error on certain historic child support assessments*.
 - On 2 August 2023, the Commonwealth Ombudsman released his public statement on the Part 1 income apportionment investigation titled *Lessons in lawfulness – Own motion investigation into Services Australia’s and the*

Department of Social Services' response to the question of the lawfulness of income apportionment before 7 December 2020.

- The *Lessons in lawfulness* public statement issued by the Commonwealth Ombudsman made four recommendations and one suggestion to be implemented.
- The *Accountability in Action* public statement issued by the Commonwealth Ombudsman made a further eight recommendations to be implemented.
- A table listing the recommendations and the status of their implementation for both public statements is at [Attachment B](#).

Engagement with the Ombudsman's Office

- Investigations are managed in accordance with a Relationship Protocol, which has been agreed between the Agency and the Commonwealth Ombudsman.
- The Relationship Protocol sets out the key arrangements for responding to such investigations, including timeframes for standard responses. The Ombudsman's Office has advised the Agency it is currently reviewing the Protocols.
- The Agency also regularly provides proactive briefings and updates on other issues of interest to the Commonwealth Ombudsman.
- The Agency and the Commonwealth Ombudsman hold bi-annual liaison meetings at the SES Band 2 level, and monthly meetings at officer level throughout the year. These meetings focus on key administrative issues and customer complaint themes relevant to the Agency.
- Questions on specific investigations currently being conducted by the Commonwealth Ombudsman are best directed to the Commonwealth Ombudsman.

Timeline of recent or significant events

Date	Action
30 April 2024	The Agency formally responded to the own motion investigation into myGov identity theft and fraud.
8 April 2024	The Agency received written notice from the Commonwealth Ombudsman of the decision to initiate an investigation under section 5(1)(b) of the Act into Services Australia (as the delivery owner of MyGov) and its response to the unauthorised access of customer accounts through myGov.

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Background

- The Commonwealth Ombudsman investigates complaints from customers who believe they have been treated unfairly or unreasonably by the Agency.
- Only a small proportion of complaints received by the Commonwealth Ombudsman are investigated. Generally, the Commonwealth Ombudsman refers customers back to the Agency to have their complaint resolved.

Media coverage

Date	Source	Item
2 March 2024	PS News	Government agencies given guidance on how to collect debt with decency
4 December 2023	Commonwealth Ombudsman website	Media-release-Income-Appportionment-2-OMI.pdf (ombudsman.gov.au)

Attachments

- Attachment A – Commonwealth Ombudsman Complaint Investigations.
- Attachment B – Status of implementation of Commonwealth Ombudsman Recommendations.

	Name and Role	Group/Branch/Organisation	Phone (w)	Phone (mob)
Cleared By	Name: Jeff Derix Role: Chief Counsel	Legal Services Division	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Contact Officer	Name: Alana Jessep Role: A/g General Counsel	FOI & Reviews Branch	s47F(1)	s47F(1)

ATTACHMENT A**Commonwealth Ombudsman Complaint Investigations****Customer Complaint Investigations**

New Customer Complaint Investigations – Quarterly Activity					
Financial Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
2021-22	36	52	57	78	223
2022-23	56	49	38	19	162
2023-24*	23	20	23	-	66

*Data as at 31 March 2024.

Customer Complaint Investigations by Service Delivery Brand

Financial Year	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24*
Centrelink	175	118	38
Child Support	33	28	25
Medicare	15	11	3
myGov	0	5	0
Departmental Total	223	162	66

* Data as at 31 March 2024.

Investigations Finalised with Subsection 12(4) Comments

Financial Year	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24*
Centrelink	4	2	1
Child Support	0	2	0
Medicare	0	0	0
No specific brand	1	0	0
Departmental Total	5	4	1

* Data as at 31 March 2024.

Commonwealth Ombudsman Initiated Own Motion Investigations

Financial Year	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24*
Centrelink	0	1	2
Child Support	0	0	0
Medicare	0	0	0
Departmental Total	0	1	2

* Data as at 31 March 2024.

Commonwealth Ombudsman Statements and Reports Published about Services Australia

Financial Year	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24*
Centrelink	0	2	2
Child Support	0	0	1
Medicare	0	0	0
Departmental Total	0	2	3

* Data as at 31 March 2024

2022-23

- *Did They Do What They Said They Would* volume 2 report (included a chapter on Services Australia (October 2022); and
- *Iain Anderson Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme* statement (March 2023).

2023-24

- *Lessons in lawfulness – Own motion investigation into Services Australia’s and the Department of Social Services’ response to the question of the lawfulness of income apportionment before 7 December 2020* (August 2023);
- *Making things right: Insights into Services Australia’s handling of the impact of a system error on certain historic child support assessments* (August 2023); and
- *Accountability in Action: identifying, owning and fixing errors* (December 2023).

ATTACHMENT B

Commonwealth Ombudsman Recommendations - Status

Income apportionment own motion investigation (Part 1)*: Ombudsman Public Statement: <i>Lessons in lawfulness – Own motion investigation into Services Australia’s and the Department of Social Services’ response to the question of the lawfulness of income apportionment before 7 December 2020 (published August 2023)</i>	
Recommendation	Response
Recommendation 1 (Option 1A) We recommend DSS, in consultation with Services Australia, seeks Solicitor-General opinion, through an Attorney-General referral under the <i>Law Officers Act 1964</i> , on two issues.	Recommendation 1 Option 1A has been completed by the Department of Social Services (the Department). Solicitor-General opinion has been sought by DSS (Solicitor-General’s opinion was received on 22 December 2023). A further advice was received from the Solicitor-General on 15 March 2024.
Recommendation 1 (Option 1B) We recommend DSS and Services Australia seek Federal Court opinion, through referral by the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, under the Administrative Appeals Tribunal Act 1975.	Recommendation 1 Option 1B was jointly considered by the Department and Services Australia (the Agency). The preference was to resolve the issue through an opinion from the Solicitor-General.
Recommendation 2 We recommend DSS, in consultation with Services Australia: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • amend paragraph 2 of the General Instructions to ensure delegates are not inhibited from exercising discretion to consider whether to review historical debts, and • develops a new policy position on the Secretary’s obligation to initiate a review under section 126 of the SS (Admin) Act of decisions affected by errors in applying section 1073B, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ factors to consider when determining when the sufficient reason threshold is met, and ○ how to identify, seek and weigh up relevant factors. 	Partially accepted and actioned The General Guidance was finalised on 9 April 2024. The Agency has developed staff guidance materials consistent with the Guidance and these have been shared with the Ombudsman’s Office.

Income apportionment own motion investigation (Part 1)*: Ombudsman Public Statement: Lessons in lawfulness – Own motion investigation into Services Australia’s and the Department of Social Services’ response to the question of the lawfulness of income apportionment before 7 December 2020 (published August 2023)	
Recommendation	Response
	The policy position should be consistent with legal advice and include consideration of debts accrued in periods prior to 7 December 2020, as well as potential historic underpayments.
Recommendation 3	<p>We recommend Services Australia, in consultation with DSS and the CDPP, develops a strategy for how agencies will approach historic, current and future criminal prosecutions associated with administrative debts involving income apportionment under section 1073B of the Social Security Act 1991.</p> <p>The strategy should include an agreed policy position on evidence required to prove administrative debt amounts and the impact this will have on prosecutions and convictions.</p>
Recommendation 4	<p>We recommend Services Australia and DSS provide the CDPP with copies of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any Solicitor-General’s opinion they obtain in response to Recommendation 1. • All draft and finalised legal advices on section 1073B <i>Social Security Act 1991</i> for social security benefits. • Our finalised investigation report, including any formal responses from DSS and Services Australia.
Suggestion 1	<p>The Agency and the Department have protocols in place to report relevant matters, including section 1073B issues, to the Office of Legal Services Coordination (OLSC).</p> <p>These protocols have been incorporated into a new DSS and Services Australia <i>Standing Operational Statement – Protocols for the management of litigation and legal advice</i> (dated 27 November 2023).</p>

Income apportionment own motion investigation (Part 2)*: Ombudsman report: <i>Accountability in Action: identifying, owning and fixing errors</i> (published December 2023)	
Recommendation	Response
<p>Recommendation 1</p> <p>We recommend Services Australia, in consultation with DSS, develop a strategy to assess a sample of historic debts, underpayments, AAT decisions and debts referred to the CDPP for prosecution that were potentially affected by unlawful income apportionment.</p> <p>The sample should be statistically significant in size, provide a high rate of confidence, and include a range of payments across a range of years between 2003 to 2020.</p> <p>The strategy should outline the timing, resourcing and sampling methodology involved for all potentially affected payments.</p>	<p>Accepted and actioned</p> <p>The Agency completed the first sampling exercise in October 2023.</p> <p>In February 2024, the Agency completed a second sampling exercise to address matters specifically raised in the Ombudsman's recommendation.</p> <p>The final report has been provided to the Ombudsman's Office</p>
<p>Recommendation 2</p> <p>We recommend Services Australia and DSS develop an overarching strategy to manage remedies for customers affected or potentially affected by unlawful income apportionment decisions.</p> <p>The strategy should be based on evidence and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the agencies' policy position, with a clear rationale, for which customers or classes of customers will receive a remedy • what remedies are available to customers or classes of customers • regular evaluation milestones to ensure remedial actions are successfully meeting the strategy's objective and goals. <p>The strategy should be clearly communicated to potentially affected customers and shared with the CDPP and the AAT.</p>	<p>Accepted and in progress</p> <p>Work is being progressed on the legal and policy issues that will inform the remediation options to be put forward to Government for decision.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3</p> <p>We recommend Services Australia, in consultation with DSS, develops and implements a strategy for managing income apportionment-affected reviews and debt recovery pauses.</p> <p>The strategy should include its policy position on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the resourcing and timeframes it will dedicate to assessing the backlog of paused reviews • identifying and assessing priority reviews and recording reasons for prioritisation • how it will manage debt recovery pauses and pause extensions. 	<p>Accepted and in progress</p> <p>On 29 April 2024, the Agency recommenced a small number of income apportionment-affected reviews.</p> <p>The Staged approach to recommencement will allow the Agency to gather feedback on its processes and the findings will underpin the development of an overarching strategy for managing the remaining activities.</p>

Income apportionment own motion investigation (Part 2)*: Ombudsman report: <i>Accountability in Action: identifying, owning and fixing errors</i> (published December 2023)		
Recommendation		Response
	The strategy should be accompanied by clear procedural guidance for staff on how to identify, record and assess reviews and debt recovery pauses consistently and appropriately.	
Recommendation 4	<p>We recommend Services Australia updates its procedures for recalculating income apportionment affected decisions following a settled legal position on how to lawfully calculate its decisions.</p> <p>Services Australia should also update its procedural guidance after DSS makes any updates to the General Instructions following our Investigation 1 recommendations, and after the agencies develop their remediation strategy.</p>	<p>Accepted and in progress</p> <p>The General Guidance was finalised on 9 April 2024.</p> <p>The Agency has developed staff guidance materials consistent with the Guidance and these have been shared with the Ombudsman's Office.</p> <p>Staff guidance relating to remediation actions are dependent on a Government decision on remediation.</p>
Recommendation 5	<p>We recommend Services Australia develop a comprehensive communications plan to manage all aspects of communication with customers affected, or potentially affected, by historic unlawful income apportionment.</p> <p>Services Australia should provide copies of its approved communication plan to DSS, the CDPP and the AAT.</p>	<p>Accepted and partially actioned</p> <p>The Agency, in consultation with DSS, has developed a communications approach to provide customers with information and to support staff to provide information in relation to income apportionment.</p> <p>A communications strategy has been developed to support the Stage 1 commencement activities. This has been shared with the Ombudsman's Office.</p> <p>A comprehensive communications plan will be developed following the Stage 1 commencement activities and subsequent findings/feedback.</p>
Recommendation 6	<p>We recommend Services Australia amends all relevant communications, including its decision letters, staff telephone guidance and website information to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A clear and simple explanation of income apportionment, and how unlawful practices impacted historic decisions and review delays (including specific information to individuals wad their payments unlawfully calculated) 	<p>Accepted and partially actioned</p> <p>The Agency continually revises its communications products, with updated information provided to customers through the Services Australia website, Interactive Voice Response telephony service, and letters issued to customers.</p>

Income apportionment own motion investigation (Part 2)*: Ombudsman report: <i>Accountability in Action: identifying, owning and fixing errors</i> (published December 2023)		
Recommendation		Response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apology for decision delays, and for historic unlawful calculations <p>Information about what Services Australia is doing to address historic unlawful income apportionment decisions.</p>	<p>Stage 1 recommencement letters were user tested with real customers prior to implementation, and these letters have been shared with the Ombudsman's Office.</p> <p>The Agency will continue to update its customer correspondence products as feedback is received throughout the delivery of Stage 1.</p>
Recommendation 7	<p>We recommend Services Australia develops and implements a policy to capture complaints about income apportionment-affected decisions, reviews, communications and related issues at all complaint levels.</p> <p>The policy should be supported by guidance for all staff to support them to identify and respond to complaints related to income apportionment.</p>	<p>Accepted and actioned</p> <p>The Agency has implemented processes to capture complaints about income apportionment-affected decisions, reviews, communications and related issues.</p>
Recommendation 8	<p>We recommend Services Australia and DSS provide regular reports to each other on income apportionment complaints and complaint issues arising from agency actions to remedy historic income apportionment issues.</p> <p>At a minimum, reports should include complaint volumes and trends – such as data about complaint volumes and trends – such as aa about complaint issues, causes and outcomes, and systemic issues.</p>	<p>Accepted and partially actioned</p> <p>Regular reporting on complaints related to income apportionment has been implemented.</p> <p>The Agency will continue to work with DSS to formalise reporting arrangements in the Bilateral Management Agreement between the agencies.</p>

*Data as at 30 April 2024.

Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

TOPIC: OVERVIEW OF ALL ANAO AUDITS

WITNESS: Danielle Regeling
Acting Chief Operating Officer

Strategic Narrative

- Services Australia (the Agency) values the independent assurance and review provided by the Auditor-General through the Australian National Audit Office's (ANAO) program of performance audits. The ANAO's work contributes to improved public sector administration and accountability.
- The Agency takes on lessons from ANAO performance audits to improve its governance, compliance and performance monitoring frameworks, as part of its commitment to continuous improvement.
- The ANAO, through its financial statement audit, obtains reasonable assurance whether an entity's annual financial statements are free from material misstatement whether, due to fraud or error, to inform the Auditor-General's opinion on whether they accord with the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*.
- The ANAO, through its annual performance statement audit, aims to drive improvements in the transparency and quality of performance reporting, and in turn, increase accountability to Government and the public.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES (as at 31 March 2024)

- There are currently three ANAO performance audits underway in the Agency:
 - management of cyber incidents;
 - administration of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme; and
 - transitional arrangements for the Cashless Debit Card (CDC).
- The Agency is also contributing to the ANAO's performance audit, Compliance with corporate credit card requirements in the National Disability Insurance Agency.

- The Agency is working to remediate eight category A and B findings from the 2022–23 financial statements audit, including:
 - one significant (category A) finding; and
 - seven moderate (category B) findings.
- In 2022–23, the Agency was included in the ANAO’s Annual Performance Statements Audit program. The Agency’s Annual Performance Statements will be audited annually, as part of this program.
 - the Agency has resolved one finding and is working to address four findings.
- The 2024–25 ANAO Draft Annual Audit Work Program (AAWP) listed 12 potential audits for the Agency.

Talking Points

ANAO Financial Statement Audit

- The Agency is working to remediate seven category A and B findings from the 2022–23 financial statements audit, as follows:

Category	Finding
A	IT Governance
B	Governance over Legal and other matters (downgraded from A)
B	Logging and Monitoring in SAP (upgraded from C – raised 2019–20)
B	RACF (Resource Access Control Facility) – Monitoring of super user activity (Medicare, Child Support, Health) – (upgraded from C finding raised in 2020–21)
B	ACF2 (Access Control Facility 2) and M204 (Model 204) – Monitoring of super users (Centrelink) – (upgraded from C finding raised in 2020–21)
B	New Residential Aged Care System Access Management
B	New Residential Aged Care System Change Management
B	Medicare Mainframe Passwords and User Access Management

- A closure pack for the Category A Governance over Legal and other matters was submitted to the ANAO on 28 March 2024, which has been downgraded to a Category B as part of the ANAO Interim Management Letter on 30 April 2024.
- The remaining findings relate to Information Communications Technology governance arrangements with common themes including general access management, privileged user access, change management, and disaster recovery planning and testing.
- The Agency has established a dedicated division responsible for working closely with the ANAO and other stakeholders to oversee the resolution of IT Governance findings.

- The Agency made a submission to the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit (JCPAA) inquiry into Commonwealth Financial Statements 2022–23. The submission provides details of the Agency’s significant (category A) and moderate (category B) audit findings, together with the steps the Agency is taking to remediate the issues.

ANAO In-Progress Performance Audits

Management of cyber incidents

- This audit will assess effectiveness of non-corporate Commonwealth entity’s management of cyber security incidents and includes the Agency and AUSTRAC. The ANAO proposes to examine the following high-level criteria:
 - Have entities appropriately documented cyber security incident management?
 - Have entities effectively implemented cyber security incident management responses to investigate and respond to cyber security incidents?
 - Have entities effectively implemented processes to mitigate risks where cyber security incident management responses are ineffective?
- The audit is currently scheduled to table in late June 2024.

Administration of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS)

- This audit will assess the effectiveness of the administration of the PBS. The ANAO proposes to examine whether:
 - The Department of Health and Aged Care (Health) has established effective governance and oversight arrangements for the PBS;
 - Health and the Agency have established effective processes and systems for delivering PBS services and payments; and
 - Health and the Agency have established effective arrangements for monitoring, review and evaluation of PBS administration.
- The report is expected to be tabled in October 2024.

Transitional arrangements for the Cashless Debit Card (CDC)

- This audit will assess the effectiveness of the transitional arrangements from the CDC program to the enhanced Income Management (eIM) program, and includes the Agency and Department of Social Services (DSS). The ANAO proposes to examine whether:
 - DSS had effective oversight of the transition arrangements;
 - The design of the eIM program was based on appropriate advice and evidence; and
 - The Agency and DSS undertook the procurement process for the eIM program in accordance with the Commonwealth Procurement Rules.
- The report is expected to be tabled in June 2024.

Compliance with corporate credit card requirements in the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)

- The Agency was not designated as an entity for the purposes of this performance audit.
- The audit examined NDIA's effective management of the use of corporate credit cards for official purposes in accordance with legislative and entity requirements.
- The ANAO examined whether the NDIA has effective arrangements in place to manage the issue, return and use of corporate credit cards and implemented effective controls and processes for corporate credit cards in accordance with its policies and procedures.
- The report was tabled on 30 May 2024.

ANAO Performance Audit Recommendations

- The Agency currently has 13 open ANAO performance audit recommendations. The majority of these relate to two audits tabled in the last 12 months, 'Accuracy and Timeliness of Welfare Payments' (five recommendations) and 'Debt Management and Recovery in Services Australia' (four recommendations).
- The Agency is continuing to progress the implementation of all open ANAO performance recommendations.

ANAO Performance Statements Audit

- In 2022–23, the ANAO audited the Agency's 2022–23 Annual Performance Statements, which are included in the 2022–23 Annual Report.
- The ANAO concluded the 2022–23 Annual Performance Statements of Services Australia present fairly the Agency's performance in achieving its purposes and they are prepared in accordance with relevant parts of the *Public Governance Performance and Accountability Act 2013*.
- The ANAO issued a closing letter to the Agency in September 2023 which contained four findings with recommendations for the Agency.
- The Agency agreed with all findings with an internal program of work now underway to address these.
 - Appropriateness of performance information – reliability of information sources and methodologies (Category A). The Agency is reviewing its strategic performance measures to ensure they are fit for purpose, complete, transparent, and linked to the Agency's performance.

SERVICES AUSTRALIA

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- Omission of an efficiency performance measure (Category A).
The Agency is continuing to investigate options for a standalone efficiency measure. The Agency's 2022–23 Annual Performance Statements identified two proxy measures of efficiency that are used for reporting efficiency in the meantime.
- Enterprise-wide performance framework (Category B). The Agency is building on its current performance reporting framework to better coordinate and integrate the reporting process across the Agency (resolved).
- Availability and timeliness of evidence (Category B). The Agency has strengthened internal processes and communication with ANAO to support the 2023–24 audit.
- An additional finding on Omission of performance measures on the Agency's regulatory functions. This is a new requirement for all government entities to report. Work will be completed for reporting from 2024–25.

	Name and Role	Group/Branch/Organisation	Phone (w)	Phone (mob)
Cleared By	Name: Lily Viertmann Role: General Manager	Corporate Enabling Group/ Services Australia	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Contact Officer	Name: Andrew Rodrigues Role: National Manager	Corporate Enabling Group/ Audit Branch/Services Australia	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Consultation	Name: Angela Diamond Role: Chief Financial Officer	Corporate Enabling Group/Services Australia	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Consultation	Name: Adrian Bernroider Role: National Manager	Corporate Enabling Group/Financial Accounting Branch/ Services Australia	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Consultation	Name: Chistopher Jasson Role: A/g National Manager	Technology and Digital Programs Group/Technology and Digital Assurance/ Services Australia		s47F(1)
Consultation	Name: Jane Annear Role: National Manager	Technology and Digital Programs Group/ICT Governance/ Services Australia		s47F(1)
Consultation	Name: Pauline O'Neill Role: A/g General Manager	Strategy and Performance Group/Performance, Priorities and Reporting Branch/ Services Australia	s47F(1)	s47F(1)

Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

TOPIC: 3000 STAFFING BOOST FOR SERVICES AUSTRALIA

WITNESS: Danielle Regeling
Acting Chief Operating Officer

Strategic Narrative

- On 6 November 2023, Minister Shorten announced additional government funding of \$228 million for Services Australia (the Agency) to recruit 3,000 new staff to support processing and telephony services across social welfare and health programs.
- Between 27 November 2023 to 15 January 2024, the Agency recruited approximately 3,100 additional service delivery staff.
- All staff that were successful in gaining a position were assessed through the Agency's recruitment process, completed necessary pre-employment checks, and commenced in ongoing roles.
- The Agency targeted recruitment in key locations where there was appropriate accommodation and leadership support. Locations included Adelaide, Brisbane, Western Sydney, Canberra, Perth, and a range of regional locations.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- The Government provided supplementation of \$228 million in 2023-24, to increase the customer service delivery staffing levels by 1,823 average staffing level (ASL).
- Of the 3,100 new staff who commenced with the Agency between 27 November 2023 and 15 January 2024, approximately 10 per cent have left the Agency.
- Of the 3,100 staff, 13 per cent are from a cultural and linguistic diverse background, 3 per cent declared they have a disability, and 1 per cent identified as Indigenous.

Talking Points

- The Agency recruited the additional staff in four tranches:
 - 27 November 2023 (852 staff);
 - 11 December 2023 (735 staff);
 - 8 January 2024 (982 staff); and
 - 15 January 2024 (534 staff).
- A comprehensive learning program was designed and delivered to build core knowledge and role specific technical capabilities relevant to the work our new staff will undertake to service customers.
- New staff progress through the Agency's tiered capability journey, allowing them to 'learn a bit, do a bit' to consolidate skills and build confidence.
- Staff commence in foundational (Tier 1), low complexity call and processing work, focusing on customer outcomes and progressively build capability to become a customer service expert.
 - All new Social Security and Welfare (SSW) recruits have completed their initial training and are contributing to customer outcomes.
 - Of the 2,477 recruits, 1,600 have advanced to the next Tier of their training (as at 15 April 2024).
 - The remaining staff are taking calls or processing work.
 - All new Health recruits have completed their initial training and are contributing to customer outcomes.
 - Of the 484 recruits, 110 have advanced to the next Tier of their training (as at 15 April 2024).
 - The remaining staff are taking calls or processing work.
- The Agency is monitoring staffing levels and attrition, with a plan to undertake ongoing recruitment to maintain staffing at funded level.
- Our workforce planning allows us to increase or decrease the flow of new recruits based on affordability and attrition, and provide a quality training experience for new starters.
- Of the 3,100 new staff who commenced between 27 November 2023 and 15 January 2024, just over 10 per cent (327) are no longer employed with the Agency.
 - The main reasons for separations are either self-identification for the right fit, not meeting employment conditions or non-performance of duties.
- Between 16 January to 31 March 2024 approximately 1,900 APS3/4s have been recruited into Customer Service Delivery.

- Between 1 April 2024 and 30 June 2024, the Agency expects to recruit approximately 300 entry level staff.
- From 1 July 2023, the Agency implemented an 'Apply at Anytime' recruitment approach, for APS3/4 Entry Level Service Delivery roles. This approach has provided the Agency with strong merit pools to select candidates from.
- As at 30 April 2024, there are approximately 17,000 candidates in the APS3/4 merit lists across the country.
- Each month, candidates have the opportunity to apply and be assessed against key criteria. Those candidates who are successful in the process are then placed in merit pools for future job opportunities.
- Advertising of Entry Level Service Delivery roles concluded on 30 April 2024, noting the available merit pools. Planning on the timing of future recruitment for the new financial year is currently being considered.

Background

- The Agency has faced an increasing degradation in delivering services to citizens, at a time when Australians are facing overwhelming cost of living pressures.
- The Agency's previous resourcing did not address the levels of demand for customer services.
- This is further exacerbated by a reduction of approximately \$60 million to the overtime budget since 2019–20, which has limited the Agency's ability to reduce work on hand within its existing workforce.
- All these factors have contributed to claims processing backlogs, long call wait times and call congestion, and increasing numbers of complaints.
- The Agency has put measures in place to improve customer service, such as reducing the number of steps for customers to speak to the right area, and the number of steps for staff to finalise a claim.
- Through the Agency's 'Apply at Anytime' approach, candidates have the opportunity to apply and be assessed against key criteria. Those candidates who are successful in the process are then placed in merit pools for future job opportunities.
- Of the approximate 3,100 staff, the following characteristics were declared:
 - 64 per cent identified as female;
 - 3 per cent identified as indeterminate; and
 - 33 per cent identified as male.

- The approximate 3,100 staff were from the following States:
 - 12 per cent from the ACT;
 - 22 per cent from NSW;
 - 1 per cent from the NT;
 - 19 per cent from QLD;
 - 12 per cent from SA;
 - 2 per cent from TAS;
 - 24 per cent from VIC; and
 - 7 per cent from WA.
- Of the 3,100, 81 per cent were located in metropolitan areas and 19 per cent were in non-metropolitan (i.e. not located in or near a large city).
- Of the 1873 APS3/4s who have been recruited into Customer Service Delivery between 16 January to 31 March 2024, staff were placed in the following Divisions:
 - Child Support and Tailored Services – 26 staff;
 - Face to Face Services – 347 staff;
 - Health Service Delivery – 168 staff; and
 - Smart Centres Operations – 1332 staff.

Media coverage

Date	Source	Item
8 November 2023	<i>ABC Coffs Coast Coffs Harbour</i>	There will be a nationwide boost to Services Australia jobs with 3000 new recruits expected to join the front line in a bid to improve Centrelink and Medicare services. Stream
7 November 2023	<i>The Guardian</i>	Up to 180 staff leaving Services Australia each month amid growing delays for Centrelink services Centrelink The Guardian

Relevant Ministerial Comments

Date	Minister	Details
6 November 2023	Minister Bill Shorten and Peter Khalil MP	Joint press conference to discuss the announcement of 3000 jobs at Centrelink.
6 November 2023	Minister Bill Shorten	ABC News – Federal Government will hire an extra 3000 staff for Services Australia to help reduce wait times for Centrelink services

Attachments

- Attachment A - List of locations by State.

	Name and Role	Group/Branch/Organisation	Phone (w)	Phone (mob)
Cleared By	Name: Goran Stojanovski Role: A/g General Manager	Workforce Capability Division	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Contact Officer	Name: Michael Pohl Role: A/g National Manager	Recruitment and Onboarding Branch	N/A	s47F(1)
Consultation	Name: Bo Robertson Role: General Manager	Operations Management Division	s47F(1)	s47F(1)

Attachment A**Additional staff – locations**

Location – ACT	Numbers
Belconnen	5
Greenway – Caroline Chisholm Centre	312
Greenway – Louisa Lawson Building	30
Gungahlin	6
Tuggeranong	5
Woden	12
Total	370

Location – NSW	Numbers
Albury	1
Armidale	1
Bankstown	2
Batemans Bay	8
Bathurst	1
Blacktown	68
Bondi Junction	1
Bowral	2
Brookvale	1
Cabramatta	16
Camden	1
Caringbah	1
Cessnock	1
Chatswood	1
Coffs Harbour	19
Cowra	1
Dapto	2
Darlinghurst	1
Dubbo	7
Fairfield	1
Glen Innes	2
Gosford	1
Goulburn	3
Griffith	2
Hornsby	1
Hurstville	6
Ingleburn	25
Inverell	2
Lake Haven	1
Leichhardt	1
Lismore	2
Liverpool	150
Maitland	1
Merrylands	2
Mt Druitt	3
Mudgee	2

Attachment A

Location – NSW	Numbers
Murwillumbah	1
Newcastle	12
Orange	1
Parramatta	182
Penrith	17
Port Macquarie	19
Queanbeyan	1
Redfern	1
Rouse Hill	4
Ryde	2
Singleton	1
Springwood	1
St Marys	3
Sutherland	11
Tamworth	1
Taree	3
Tuggerah	11
Tumut	2
Tuncurry	1
Tweed Heads	22
Wagga Wagga	5
Windsor	1
Wollongong	43
Woy Woy	3
Yass	2
Total	690

Location – QLD	Numbers
Atherton	1
Beenleigh	2
Brisbane CBD	330
Browns Plains	1
Caboolture	24
Cairns	16
Caloundra	2
Cannon Vale	3
Capalaba	1
Chermside	1
Cleveland	1
Deception Bay	2
Emerald	1
Fortitude Valley	1
Gympie	1
Inala	27
Innisfail	1
Ipswich	4
Kingaroy	2
Margate	1

Attachment A

Location – QLD	Numbers
Maroochydore	11
Maryborough	21
Mitchelton	1
Mackay	2
Nambour	4
Nundah	1
Hervey Bay	1
Robina	50
Rockhampton	2
Stones Corner	21
Toowong	1
Toowoomba	27
Townsville	20
Woodridge	9
Yeppoon	1
Total	594

Location – Northern Territory	Numbers
Casuarina	9
Darwin	30
Palmerston	4
Total	43

Location – Western Australia	Numbers
Armadale	1
Bunbury	10
Geraldton	2
Mandurah	1
Perth	193
Rockingham	4
Total	211

Location – South Australia	Numbers
Adelaide CBD	363
Elizabeth	1
Gawler	2
Kadina	1
Modbury	1
Mt Gambier	2
Murray Bridge	1
Noarlunga	2
Norwood	3
Marion	2
Port Augusta	2
Port Pirie	1
Salisbury	3
Torrens ville	1
Whyalla	2
Total	387

Attachment A

Location – Tasmania	Numbers
Devonport	4
Hobart	64
Launceston	10
Rosny Park	1
Total	79

Location – Victoria	Numbers
Airport West	20
Bendigo	11
Bentleigh	9
Broadmeadows	1
Box Hill	18
Brunswick	1
Colac	1
Cranbourne	15
Epping	4
Geelong	55
Glen Waverley	11
Greensborough	45
Melbourne CBD	383
Melton	4
Morwell	12
7379Oakleigh	1
Packenham	7
Prahan (Windsor)	3
Preston (Darebin)	7
Ringwood	1
Sale	2
Shepparton	3
Springvale	25
Stawell	1
Sunbury	2
Sunshine	56
Watergardens	11
Traralgon	13
Wendouree	13
Werribee	2
Wonthaggi	2
Total	739

Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

TOPIC: CENSUS AND CULTURE

WITNESS: Danielle Regeling
Acting Chief Operating Officer

Strategic Narrative

- Services Australia (the Agency) participates in the Australian Public Service (APS) Employee Census (Census) each year. The results inform the Australian Public Service Commission's (APSC) State of the Service Report.
- The 2024 APS Census is currently open for staff to complete and provide feedback on working for the Agency. The Census closes on Friday 7 June 2024. Results from the Census will be available in August 2024.
- The Agency's Census is the main tool to gauge employee sentiment and provides opportunities for employees to share their thoughts, opinions and suggestions. The Census contains several index scores that relate to staff satisfaction. The 2023 Agency Census results at [Attachment A](#) can be found on the Agency's website, along with our action plan [Attachment B](#).

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- The 2023 APS Census received an Agency staff response rate of 84 per cent (compared to the overall APS rate of 80 per cent).
- While the Agency's 2023 Census results in relation to Employee Engagement (69 per cent) have declined since the high in 2021 (72 per cent), this is in-line with a return to pre-pandemic levels of 2019 (69 per cent).
- Similarly, the Agency's 2023 results in relation to Wellbeing (66 per cent) have declined since the high in 2020 (69 per cent). However, is in-line with a return to pre-pandemic levels of 2019 (67 per cent).
- The Agency's Census results for 2023 show positive results in many areas underpinned by a strong commitment to delivering services for customers, including:
 - 92 per cent of staff understood how their role contributes to achieving an outcome for the Australian public.

- 87 per cent of staff said they were happy to go the extra mile at work when required.
- 87 per cent of staff believe the people in their workgroup cooperate to complete tasks.

Talking Points

Census

- In the 2023 Census, our staff told us what they consider important to them and areas in which the Agency can improve. We reviewed the results to inform a focus on four overarching Agency areas for action:
 - staff engagement;
 - health and wellbeing;
 - leadership capability; and
 - attracting, developing and retaining a capable workforce.
- The Agency action plan, [Attachment B](#), is published on our website.
- When comparing key indicators regarding staff sentiment and satisfaction, Services Australia staff are not dissimilar to staff in other APS agencies, particularly extra-large APS agencies.

	Services Australia	APS Overall	Extra-large APS agencies ¹
<i>My Agency supports and actively promotes an inclusive workplace culture.</i>	79%	80%	78%
Staff attitudes to remaining in their <u>current position</u>			
<i>Leave current position as soon as possible</i>	11%	10%	11%
<i>Leave current position within the next 12 months</i>	20%	24%	23%
<i>Stay in current position for next one to two years</i>	29%	37%	34%
<i>Stay in current position for at least the next three years</i>	40%	29%	32%

State of the Service Report

- The 2023 State of the Service Report published by the APSC includes a new section that has highlighted how agencies are performing in six key areas, including in comparison with other agencies. This is informed by the results of the APS Census and draws on the APS Employment Data.

¹ Extra-large APS agencies: Services Australia, ATO, Home Affairs, Defence

- Compared to other extra-large APS agencies:
 - Employee engagement – the Agency ranked equal to Home Affairs (69 per cent), behind ATO (74 per cent) and Defence (73 per cent).
 - Perceptions of harassment and bullying – the Agency ranked ahead of Home Affairs (13 per cent), and behind ATO (8.3 per cent) and Defence (10.8 per cent).
 - Perceptions of SES Leadership – the Agency ranked equal to Home Affairs (65 per cent), behind ATO (70 per cent) and Defence (66 per cent).

Media coverage

Date	Source	Item
27 November 2023	https://www.paulfletcher.com.au/media-releases/media-release-2023-aps-census-result-toxic-culture-at-services-australia-exposed .	Shadow Minister for Government Services and the Digital Economy has issued a media release this afternoon about the 2023 APS Census.

Questions on Notice

Estimates QONs

Hearing	Date	Senator - Question #	Broad topic
Additional Estimates	14 February 2024	Senator the Hon Jane Hume SQ24-000089 Senator Janet Rice SQ24-000114	Various workforce topics e.g. separations, separation rates
Supplementary Budget Estimates	25 October 2023	Senator Maria Kovacic SQ23-000702 Senator Janet Rice SQ23-000778 Senator Janet Rice SQ23-000812 Senator Janet Rice SQ23-000813 Senator Janet Rice SQ23-000818 Senator Janet Rice SQ23-000820 Senator Maria Kovacic SQ23-000953	Various workforce topics e.g. Census, culture, surveys and separations

Freedom of Information (FOI)

Request Date	Who	Relating to	Documents released
20 February 2023	s47F(1) (University of New South Wales Canberra)	2017 to 2019 Agency APS Census Results (original request modified from 2015 to 2017 for each group/division/branch)	14 reports – high level reports 27 February 2023

Attachments

- Attachment A – 2023 Agency Census Highlight Report.
- Attachment B – 2023 Agency Census Plan.

	Name and Role	Group/Branch/Organisation	Phone (w)	Phone (mob)
Cleared By	Name: Danielle Regeling, Role: A/g Chief Operating Officer	Corporate Enabling	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Contact Officer	Name: Goran Stojanovski Role: A/g General Manager	Corporate Enabling / Workforce Capability Division	s47F(1)	s47F(1)

Attachment A SB24-000055**Census and Culture Senate Estimates
2023 Agency Census Highlight Report**Australian Public Service
Employee Census 2023
8 May – 9 June**HIGHLIGHTS REPORT
SERVICES AUSTRALIA****CONTENT**

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RESPONSES:**26,953 of 31,933****RESPONSE RATE:****84%**

EXPLORING YOUR RESULTS



Take time to understand your report. Consider your response rate to determine how representative your results are of the views of your colleagues.



Most questions in this report have information about the proportion of colleagues responding positively, neutrally or negatively.



Identify the areas where you are performing well. These will tend to be high results which are notably above any comparative results. Celebrate these results.



Identify areas that need improvement. These will be the lower results, and/or those which are scoring notably below your comparators.



Generally a difference of $-/+$ 5 percentage points is worthy of attention, but the size of the group is important. Changes in small groups can be unreliable.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: SAY, STAY, STRIVE



HOW ENGAGED IS YOUR TEAM?

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IS MORE THAN SIMPLY JOB SATISFACTION OR COMMITMENT TO AN ORGANISATION. IT IS THE EXTENT TO WHICH EMPLOYEES ARE MOTIVATED, INSPIRED AND ENABLED TO IMPROVE AN ORGANISATION'S OUTCOMES.

YOUR EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT INDEX SCORE		69	RESPONSE SCALE	% POSITIVE	VARIANCE FROM 2022	VARIANCE FROM APS OVERALL	VARIANCE FROM LARGER OPERATIONAL AGENCIES	VARIANCE FROM EXTRA LARGE SIZED AGENCIES	
SAY	Overall am satisfied with my job	67	17	16	67%	-5	-6	-4	-3
	am proud to work in my agency	67	22	11	67%	-5	-9	-6	-5
	would recommend my agency as a good place to work	58	23	20	58%	-7	-11	-7	-6
	believe strongly in the purpose and objectives of my agency	79	15		79%	-2	-5	-3	-2
STAY	feel a strong personal attachment to my agency	55	27	18	55%	-4	-5	-5	-3
	feel committed to my agency's goals	80	15		80%	-2	-3	-2	-1
STRIVE	suggest ideas to improve our way of doing things	81	15		81%	0	-5	-3	-3
	am happy to go the extra mile at work when required	87	9		87%	-2	-3	-2	-1
	work beyond what is required in my job to help my agency achieve its objectives	79	16		79%	-1	-1	0	0
	My agency really inspires me to do my best work every day	53	28	19	53%	-4	-5	-3	-1

KEY

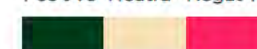


AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE POINTS GREATER THAN COMPARATOR



AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE POINTS LESS THAN COMPARATOR

Positive Neutral Negative



LEADERSHIP - IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR



IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR

THE IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR SCORE ASSESSES HOW EMPLOYEES VIEW THE LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOURS OF THEIR IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR IN LINE WITH THE APS LEADERSHIP CAPABILITY FRAMEWORK.

YOUR IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR INDEX SCORE		76	RESPONSE SCALE	% POSITIVE	VARIANCE FROM 2022	VARIANCE FROM APS OVERALL	VARIANCE FROM LARGER OPERATIONAL AGENCIES	VARIANCE FROM EXTRA LARGE SIZED AGENCIES
					0	0	0	+1

Immediate Supervisor	My supervisor engages with staff on how to respond to future challenges	80	13	8	80%	0	+1	+1	+2
	My supervisor can deliver difficult advice whilst maintaining relationships	79	13	8	79%	0	+1	+1	+1
	My supervisor invites a range of views including those different to their own	80	12	7	80%	0	-1	0	0
	My supervisor encourages my team to regularly review and improve our work	83	11		83%	0	+2	+2	+2
	My supervisor is invested in my development	74	16	10	74%	0	-2	-1	-1
	My supervisor ensures that my workgroup delivers on what we are responsible for	87	9		87%	0	0	0	+1

Other similar questions

	My supervisor provides me with the feedback to improve my performance	79	13	8	79%	0	+2	+2	+2
	My immediate supervisor encourages me	75	17	8	75%	0	-1	0	+1

KEY	AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE POINTS GREATER THAN COMPARATOR	AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE POINTS LESS THAN COMPARATOR	Pos t ve	Neutra	Negat ve

LEADERSHIP - SES MANAGER



SES MANAGER

THE SES MANAGER SCORE ASSESSES HOW EMPLOYEES VIEW THE LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOURS OF THEIR IMMEDIATE SES MANAGER IN LINE WITH THE APS LEADERSHIP CAPABILITY FRAMEWORK.

	YOUR SES MANAGER LEADERSHIP INDEX SCORE	65	RESPONSE SCALE	% POSITIVE	VARIANCE FROM 2022	VARIANCE FROM APS OVERALL	VARIANCE FROM LARGER OPERATIONAL AGENCIES	VARIANCE FROM EXTRA LARGE SIZED AGENCIES
					-2	-4	-2	-1

SES Manager	Statement	Score			% Positive	Variance from 2022	Variance from APS Overall	Variance from Larger Operational Agencies	Variance from Extra Large Sized Agencies
		Agencies	Agencies	Agencies					
	My SES manager clearly articulates the direction and priorities for our area	64	24	12	64%	-3	-4	-2	-1
	My SES manager presents convincing arguments and persuades others towards an outcome	54	34	13	54%	-3	-8 ↓	-4	-3
	My SES manager promotes cooperation within and between agencies	59	32	9	59%	-3	-7 ↓	-3	-2
	My SES manager encourages innovation and creativity	61	28	11	61%	-3	-4	-1	-1
	My SES manager creates an environment that enables us to deliver our best	57	27	15	57%	-3	-6 ↓	-3	-2
	My SES manager ensures that work effort contributes to the strategic direction of the agency and the APS	66	25	9	66%	-3	-7 ↓	-3	-2

Other similar questions

	In my agency the SES work as a team	52	32	16	52%	-3	-1	+1	+2
	In my agency the SES clearly articulate the direction and priorities for our agency	60	24	15	60%	-4	-3	0	0
	In my agency communication between SES and other employees is effective	51	28	22	51%	-4	-2	0	+1
	My SES manager routinely promotes the use of data and evidence to deliver outcomes	62	28	10	62%		-4	-1	0

KEY	AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE POINTS GREATER THAN COMPARATOR	AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE POINTS LESS THAN COMPARATOR	Pos t ve	Neutra	Negat ve

COMMUNICATION AND CHANGE



COMMUNICATION

THE COMMUNICATION SCORE MEASURES COMMUNICATION AT THE INDIVIDUAL, GROUP AND AGENCY LEVEL.

CHANGE

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF ANY CHANGE PROCESS. NOT THESE QUESTIONS DO NOT CONTRIBUTE TO THE ABOVE INDEX SCORE.

YOUR COMMUNICATION INDEX SCORE

67

RESPONSE SCALE

% POSITIVE	VARIANCE FROM 2022	VARIANCE FROM APS OVERALL	VARIANCE FROM LARGER OPERATIONAL AGENCIES	VARIANCE FROM EXTRA LARGE SIZED AGENCIES
81%	-1	-1	-1	0

Communication	My supervisor communicates effectively	81	10	8	81%	0	+1	+1
	My SES manager communicates effectively	64	23	13	64%	-3	-5	-2
	Internal communication within my agency is effective	54	23	23	54%	-4	-2	-1

Other similar questions

Change	When changes occur the impacts are communicated well within my workgroup	67	16	18	67%	-3	-1	0
	Staff are consulted about change at work	47	30	22	47%	-2	-2	-1
	Changes managed well in my agency	45	25	30	45%	-6	+2	+2

KEY

AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE POINTS GREATER THAN COMPARATOR

AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE POINTS LESS THAN COMPARATOR

Positive Neutral Negative

WORKPLACE CONDITIONS

	RESPONSE SCALE	% POSITIVE	VAR ANCE FROM 2022	VAR ANCE FROM APS OVERALL	VAR ANCE FROM LARGER OPERATIONAL AGENCIES	VAR ANCE FROM EXTRA LARGE SIZED AGENCIES
My job gives me opportunities to use my skills		73%	-2	-6 ↓	-4	-3
I have a choice in deciding how I do my work		45%	-2	-19 ↓	-14 ↓	-12 ↓
Where appropriate I am able to take part in decisions that affect my job		58%	-3	-11 ↓	-7 ↓	-7 ↓
I am clear what my duties and responsibilities are		82%	-1	+3	+2	+3
I am satisfied with the recognition I receive for doing a good job		60%	-3	-6 ↓	-3	-1
I am fairly remunerated (e.g. salary, superannuation) for the work that I do		45%	-14 ↓	-6 ↓	0	+2
I am satisfied with my non-monetary employment conditions (e.g. leave, flexible work arrangements, other benefits)		64%	-3	-10 ↓	-6 ↓	-5 ↓
I am satisfied with the stability and security of my job		75%	+2	-7 ↓	-6 ↓	-7 ↓
I am confident that if I requested a flexible work arrangement, my request would be given reasonable consideration		65%	-2	-14 ↓	-10 ↓	-8 ↓

KEY



AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE POINTS GREATER THAN COMPARATOR






AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE POINTS LESS THAN COMPARATOR

Positive Neutral Negative








WORKPLACE CONDITIONS

	RESPONSE SCALE	% POSITIVE	VAR ANCE FROM 2022	VAR ANCE FROM APS OVERALL	VAR ANCE FROM LARGER OPERAT ONAL AGENC ES	VAR ANCE FROM EXTRA LARGE S ZED AGENC ES
fee a strong persona attachment to the APS		62%	-2	0	-1	-1
understand how my ro e contr butes to ach ev ng an outcome for the Austran pub c		92%	-1	0	0	+1
be eve strong y n the purpose and ob ect ves of the APS		83%	-1	-2	-1	-1

	RESPONSE SCALE	%	VAR ANCE FROM 2022	VAR ANCE FROM APS OVERALL	VAR ANCE FROM LARGER OPERAT ONAL AGENC ES	VAR ANCE FROM EXTRA LARGE S ZED AGENC ES
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What best describes your current workload?

We e above capac ty - too much work		24%	+4	0	0	0
S ght y above capac ty - ots of work to do		40%	-2	0	0	0
At capac ty - about the r ght amount of work to do		32%	-2	+2	+1	+1
S ght y be ow capac ty - ava ab e for more work		4%	0	-2	-1	-1
We be ow capac ty - not enough work		1%	0	0	0	0

KEY



AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE PO NTS GREATER THAN COMPARATOR



AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE PO NTS LESS THAN COMPARATOR

Pos t ve Neutra Negat ve



INCLUSION AND FLEXIBLE WORKING

	RESPONSE SCALE	% POSITIVE	VAR ANCE FROM 2022	VAR ANCE FROM APS OVERALL	VAR ANCE FROM LARGER OPERAT ONAL AGENC ES	VAR ANCE FROM EXTRA LARGE S ZED AGENC ES
My agency supports and act ve y promotes an nc us ve workp ace cu ture		79%	-1	-1	0	+1
My superv sor act ve y ensures that everyone can be nc uded n workp ace act v t es		84%	0	+1	+1	+2
rece ve the respect deserve from my co eagues at work		81%	-1	0	+1	+2

	RESPONSE SCALE	%	VAR ANCE FROM 2022	VAR ANCE FROM APS OVERALL	VAR ANCE FROM LARGER OPERAT ONAL AGENC ES	VAR ANCE FROM EXTRA LARGE S ZED AGENC ES
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Do you currently access any of the following flexible working arrangements?
[Multiple Response]

Part t me		20%	0	+6 ⬆	+6 ⬆	+6 ⬆
F ex b e hours of work		21%	0	-7 ⬇	-8 ⬇	-8 ⬇
Compressed work week		3%	0	-1	0	0
Job shar ng		0%	0	0	0	0
Work ng away from the off ce/work ng from home		28%	+3	-29 ⬇	-24 ⬇	-19 ⬇
None of the above		43%	-1	+17 ⬆	+14 ⬆	+11 ⬆

KEY



AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE PO NTS GREATER THAN COMPARATOR



AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE PO NTS LESS THAN COMPARATOR

Pos t ve Neutra Negat ve



ENABLING INNOVATION



ENABLING INNOVATION

THE INNOVATION SCORE ASSESSES HOW WELL EMPLOYEES FEEL WILLING AND ABLE TO BE INNOVATIVE, AND WHETHER THEIR AGENCY HAS A CULTURE WHICH ENABLES THEM TO BE SO.

YOUR ENABLING INNOVATION INDEX SCORE

64

RESPONSE SCALE

% POSITIVE	VARIANCE FROM 2022	VARIANCE FROM APS OVERALL	VARIANCE FROM LARGER OPERATIONAL AGENCIES	VARIANCE FROM EXTRA LARGE SIZED AGENCIES
	-1	-1	0	0

Enabling innovation	I believe that one of my responsibilities is to continually look for new ways to improve the way we work	74	18	8	74%	-2	-6	-4	-3
	My immediate supervisor encourages me to come up with new or better ways of doing things	70	21	9	70%	-1	-2	0	0
	People are recognised for coming up with new and innovative ways of working	60	27	13	60%	-3	+2	+3	+3
	My agency inspires me to come up with new or better ways of doing things	50	33	17	50%	-5	0	+1	+1
	My agency recognises and supports the notion that failure is a part of innovation	42	38	20	42%	-2	+3	+2	+3

KEY

AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE POINTS GREATER THAN COMPARATOR

AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE POINTS LESS THAN COMPARATOR

Positive Neutral Negative

WELLBEING POLICIES AND SUPPORT



WELLBEING

THE WELLBEING SCORE PROVIDES A MEASURE OF THE PRACTICAL AND CULTURAL ELEMENTS THAT ALLOW FOR A SUSTAINABLE AND HEALTHY WORKING ENVIRONMENT.

YOUR WELLBEING POLICIES AND SUPPORT INDEX SCORE

66

RESPONSE SCALE

% POSITIVE

VARIANCE FROM 2022

VARIANCE FROM APS OVERALL

VARIANCE FROM LARGER OPERATIONAL AGENCIES

VARIANCE FROM EXTRA LARGE SIZED AGENCIES

I am satisfied with the policies/practices in place to help me manage my health and wellbeing	60	23	17	60%	-2	-3	-3	-2
My agency does a good job of communicating what it can offer me in terms of health and wellbeing	61	23	17	61%	-2	-2	-1	0
My agency does a good job of promoting health and wellbeing	61	23	16	61%	-2	-2	-1	-1
I think my agency cares about my health and wellbeing	53	24	23	53%	-4	-8↓	-5↓	-4
I believe my immediate supervisor cares about my health and wellbeing	82	11	7	82%	0	-3	-1	-1

Wellbeing policies and support

KEY

AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE POINTS GREATER THAN COMPARATOR

AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE POINTS LESS THAN COMPARATOR

Positive Neutral Negative

WELLBEING

	RESPONSE SCALE	%	VAR ANCE FROM 2022	VAR ANCE FROM APS OVERALL	VAR ANCE FROM LARGER OPERAT ONAL AGENC ES	VAR ANCE FROM EXTRA LARGE S ZED AGENC ES
How often do you find your work stressful?						
A ways		8%	+2	+3	+2	+2
Often		29%	+2	+3	+2	+2
Somet mes		46%	-2	-3	-3	-2
Rare y		16%	-1	-2	-2	-2
Never		2%	0	0	0	0

To what extent is your work emotionally demanding?

To a very arge extent		13%	+3	+5 ⬆	+4	+4
To a arge extent		26%	+1	+5 ⬆	+4	+4
Somewhat		37%	-2	-2	-2	-2
To a sma extent		18%	-1	-5 ⬇	-4	-4
To a very sma extent		6%	-1	-3	-2	-2

KEY



AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE PO NTS GREATER THAN COMPARATOR



AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE PO NTS LESS THAN COMPARATOR

WELLBEING

	RESPONSE SCALE	%	VAR ANCE FROM 2022	VAR ANCE FROM APS OVERALL	VAR ANCE FROM LARGER OPERAT ONAL AGENC ES	VAR ANCE FROM EXTRA LARGE S ZED AGENC ES
I feel burned out by my work						
Strong y agree		11%	+2	+2	+2	+2
Agree		26%	+1	+2	+2	+1
Neither agree nor d sagree		31%	0	0	-1	-1
D sagree		26%	-2	-3	-2	-2
Strong y d sagree		6%	-1	-1	-1	0
In general, would you say that your health is:						
Exce ent		10%	0	0	+1	+1
Very good		32%	-1	-1	-1	0
Good		38%	0	0	-1	-1
Fa r		16%	+1	+1	0	0
Poor		4%	0	0	0	0

KEY



AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE PO NTS GREATER THAN COMPARATOR



AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE PO NTS LESS THAN COMPARATOR

PERFORMANCE

	RESPONSE SCALE	%	VAR ANCE FROM 2022	VAR ANCE FROM APS OVERALL	VAR ANCE FROM LARGER OPERAT ONAL AGENC ES	VAR ANCE FROM EXTRA LARGE S ZED AGENC ES
In the last month, please rate your workgroup's overall performance						
Exce ent		27%	-1	-1	+1	+2
Very good		54%	-1	-1	-1	-1
Average		16%	+2	+1	0	0
Be ow average		2%	0	0	0	0
We be ow average		1%	0	0	0	0

In the last month, please rate your agency's success in meeting its goals and objectives

Exce ent		14%	-4	-2	0	0
Very good		48%	-7⬇️	-6⬇️	-3	-3
Average		29%	+6⬆️	+4	+1	+1
Be ow average		6%	+3	+2	+1	+1
We be ow average		3%	+2	+1	+1	+1

KEY



AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE PO NTS GREATER THAN COMPARATOR



AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE PO NTS LESS THAN COMPARATOR

PERFORMANCE

	RESPONSE SCALE	% POSITIVE	VAR ANCE FROM 2022	VAR ANCE FROM APS OVERALL	VAR ANCE FROM LARGER OPERATIONAL AGENCIES	VAR ANCE FROM EXTRA LARGE SIZED AGENCIES
My workgroup has the appropriate skills, capabilities and knowledge to perform well		77%	-3	-1	0	+1
My workgroup has the tools and resources we need to perform well		64%	-5↓	+5↑	+5↑	+4
The people in my workgroup use time and resources efficiently		76%	-2	0	+1	+2
My workgroup can readily adapt to new priorities and tasks		83%	-3	0	+1	+1
The people in my workgroup cooperate to get the job done		87%	-1	-1	0	0

KEY



AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE POINTS GREATER THAN COMPARATOR



AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE POINTS LESS THAN COMPARATOR

Positive Neutral Negative



RETENTION



EMPLOYEES WHO INDICATED THAT THEY WANTED TO LEAVE THEIR CURRENT POSITION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE OR WITHIN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS WERE ASKED WHAT THEIR PLANS WERE

RESPONSE SCALE	%	VAR ANCE FROM 2022	VAR ANCE FROM APS OVERALL	VAR ANCE FROM LARGER OPERATIONAL AGENCIES	VAR ANCE FROM EXTRA LARGE SIZED AGENCIES
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Which of the following statements best reflects your current thoughts about working in your current position?

want to leave my position as soon as possible		11%	+2	+1	+1	0
want to leave my position within the next 12 months		20%	+1	-4	-3	-3
want to stay working in my position for the next one to two years		29%	-1	-9↓	-6↓	-6↓
want to stay working in my position for at least the next three years		40%	-2	+12↑	+8↑	+8↑

What best describes your plans involved with leaving your current position?

am planning to retire		7%	-1	+2	0	0
am pursuing another position within my agency		34%	-2	-7↓	-10↓	-10↓
am pursuing a position in another agency		31%	+9↑	+4	+7↑	+6↑
am pursuing work outside the APS		13%	-1	+2	+2	+2
at the end of my non ongoing casual or contracted employment		2%	-4	-1	0	+1
Other		12%	-1	0	+1	+1

KEY



AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE POINTS GREATER THAN COMPARATOR



AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE POINTS LESS THAN COMPARATOR

RETENTION



EMPLOYEES WERE ALSO ASKED FOR THE PRIMARY REASON BEHIND THEIR DESIRE TO LEAVE AND COULD SELECT ONE RESPONSE FROM A LIST OF ITEMS

ONLY THE FIVE REASONS FOR LEAVING WITH THE GREATEST PROPORTION OF RESPONSES ARE PRESENTED HERE. THESE MAY VARY BETWEEN AGENCIES, WORK UNITS AND WITH RESULTS FOR THE APS OVERALL.

RESPONSE SCALE	%	VARIANCE FROM 2022	VARIANCE FROM APS OVERALL	VARIANCE FROM LARGER OPERATIONAL AGENCIES	VARIANCE FROM EXTRA LARGE SIZED AGENCIES
What is the primary reason behind your desire to leave your current position? (5 highest responses):					
wish to pursue a promotion opportunity	16%	-	-	-	-
want to try a different type of work or seek a career change	9%	-	-	-	-
can receive a higher salary elsewhere	9%	-	-	-	-
looking to further my skills in another area	9%	-	-	-	-
There are a lack of future career opportunities in my agency	7%	-	-	-	-

KEY



AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE POINTS GREATER THAN COMPARATOR



AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE POINTS LESS THAN COMPARATOR

UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR



EMPLOYEES WHO AD
PERCEIVED
DISCRIMINATION IN
THE LAST 12 MONTHS
IN THE COURSE OF
THEIR EMPLOYMENT
WERE ASKED WHAT
THE BASIS WAS FOR
THE DISCRIMINATION
EMPLOYEES COULD
SELECT ONE OR MORE
RESPONSES FROM A
LIST OF ITEMS

ONLY THE THREE
TYPES OF
DISCRIMINATION WITH
THE GREATEST
PROPORTION OF
RESPONSES ARE
PRESENTED HERE
THESE MAY VARY
BETWEEN AGENCIES
WORK UNITS AND
WITH RESULTS FOR
THE APS OVERALL

DISCRIMINATION	RESPONSE SCALE	%	VARIANCE FROM 2022	VARIANCE FROM APS OVERALL	VARIANCE FROM LARGER OPERATIONAL AGENCIES	VARIANCE FROM EXTRA LARGE SIZED AGENCIES
During the last 12 months and in the course of your employment, have you experienced discrimination on the basis of your background or a personal characteristic?						
Yes		12%	+1	+2	+1	+1
No		88%	-1	-2	-1	-1
Did this discrimination occur in your current agency?						
Yes		95%	0	+3	+2	+1
No		5%	0	-3	-2	-1
Basis for the discrimination that you experienced (3 highest responses):						
Caring responsibilities		26%	-	-	-	-
Race		23%	-	-	-	-
Other		22%	-	-	-	-

KEY



AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE POINTS GREATER THAN COMPARATOR



AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE POINTS LESS THAN COMPARATOR

UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR



EMPLOYEES WHO PERCEIVED HARASSMENT OR BULLYING IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS WERE ASKED WHAT TYPE OF HARASSMENT OR BULLYING THEY EXPERIENCED. EMPLOYEES COULD SELECT ONE OR MORE RESPONSES FROM A LIST OF ITEMS.

ONLY THE THREE OPTIONS WITH THE HIGHEST PROPORTION OF RESPONSES ARE PRESENTED HERE. THESE MAY VARY BETWEEN AGENCIES, WORK UNITS AND WITH RESULTS FOR THE APS OVERALL.

HARASSMENT AND BULLYING

RESPONSE SCALE

%

VAR ANCE FROM 2022

VAR ANCE FROM APS OVERALL

VAR ANCE FROM LARGER OPERATIONAL AGENCIES

VAR ANCE FROM EXTRA LARGE SIZED AGENCIES

During the last 12 months, have you been subjected to harassment or bullying in your current workplace?

Yes		12%	0	+1	+1	+1
No		82%	-1	-2	-1	-1
Not sure		6%	0	+1	0	0

Types of harassment or bullying experienced (3 highest responses):

Verbal abuse (e.g. offensive language, derogatory remarks, shouting or screaming)		37%	-	-	-	-
Inappropriate and unfair application of work policies or rules (e.g. performance management, access to leave, access to earning and development)		34%	-	-	-	-
Interference with work tasks (e.g. withholding needed information, undermining or sabotage)		29%	-	-	-	-

Did you report the harassment or bullying?

Reported the behaviour in accordance with my agency's policies and procedures		35%	0	0	0	+1
It was reported by someone else		8%	0	0	0	0
Did not report the behaviour		57%	0	0	+1	0

KEY



AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE POINTS GREATER THAN COMPARATOR



AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE POINTS LESS THAN COMPARATOR

UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR



EMPLOYEES WOULD BE NOTIFIED THAT THEY HAD WITNESSED POTENTIAL CORRUPT BEHAVIOUR WERE ASKED TO DESCRIBE THE BEHAVIOUR EMPLOYEES COULD SELECT ONE OR MORE RESPONSES FROM A LIST OF ITEMS

ONLY THE THREE TYPES OF CORRUPT BEHAVIOURS WITH THE GREATEST PROPORTION OF RESPONSES ARE PRESENTED HERE THESE MAY VARY BETWEEN AGENCIES AND WITH RESULTS FOR THE APS OVERALL

CORRUPTION	RESPONSE SCALE	%	VAR ANCE FROM 2022	VAR ANCE FROM APS OVERALL	VAR ANCE FROM LARGER OPERATIONAL AGENCIES	VAR ANCE FROM EXTRA LARGE SIZED AGENCIES
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Excluding behaviour reported to you as part of your duties, in the last 12 months have you witnessed another APS employee in your agency engaging in behaviour that you consider may be serious enough to be viewed as corruption?

Yes		4%	0	0	0	0
No		89%	0	-2	-1	-1
Not sure		4%	0	+1	0	0
Would prefer not to answer		3%	0	+1	0	0

Types of corrupt behaviours witnessed (3 highest responses):

Cronyism preferential treatment of friends such as appointing them to positions without proper regard to merit		55%	-	-	-	-
Nepotism preferential treatment of family members such as appointing them to positions without proper regard to merit		28%	-	-	-	-
Acting or failing to act) in the presence of an undisclosed conflict of interest		17%	-	-	-	-

Did you report the potentially corrupt behaviour?

reported the behaviour in accordance with my agency's policies and procedures		19%	0	-1	-3	-3
it was reported by someone else		19%	+3	+3	+3	+2
did not report the behaviour		62%	-2	-2	0	0

KEY



AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE POINTS GREATER THAN COMPARATOR



AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE POINTS LESS THAN COMPARATOR

DEMOGRAPHICS

How do you describe your gender?	Responses
Man or male	31%
Woman or female	66%
Non-binary	0%
use a different term	0%
Prefer not to say	3%

Do you identify as an Australian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person?	Responses
Yes	6%
No	94%

Do you have an ongoing disability?	Responses
Yes	12%
No	88%

Do you have carer responsibilities?	Responses
Yes	47%
No	53%

Do you identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and/or gender diverse, Intersex, Queer, Questioning and/or Asexual (LGBTIQA+)?	Responses
Yes	7%
No	93%

How would you describe your cultural background? [Multiple Response]	Responses
Australian (excluding Australian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander)	64%
Australian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	6%
New Zealander (excluding Maori)	1%
Maori, Mānesan, Papuan, Mānesan and Pōynesian	1%
Anglo-European	10%
North-West European (excluding Anglo-European)	2%
Southern and Eastern European	4%
South-East Asian	11%
North-East Asian	2%
Southern and Central Asian	4%
North American	0%
South and Central American and Caribbean Islander	1%
North African and Middle Eastern	1%
Sub-Saharan African	1%

Do you consider yourself to be neurodivergent?	Responses
Yes	7%
No	80%
Not sure	13%

AGENCY POSITION



AGENCY POSITION

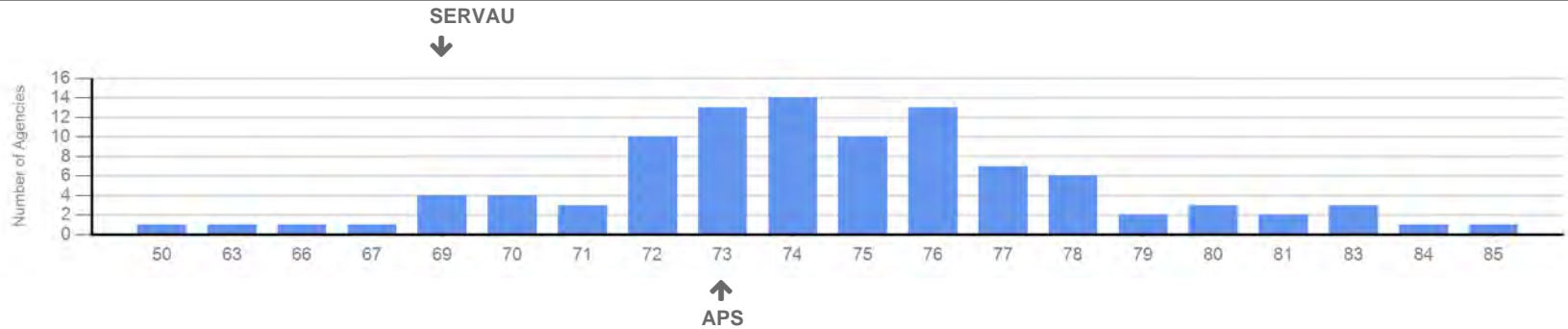
THESE GRAPHS DISPLAY THE OVERALL INDEX SCORE OF EACH AGENCY FOR THE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT LEADERSHIP IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR LEADERSHIP SES MANAGER COMMUNICATION ENABLING INNOVATION AND WELLBEING POLICIES AND SUPPORT SERVICES THESE ARE TO ASSIST YOU TO SEE WHERE YOUR AGENCY STANDS IN COMPARISON TO THE OVERALL APS INDEX SCORE AND THE SCORES OF OTHER AGENCIES

ALONG THE LINE Y AXES ARE THE INDEX SCORES THE HEIGHT OF THE BAR (X AXES) SHOWS HOW MANY AGENCIES HAVE THAT INDEX SCORE

PLEASE NOTE THE Y AXIS VALUES ARE NOT CONSECUTIVE AS ONLY INDEX SCORES RECEIVED BY AN AGENCY ARE REPRESENTED

Employee Engagement Index

Ranking : 96th of 100



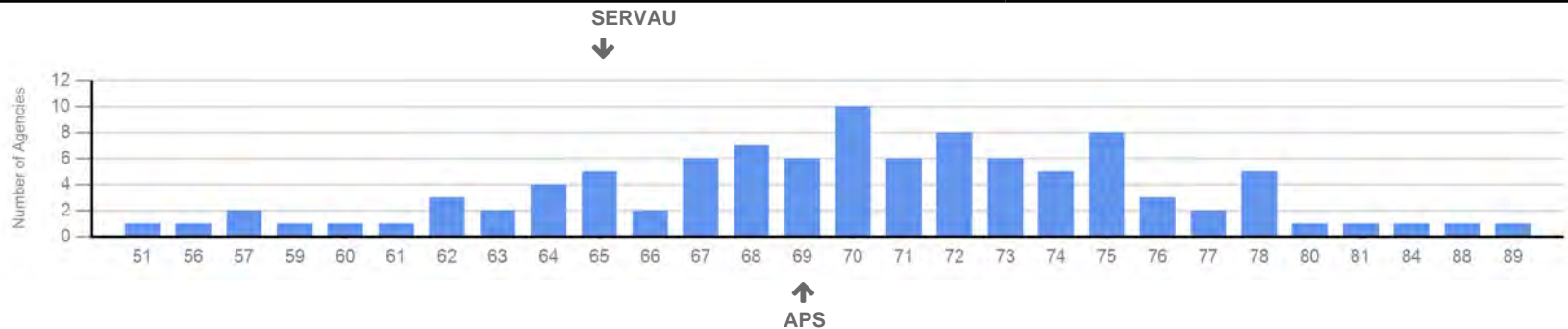
Leadership – Immediate Supervisor Index

Ranking : 54th of 100



Leadership – SES Manager Index

Ranking : 82nd of 100



AGENCY POSITION



AGENCY POSITION

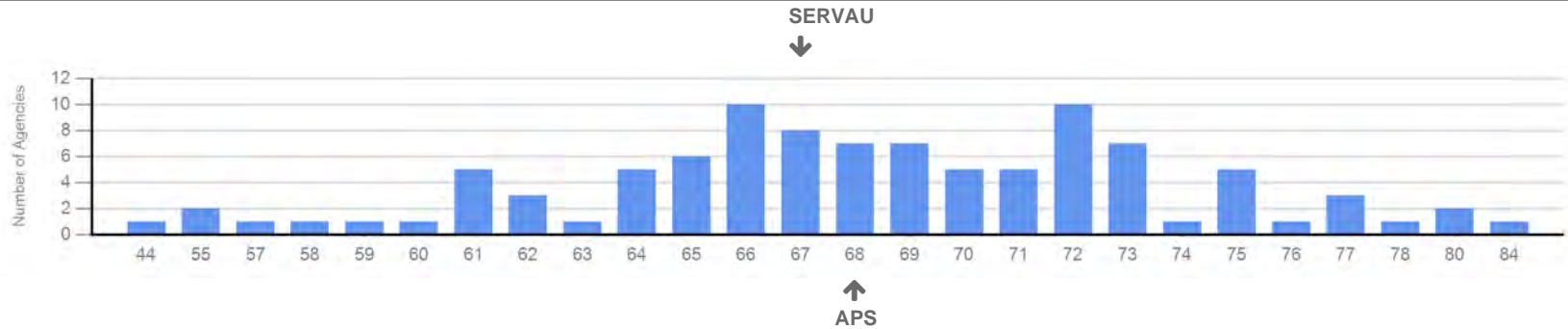
THESE GRAPHS DISPLAY THE OVERALL INDEX SCORE OF EACH AGENCY FOR THE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT LEADERSHIP MEDIAN SUPERVISOR LEADERSHIP SENIOR MANAGER COMMUNICATION ENABLING INNOVATION AND WELLBEING POLICIES AND SUPPORT INDICES. THESE ARE TO ASSIST YOU TO SEE WHERE YOUR AGENCY STANDS IN COMPARISON TO THE OVERALL APS INDEX SCORE AND THE SCORES OF OTHER AGENCIES.

ALONG THE LINE Y AXES ARE THE INDEX SCORES. THE HEIGHT OF THE BAR (X AXES) SHOWS HOW MANY AGENCIES HAVE THAT INDEX SCORE.

PLEASE NOTE THE Y AXIS VALUES ARE NOT CONSECUTIVE AS ONLY INDEX SCORES RECEIVED BY AN AGENCY ARE REPRESENTED.

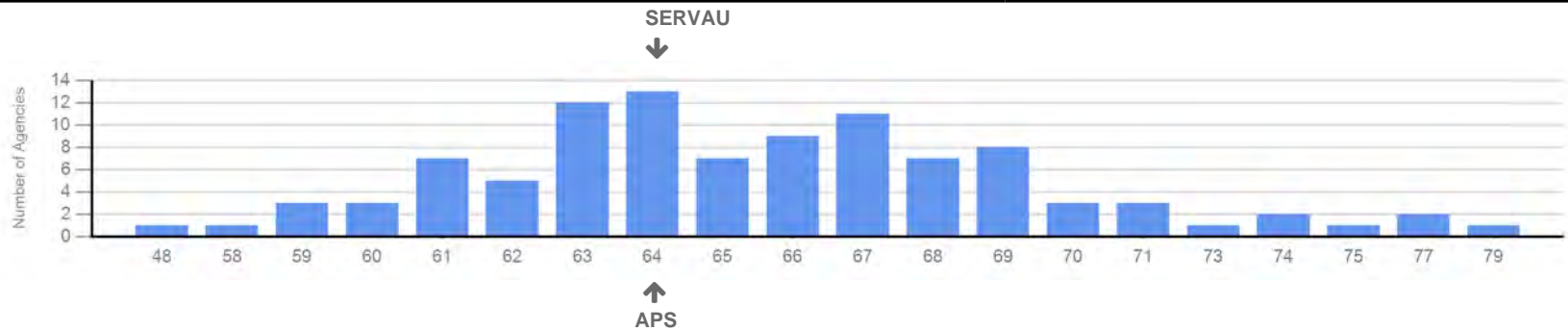
Communication Index

Ranking : 61st of 100



Enabling Innovation Index

Ranking : 64th of 100



Wellbeing Policies and Support Index

Ranking : 82nd of 100



SUGGESTED QUESTIONS TO FOCUS ON



WHAT TO FOCUS ON?

THROUGH DRIVER ANALYSIS THESE KEY QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AS BEING MOST IMPORTANT TO EMPLOYEES IN YOUR AGENCY AND ASSOCIATED WITH EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

THEY ARE NOT NECESSARILY THE QUESTIONS WITH THE LOWEST SCORES.

SOME WILL BE AREAS TO IMPROVE UPON AND SOME WILL BE AREAS TO MAINTAIN

DEVELOP ACTIONS AND ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE UPON THESE WHERE POSSIBLE TO DRIVE HIGHER LEVELS OF PERFORMANCE

	AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE POINTS GREATER THAN COMPARATOR	AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE POINTS LESS THAN COMPARATOR	% POSITIVE	VAR ANCE FROM 2022	VAR ANCE FROM APS OVERALL	VAR ANCE FROM LARGER OPERATIONAL AGENCIES	VAR ANCE FROM EXTRA LARGE SIZED AGENCIES
.1 Internal communication within my agency is effective			54%	-4	-2	-1	-1
.2 Change is managed well in my agency			45%	-6	+2	+2	+2
.3 My agency inspires me to come up with new or better ways of doing things			50%	-5	0	+1	+1
.4 I think my agency cares about my health and wellbeing			53%	-4	-8	-5	-4
.5 My agency supports and actively promotes an inclusive workplace culture			79%	-1	-1	0	+1
.6 My SES manager creates an environment that enables us to deliver our best			57%	-3	-6	-3	-2

SERVAU SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

	RESPONSE SCALE	% POSITIVE	VAR ANCE FROM 2022
understand the Agency s Master Plan	83	83%	+1
am comm tted to our v s on of mak ng government serv ces s mp e so peop e can get on w th the r ves	91	91%	0
can see a connect on between my work and how th s contr butes to he p ng customers	90	90%	-1
put the customer f rst when des gn ng or de ver ng serv ces and products	91	91%	0
he p create a work env ronment that s about he p ng our customers	92	92%	0
My phys ca safety s adequate y protected n my workp ace	82	82%	-2
genu ne y fee stened to and have my v vews cons dered	61	61%	-1
My co eagues are open honest and transparent	77	77%	0
am encouraged to use my n t at ve and udgement n the workp ace	74	74%	-2
fee safe ras ng and ca ng out ssues n my workp ace	66	66%	-2

KEY



AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE PO NTS GREATER THAN COMPARATOR



AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE PO NTS LESS THAN COMPARATOR

Pos t ve Neutra Negat ve



SERVAU SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

	RESPONSE SCALE	% POSITIVE	VARIANCE FROM 2022
am kept informed of the agency's advice protocols procedures and guidelines during emergencies	79	79%	-2
If working in a customer contact role (for example undertake face to face or telephony work) have you had adequate training to know what to do in the event of customer aggression?	78	78%	-2

KEY



AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE POINTS GREATER THAN COMPARATOR




AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE POINTS LESS THAN COMPARATOR

Positive Neutral Negative




TIME TO TAKE ACTION



CELEBRATE

What things do we do well?

THINK ABOUT HOW WE CAN BUILD ON OUR STRENGTHS AND LEARN FROM WHAT WE ARE GOOD AT.



INVESTIGATE FURTHER WITH OUR TEAMS

Are there any other opportunities coming out of the results that we want to explore further?

HOW COULD WE INVESTIGATE THROUGH LOOKING AT THE DATA IN MORE DETAIL OR THROUGH DISCUSSIONS WITH STAFF?



OPPORTUNITIES

Areas we need to focus on and turn into action plans:

WHAT ARE THE KEY THINGS WE NEED TO IMPROVE OR MAKE WORKING BETTER?



USE THIS PAGE TO START YOUR LOCAL ACTION PLANS

IDENTIFY AREAS TO CELEBRATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT AND AREAS WHICH YOU NEED TO INVESTIGATE FURTHER

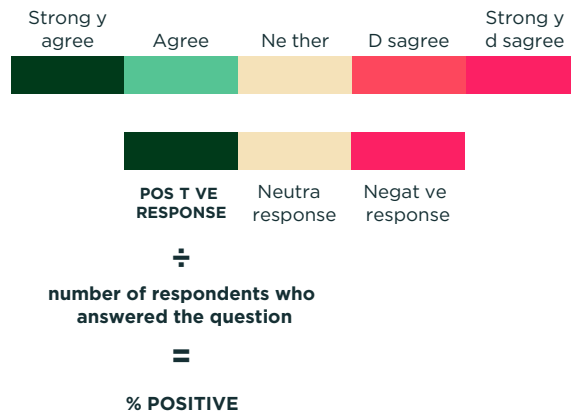
PRIORITY SE 3 AREAS TO TAKE FORWARD

	PRIORITISE 3 AREAS FOR ACTION	TIMESCALES	OWNER	RESOURCES REQUIRED	TARGET/SUCCESS MEASURE
1					
2					
3					

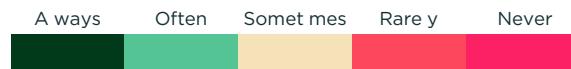
GUIDE TO THIS REPORT

% POSITIVE

WHERE RESULTS ARE SHOWN AS POSITIVE PERCENTAGES (% POSITIVE) THESE ARE CALCULATED BY ADDING TOGETHER POSITIVE RESPONSES ("STRONGLY AGREE" + "AGREE" OR "ALWAYS" + "OFTEN") AND DIVIDING BY THE NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS WHO ANSWERED THE QUESTION



FOR 5 POINT SCALE QUESTIONS NOT ASKED ON THE 'AGREE TO DISAGREE' SCALE THE SAME RULES APPLY (THE GREEN PERCENT REPRESENTS A **POSITIVE RESPONSE** (UNLESS THE QUESTION IS NEGATIVELY WORDED))



ROUNDING

RESULTS ARE PRESENTED AS WHOLE NUMBERS FOR EASE OF READING WITH ROUNDING PERFORMED AT THE LAST STAGE OF CALCULATION FOR MAXIMUM ACCURACY. VALUES FROM X.00 TO X.49 ARE ROUNDED DOWN AND VALUES FROM X.50 TO X.99 ARE ROUNDED UP. THEREFORE IN SOME INSTANCES RESULTS MAY NOT TOTAL 100%.

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEITHER	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	TOTAL
NUMBER OF RESPONSES	151	166	176	96	24	613
PERCENTAGE	24.63%	27.08%	28.71%	15.66%	3.92%	100%
ROUNDED PERCENTAGE	25%	27%	29%	16%	4%	101%
NUMBER OF POSITIVE	151 + 166 = 317					
% POSITIVE	317 ÷ 613 = 52%					

ANONYMITY

IT IS BEST PRACTICE NOT TO DISPLAY THE RESULTS OF GROUPS OF RESPONDENTS TO THE EXTENT WHERE THE ANONYMITY OF INDIVIDUALS MAY BE COMPROMISED. RESULTS WILL NOT BE SHOWN WHERE THERE ARE LESS THAN 10 RESPONDENTS IN A GROUP.

COMPARISONS WITH RESULTS FROM PREVIOUS YEARS

THE METHOD OF ANALYSING AND REPORTING SPECIFIC RESULTS MAY BE PERIODICALLY REVIEWED AND REVISED. SUCH IMPROVEMENTS ARE APPLIED TO CURRENT DATA AND THAT OF PREVIOUS YEARS. FOR THIS REASON THE CURRENT REPORTS ALWAYS USE THE MOST ACCURATE DATA SOURCE FOR APS EMPLOYEE CENSUS RESULTS INCLUDING COMPARISONS WITH TIME SERIES DATA.



2023 Census Action Plan

Services Australia's workforce is key to realising its five year master plan vision.



The 2023 APS Employee Census achieved a response rate of 84%.

The agency is responding to this valuable feedback with some action planning in the following areas of focus.

1 Staff engagement

- Continue to support opportunities for staff to diversify their skillset and increase their capabilities.
- Continue to build on opportunities for connection and recognition for our staff.

2 Health and wellbeing

- Stay committed to ensuring the wellbeing of agency staff.
- Continue to promote and enable staff wellbeing through existing resources, open communication and support.
- Continue to provide our staff with a healthy work life balance.

3 Leadership

- Empower leaders and managers to continue to develop their leadership mindsets and capability.
- Encourage a culture of continuous learning in practice.

4 Attract, develop and retain

- Attract, develop and retain a responsive, capable workforce to deliver on the Services Australia master plan.
- Continue to build talent pipelines through recruitment, mobility, and capability uplift.

Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

TOPIC: **BARGAINING**

WITNESS: Danielle Regeling
Acting Chief Operating Officer

Strategic Narrative

- The Services Australia (the Agency) Enterprise Agreement 2024–2027 and the Services Australia Medical Officers Enterprise Agreement 2024–2027 (the Agreements) brought together APS common conditions with Agency specific conditions, and came into effect on 3 April 2024.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- In February 2024, 80.9 per cent of eligible staff participated in the vote.
- 93.4 per cent of those who voted, voted to approve the Services Australia Enterprise Agreement 2024–2027.
- 100 per cent of the 9 eligible Medical Officers voted to approve the Services Australia Medical Officers Enterprise Agreement 2024–2027.

Talking Points

Enterprise Agreement Implementation

- The one-off payment approved by the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) was paid to all eligible staff following a positive ballot, and salaries were increased by 4.0 per cent with effect from 14 March 2024.
- On 27 March 2024, the Agreements were approved by the Fair Work Commission and came into effect on 3 April 2024.
- The Agency is implementing the new terms in the Agreements and working through priority areas including:
 - Updating Human Resources policies in consultation with staff and the Community Public Sector Union (CPSU).
 - Presenting Enterprise Agreement masterclasses for managers to ensure understanding of the entitlements available to staff, including workplace flexibility and consultation.
 - Contacting staff with known eligibility for a top-up of parental leave to advise them of their entitlement or seek additional information to conduct an assessment of their eligibility.

- Systems enhancements for the Payroll and HR system which will be released progressively within the Agency’s ICT build schedule. In the interim, a workaround guide to support staff and leaders to access entitlements between the commencement of the Agreements and relevant system release has been made available.
- General guidance for staff and managers to support the implementation of both Agreements over the coming months.
- The Agency continues to work with the APSC and other large APS agencies to ensure consistent application of the APS common conditions.

Background

- The Public Sector Workplace Relations Policy 2023 (the Policy) enabled the APSC to negotiate APS-wide common conditions of employment, including pay increases, leave, flexible work arrangements, workplace consultation, and recognition of unions.
- Bargaining was undertaken in two parts:
 - APS-wide bargaining commenced on 30 March 2023 and concluded on 30 November 2023, upon the release of the final Statement of Common Conditions. This was led by the APSC; and
 - Agency-level bargaining commenced on 10 May 2023 and concluded in December 2023, limited to agency-specific terms and conditions that are unique to the operational requirements of the Agency.
- The Agency last entered into enterprise agreement negotiations between 2014 and 2017, which were highly adversarial. Since 2017, the Agency has focussed on building the trust and confidence of Agency staff and improving the industrial environment.
- The Agency approached bargaining with an interest in how it could improve the experience of employees at work, that led to claims made by the CPSU and bargaining representatives.
- Key areas for Agency-level bargaining included Rostering, Performance Management, Call Monitoring, Learning and Professional Development.
- Protected Industrial Action by CPSU members in August and October 2023 in support of bargaining claims and an improved pay offer had little impact on Agency operations, and customer service was not affected.

Media coverage

Date	Source	Item
29 February 2024	<i>Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet</i>	Strong vote for APS deals
5 February 2024	<i>The Mandarin</i>	CPSU hits panic button over potential ATO staff rejection of wage deal
18 December 2023	<i>The Mandarin</i>	APSC accelerates wage deal
23 November 2023	<i>The Mandarin</i>	Gallagher blinks in APS pay stoush with bonus offer
2 November 2023	<i>Riotact</i>	We'll take the wages offer direct to staff for a vote if we have to, says Minister
30 October 2023	<i>The Mandarin</i>	Interest rate hike will hit resistance to APS pay rise demands hard
23 October 2023	<i>The Canberra Times</i>	APS-wide bargaining: how common conditions would affect your agency

	Name and Role	Group/Branch/Organisation	Phone (w)	Phone (mob)
Cleared By	Name: Sally Martin Role: A/g General Manager	Corporate Enabling/Wellbeing and HR Support Division	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Contact Officer	Name: Stephen Cooney Role: National Manager	Corporate Enabling/Workplace Relations	s47F(1)	s47F(1)

Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

TOPIC: PAYMENT ACCURACY

WITNESS: Chris Birrer
Deputy CEO, Payments and Integrity

Strategic Narrative

- Services Australia (the Agency) remains committed to providing the best possible service to Australians and ensuring they receive the right payment at the right time.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- Payment Accuracy and Administrative Correctness (formerly Payment Correctness) over the last 4 years:

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Payment Accuracy	96.21%	93.26%	93.57%	94.03%
Administrative Correctness	98.53%	98.66%	98.90%	99.01%
Benchmark	95%	95%	95%	95%

- Payment accuracy results in 2020-21, 2021-22, and 2022-23 were shaped by the impact of COVID-19, including policy changes regarding payment access.
- Data on payment accuracy and administrative correctness is obtained through the Payment Accuracy Review (PAR) program, which conducts approximately 22,500 reviews, across three 4 monthly periods, each financial year.
- In 2022-23, the Department of Social Services (DSS) outlays for the 13 Social Security and Welfare payments subject to the PAR program totalled \$121.82 billion.
- PAR results show that the Employment Income Self category is the most prevalent factor in payment inaccuracy. However, the incidence of inaccurate outlays for this category has continued to reduce in 2022-23 in comparison to the previous two financial years.
- For the month of March 2024, more than 385,000 unique customers were presented with pre-filled Single Touch Payroll (STP) data.

- More than 7 million STP pay components (for example, salary and wages, allowances, and salary sacrifice) were pre-filled in 2022-23.
- More than 12.2 million STP pay components were pre-filled between 1 July 2023 and 31 March 2024.
- The *Auditor-General Report No. 4 of 2023–24: Accuracy and Timeliness of Welfare Payments* (the audit) was tabled in Parliament on 31 August 2023.

Talking Points

Payment Accuracy

- The Agency's role is to improve the customer experience and payment accuracy through simple, helpful, respectful, and transparent customer interactions.
- This includes the use of controlled third-party data, pre-filled income information, and targeted communications to assist customers to avoid payment inaccuracy and understand their notification obligations.
- The Agency supports customers through upfront and ongoing prevention, education, and early intervention strategies. These strategies are designed to improve payment accuracy by targeting known risks and embedding an upfront payment accuracy culture.
- Examples of these strategies in practice include:
 - the use of pre-filled information, such as STP;
 - proactively nudging customers to support timely updates to changes in circumstance(s); and
 - the implementation of customer-centric design principles across new initiatives.
- The Australian National Audit Office's performance audit assessed DSS' and the Agency's management of welfare payment accuracy and timeliness. Six of the 14 recommendations were directed to the Agency (with three of these jointly directed to DSS and the Agency – refer to Attachment A).

IF ASKED

What specific activities are being undertaken to improve payment accuracy?

- The Agency is progressing activities that embed an upfront payment accuracy approach, including:
 - increasing the use of third-party data, including STP, to pre-fill reportable income information, and to send nudge messages to customers prompting them to update their circumstances, and for the Agency to provide early interventions and education where appropriate;

- introducing a proactive circumstance conversation with customers, that is designed to prompt updates based on key drivers of payment inaccuracy relevant to their payment type;
- providing greater transparency through implementing online payment explanations, and making it easier for customers to understand and avoid overpayments;
- improved account payable letters, which included consultation with customers, staff and a range of external stakeholders;
- attempts to contact all customers prior to sending a manually produced account payable letter; and
- providing support for increased staff awareness and engagement to facilitate an Agency-wide culture of upfront payment accuracy focused on education, prevention and early intervention.

How is STP improving payment accuracy?

- Obtaining pre-fill employment income information through STP increases payment accuracy, as the risk associated with incorrect customer declaration of employment income decreases through direct employer reporting.
- STP information is used to:
 - pre-fill employment income information for customers to confirm as part of their reporting obligation with the Agency, ensuring employment income is reported and assessed correctly;
 - identify and prompt customers who may need to update their Family Tax Benefit income estimate or lodge a tax return, helping to ensure overpayments can be minimised where possible; and
 - streamline child support employer reporting and deduction processes to remove duplicate employer reporting and support timely transfer of payments to customers.

Have account payable letters been improved under the 'Improving Payment Accuracy' strategies?

- The Agency made improvements to account payable letters in 2021 to coincide with debt restart activity, and in December 2022.
- The changes were co-designed with customers, front line staff and a range of external stakeholders and peak bodies, including Economic Justice Australia (EJA).
- Changes incorporated customer feedback, including the way the Agency can include:
 - simpler payment explanations;
 - clearer information on repayment options;
 - clarity on avenues open to customers to dispute the overpayment outcome; and

- the use of more empathetic language. For example, “If you cannot repay the money, call us, we are here to help you”.

How did the Agency respond to the ANAO audit recommendations?

- There were three recommendations solely directed to the Agency, and three recommendations jointly directed to DSS and the Agency.
- The Agency agreed to all recommendations except Recommendation 10, which stated the Agency develop “*a reliable and unbiased external performance measure for welfare payment correctness that includes recipient errors or adopt payment accuracy as a performance measure.*”
- The Agency’s management response to this recommendation stated that the current measure of ‘administrative correctness of payments’ most accurately reflects its performance as it measures the success of delivering the correct payment based on information provided by customers.
- Payment accuracy data addresses inaccuracy caused by both staff, and customer errors that affect the accuracy of payments made by the Agency.
- The outcomes from the PAR program also measure the Agency’s ability to pay customers the correct payment, free of administrative errors. This is known as Administrative Correctness.

Background

- Payment accuracy as a performance measure reflects the Agency’s ability to pay the right person, the right amount, through the right program, at the right time.
- An inaccurate payment occurs when the Agency pays a customer an incorrect amount or pays someone who is ineligible for a payment.
- Payment accuracy is largely impacted by changes to customer circumstances, and the understanding by the customer of their obligation to notify these changes and take appropriate action early.
- Key areas of risk to payment accuracy are the reporting of earned income, assets, and unearned income from sources like bank accounts, trusts and real estate that affect the amount of payment an individual is entitled to under law.
- Payment accuracy risks are monitored by the Agency to ensure appropriate action is taken to minimise the occurrence of payment errors.
- The PAR program, known until October 2022 as the Random Sample Survey (RSS), conducts customer reviews on a sample of the recipient population. The program is the primary assurance mechanism to measure the integrity of payment outlays administered by DSS and delivered by the Agency.

- The 95 per cent target has been a long-standing benchmark agreed between DSS and the Agency. All payments reviewed have an individual benchmark of 95 per cent, with the exception of Age Pension which has a 97 per cent benchmark.
- The audit found that DSS' and the Agency's management of welfare payment accuracy and timeliness had been partly effective and made a total of 14 recommendations in the report (six being solely or jointly directed towards the Agency). The Agency agreed to five of the six recommendations (refer to Attachment A).

Other QONs

Committee Inquiry	Senator/MP - Question #	Broad topic
Parliamentary QoN	Senator Jannet Rice PQ23-000156	Progress update on the recommendations agreed to from the ANAO Audit.

Attachment

- Attachment A – ANAO recommendations directed to the Agency.

	Name and Role	Group/Branch/Organisation	Phone (w)	Phone (mob)
Cleared By	Name: Robert Higgins Role: General Manager	Payment Assurance Program and Appeals Division	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Contact Officer	Name: Matt McMahon Role: National Manager	Payment Accuracy Branch	s47F(1)	s47F(1)

Attachment A – SB24-000131

ANAO Recommendations directed to the Agency.

Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) Accuracy and Timeliness of Welfare Payments performance audit made 14 recommendations with 6 being solely or jointly directed towards the Agency.

The 6 recommendations directed to the Agency include:

Recommendation 1: Department of Social Services and Services Australia complete the current bilateral arrangement refresh process by October 2023, ensuring revised service arrangements for welfare payments include effective mechanisms to support the department's oversight of welfare payment accuracy and timeliness.

- Department of Social Services response: *Agreed.*
- Services Australia response: *Agreed.*

Recommendation 2: Department of Social Services and Services Australia establish by October 2023: (a) processes to exchange relevant internal audit and management assurance reports; and (b) a robust bilateral assurance framework that facilitates independent and objective assessment of welfare payment control effectiveness.

- Department of Social Services response: *Agreed.*
- Services Australia response: *Agreed.*

Recommendation 3: Department of Social Services and Services Australia implement robust bilateral processes by October 2023 to manage shared risks relating to welfare payment accuracy and timeliness, including establishing and maintaining joint risk management plans and/or registers.

- Department of Social Services response: *Agreed.*
- Services Australia response: *Agreed.*

Attachment A – SB24-000131

Recommendation 6: Services Australia establish processes to ensure:

- a) quality checking and quality assurance processes are undertaken and appropriately documented; and
- b) data captured through the Payment Accuracy Review Program is accurate and complete.

- Services Australia response: Agreed.

Recommendation 10: Services Australia develop a reliable and unbiased external performance measure for welfare payment correctness that includes recipient errors or adopt payment accuracy as a performance measure.

- Services Australia response: *Not Agreed*.

Recommendation 14: Services Australia ensure that:

- a) the business rules for calculating claim processing timeliness key performance measures are complete and accurate; and
- b) appropriate bilateral quality assurance processes are established to verify reported claim processing timeliness results.

- Services Australia response: *Agreed*.

Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

TOPIC: **OMBUDSMAN INVESTIGATIONS/INCOME APPORTIONMENT**

WITNESS: Chris Birrer
 Deputy CEO, Payments and Integrity

Strategic Narrative

- In 2023, the Commonwealth Ombudsman's Office (the Ombudsman) conducted two investigations in relation to income apportionment.
- On 2 August 2023, the Ombudsman published a statement regarding Part 1 of its investigation, *'Lessons in Lawfulness'* into Services Australia (the Agency) and the Department of Social Services (DSS) response to the question of the lawfulness of income apportionment before 7 December 2020.
- This statement included four recommendations. The Agency and DSS provided a joint response, which accepted three of the recommendations and partially accepted the remaining recommendation.
- The statement also noted:
 - “income apportionment is different to the Robodebt scheme or ‘income averaging’. In the Robodebt scheme, Services Australia used an automated process to raise debts using yearly income data (income averaging)”; and
 - “the income apportionment issue we investigated does not involve averaging of yearly income and relates to the method Services Australia used to apportion employment income over a payslip period.”
- On 4 December 2023, the Ombudsman published Part 2 of the Own Motion report, *'Accountability in Action: identifying, owning and fixing errors'*.

- In the report, the Ombudsman included eight recommendations, which were all accepted by the Agency and DSS.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- The first Ombudsman statement included four recommendations. Of those, the Agency and DSS jointly accepted three, and partially accepted one.
 - Two recommendations have been actioned.
 - Two recommendations are progressed in implementation.
- The Second Ombudsman Report included eight recommendations. All were jointly accepted by the Agency and DSS.
 - One recommendation has been actioned.
 - Four recommendations have been partially actioned.
 - Three recommendations will be actioned following a government decision on remediation options.

Talking Points

Commonwealth Ombudsman Statement '*Lessons in Lawfulness*' – 2 August 2023

- The Ombudsman highlighted in the Statement that since at least 2003 until 7 December 2020, when legislative amendments were made, the Agency was apportioning income across two or more Centrelink instalment periods in circumstances where this was not permitted by Social Security Law.
- The Ombudsman made four recommendations:
 - **Recommendation 1A:** *Solicitor-General opinion.*
 - Accepted and actioned.
 - Solicitor-General opinion has been sought by DSS (Solicitor-General's opinion was received on 22 December 2023).
 - On 15 March 2024, a further advice was received from the Solicitor-General.
 - **Recommendation 1B:** *Refer question of law to Federal Court*
 - Partially accepted.
 - The preference was to resolve the issue through an opinion from the Solicitor-General.

- **Recommendation 2:** *Develop a policy position on Secretary-initiated reviews.*
 - Partially accepted and actioned.
 - On 9 April 2024, the General Guidance was finalised. The Agency has developed staff guidance materials consistent with the Guidance and these have been shared with the Ombudsman’s Office.
- **Recommendation 3:** *Develop a strategy in consultation with Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions (CDPP).*
 - Accepted and in progress.
 - The Agency, DSS and CDPP are continuing to draft the Prosecution Strategy, and it is anticipated that this will be finalised shortly.
- **Recommendation 4:** *Provide documents to the CDPP.*
 - Accepted and actioned.
 - The Agency has provided all relevant documents to the CDPP thus far and will work with DSS to provide any further legal advice as it is received.

Commonwealth Ombudsman Part Two Report ‘Accountability in Action: identifying, owning and fixing errors’ – 4 December 2023

- In the report, the Ombudsman included eight recommendations:
 - **Recommendation 1:** *Develop a strategy for sampling potentially affected historic debts, underpayments, Australian Appeals Tribunal (AAT) decisions and CDPP referred debts.*
 - Accepted and actioned.
 - In October 2023, the Agency completed the first sampling exercise.
 - In February 2024, the Agency completed a second sampling exercise to address matters specifically raised in the Ombudsman’s recommendation.
 - The final report has been provided to the Ombudsman’s Office.
 - **Recommendation 2:** *Develop an overarching remediation strategy for income apportionment affected decisions.*
 - Accepted and in progress.
 - Work is being progressed on the legal and policy issues that will inform the remediation options to be put forward to Government for decision.

- **Recommendation 3:** *Develop strategy for managing income apportionment-affected reviews.*
 - o Accepted and in progress.
 - On 29 April 2024, the Agency recommenced a small number of income apportionment-affected reviews.
 - The staged approach to recommencement will allow the Agency to gather feedback on its processes and the findings will underpin the development of an overarching strategy for managing the remaining activities.
- **Recommendation 4:** *Update decision-making procedures.*
 - o Accepted and in progress.
 - On 9 April 2024, the General Guidance was finalised.
 - The Agency has developed staff guidance materials consistent with the Guidance and these have been shared with the Ombudsman's Office.
 - Staff guidance relating to remediation actions are dependent on a government decision on remediation.
- **Recommendation 5:** *Develop communication plan.*
 - o Accepted and partially actioned.
 - The Agency, in consultation with DSS, has developed a communications approach to provide customers with information and to support staff to provide information in relation to income apportionment.
 - A communications strategy has been developed to support the Stage 1 recommencement activities. This has been shared with the Ombudsman's Office.
 - A comprehensive communications plan will be developed following the Stage 1 recommencement activities and subsequent findings/feedback.
- **Recommendation 6:** *Amend communications.*
 - o Accepted and partially actioned.
 - The Agency continually revises its communications products, with updated information provided to customers through the Agency's website, Interactive Voice Response telephony service, and letters issued to customers.
 - Stage 1 recommencement letters were user tested with real customers prior to implementation, and these letters have been shared with the Ombudsman's Office.

- The Agency will continue to update its customer correspondence products as feedback is received throughout the delivery of Stage 1.
- **Recommendation 7:** *Develop and implement a policy to capture all income apportionment complaints.*
 - Accepted and actioned.
 - The Agency has implemented processes to capture complaints about income apportionment-affected decisions, reviews, communications and related issues.
- **Recommendation 8:** *Develop regular complaint reporting requirements.*
 - Accepted and partially actioned.
 - Regular reporting on complaints related to income apportionment has been implemented.
 - The Agency will continue to work with DSS to formalise reporting arrangements in the Bilateral Management Agreement between the agencies.

Timeline of recent or significant events

Date	Action
3 May 2024	The Agency and DSS provided a joint progress update to the Ombudsman on the implementation of accepted suggestions and recommendations made in the 2023 reports.
26 April 2024	The Agency and DSS briefed the Ombudsman's Office on the Stage 1 recommencement of previously paused activities.
11 April 2024	The Services Australia CEO received a letter from the DSS Secretary advising that work could recommence on previously paused activities based on the updated General Guidance for Decision Makers.
9 April 2024	The Agency received finalised General Guidance for Decision Makers from DSS.
6 December 2023	The Agency and DSS provided a joint progress update to the Ombudsman on the implementation of accepted suggestions and recommendations made in the 2 August 2023 statement.
4 December 2023	The Ombudsman released the Part 2 Report.
2 August 2023	The Ombudsman made a public statement regarding the investigation into the lawfulness of income apportionment.
10 July 2023	The Ombudsman wrote to DSS and the Agency advising of a second Own Motion investigation into the administration of income apportionment.

23 June 2023	The Ombudsman provided the Agency with a copy of the final Part 1 Own Motion investigation report. However, this was not publicly released.
14 March 2023	The Ombudsman wrote to DSS and the Agency notifying of two Ombudsman Own Motion investigations.
17 February 2023	The Agency and DSS briefed officers from the Ombudsman on income apportionment.

Background

- In the 2019–20 Budget, the Changing the Social Security Income Assessment Model was announced. Subsequently, the *Social Security Act 1991* (the Act) was amended with effect from 7 December 2020 to significantly improve the reporting and processes for attribution of employment income.
- The amendments included that income is assessed on when it is paid by the employer, rather than when it is earned by the customer. The changes make reporting easier for customers, so they are more likely to receive correct social security payments and are less likely to incur a debt.
- Prior to 7 December 2020, a range of methods were used to calculate payments and raise debts involving employment income. The method under the Act differed according to payment type, and outcomes varied according to the customer's reporting patterns and the quality of the evidence of employment income available.
- In cases where an employment period did not align with a fortnightly Centrelink instalment period, section 1073B of the Act was applied to apportion employment income across instalment periods.
- The Agency and DSS became aware of issues with the use of income apportionment in October 2020.

Media coverage

Date	Source	Item
9 December 2023	<i>The Saturday Paper</i>	Apportioning blame.
7 December 2023	<i>The Guardian</i>	Two people were jailed for welfare debts that Centrelink may have calculated unlawfully.
4 December 2023	<i>The Guardian</i>	Centrelink should consider waiving 100,000 debts that may be unlawful, ombudsman report finds.

SERVICES AUSTRALIA

SB24-000139

Date	Source	Item
2 November 2023	<i>The Guardian</i>	Dozens of Centrelink fraud prosecutions dropped due to unlawful welfare debt calculations.
30 October 2023	<i>The Guardian</i>	Services Australia forced to pause Centrelink debt repayments for 86,000 people amid legality concerns.
23 September 2023	<i>The Saturday Paper</i>	Exclusive: Australia's welfare agency at risk of collapse.
31 August 2023	<i>The Guardian</i>	Centrelink payments much more inaccurate than Services Australia claims, audit office finds.
17 August 2023	<i>7am Podcast</i>	Centrelink's dodgy maths goes well beyond robo-debt.
12 August 2023	<i>The Saturday Paper</i>	Exclusive: DPP reviews prosecutions for false welfare debts.
12 August 2023	<i>The Guardian</i>	Prosecutions halted due to Services Australia bungle.
12 August 2023	<i>The Australian</i>	Services Australia: Dozens of prosecutions halted due to bungle.
2 August 2023	<i>The Canberra Times</i>	Departments miscalculated welfare debts (stream.com.au).
2 August 2023	<i>Commonwealth Ombudsman Media Release</i>	Ombudsman Investigation – Lessons in Lawfulness.
2 August 2023	<i>The Commonwealth Ombudsman public statement</i>	Commonwealth-Ombudsman-public-statement-regarding-OMI-Income-Apportionment-Lawfulness.pdf.
2 August 2023	<i>The Guardian</i>	Up to 100,000 welfare debts or potential debts miscalculated over two decades, ombudsman finds Welfare The Guardian.
2 August 2023	<i>The Canberra Times</i>	Welfare debts miscalculated by federal departments The Canberra Times Canberra, ACT.

Relevant Ministerial Comments

Date	Minister	Details
2 August 2023	Minister Rishworth and Minister Shorten Joint Statement	Statement on historic income apportionment Department of Social Services Ministers (dss.gov.au).

Questions on Notice

Estimates QONs

Hearing	Date	Senator - Question #	Broad topic
Supplementary Budget Estimates	25 October 2023	Senator Janet Rice - SQ23-000872	Income apportionment paused debts

Other QONs

Committee Inquiry	Senator/MP - Question #	Broad topic
Parliamentary Question on Notice	Senator Janet Rice - PQ23-000153	Income apportionment

Freedom of Information (FOI)

Request Date	Who	Relating to	Documents released
4 December 2023	s47F(1) (Right to Know)	Reports from second sampling process	nil
3 October 2023	s47F(1) (Right to Know)	Sampling reports	Available on the Agency's disclosure log.
10 August 2023	s47F(1) (Right to Know)	General instructions for decision makers	Available on the Agency's disclosure log.

	Name and Role	Group/Branch/Organisation	Phone (w)	Phone (mob)
Cleared By	Name: Rachael Clarke Role: A/g General Manager	Integrity Response Division	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Contact Officer	Name: Dan Blackmore Role: National Manager	Income apportionment Response Branch	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Consultation	Name: Jeff Derix Role: Chief Counsel	Legal Services Division		s47F(1)

Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

TOPIC: INCOME APPORTIONMENT

WITNESS: Chris Birrer
Deputy CEO, Payments and Integrity

Strategic Narrative

- Services Australia (the Agency) and the Department of Social Services (DSS) became aware of issues with the use of income apportionment in October 2020.
- Prior to changes in legislation from 7 December 2020, people had to report their gross earnings based on what they had actually earned during a Centrelink fortnightly instalment period.
- In many cases, a customer's earnings period did not align with their Centrelink instalment period.
- Where a customer's earnings period did not align with their Centrelink instalment period, the Agency spread evenly or 'apportioned' their gross earning over the corresponding Centrelink instalment periods. This could impact a customer's eligibility or payment rate.
- Since early 2021, the Agency and DSS have been working collaboratively to understand the appropriate methodology for assessing employment income prior to 7 December 2020, with DSS taking the lead to resolve outstanding legal matters and policy.
- A sample of recalculated records has shown that without income apportionment, in almost all cases, a potential overpayment would still exist, but the amount of the overpayment may change both up and down, based on individual circumstances.

- From July 2021, the Agency commenced pausing the raising of debts, explanation of decisions, and formal reviews for debts potentially impacted by income apportionment.
- The Agency, instructed by DSS, has worked with the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions (CDPP) to withdraw all impacted active criminal prosecutions and outstanding warrants. The CDPP advised all impacted matters were withdrawn by 4 December 2023.
- From 30 October 2023, the Agency paused the recovery of debts identified as potentially impacted by income apportionment.
- From 11 April 2024, the Agency implemented a second pause on the recovery of further debts identified as potentially impacted by income apportionment.
- On 11 April 2024, the DSS Secretary issued a letter to the Agency providing instructions to recommence activities that were previously paused due to income apportionment. This included the recommencement of formal reviews, explanation of decisions, determining and raising employment income debts that occurred pre-December 2020 and recovering newly determined debts.
- Based on the revised General Guidance, the Agency has updated its staff guidance materials, business processes and customer communications to support the recommencement of paused activities.
- From 29 April 2024, the Agency started contacting a small number of customers about their outstanding reviews or debts. This first stage of the recommencement will allow the Agency to test its processes, and correspondence products, before undertaking larger volumes of activity.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- As at 28 April 2024, the Agency had paused:
 - debt recovery on approximately 150,000 debts;
 - approximately 88,000 undetermined debts;
 - approximately 8,000 explanations of decision; and
 - approximately 15,000 requests for formal reviews.

Talking Points

Resumption of paused activities

- Since early 2021, the Agency has supported DSS to seek and consider legal advice and develop a policy and operational response that is consistent with that advice.
- This work resulted in the development of revised General Guidance, which was provided by DSS to the Agency to provide a methodology for progressing reviews and potential debts that may be affected by income apportionment.
- The Agency has developed new correspondence products that have been user tested with real customers, and has incorporated this feedback to help improve Agency letters.
- From 29 April 2024, and following instructions from DSS, the Agency recommenced small numbers of previously paused activities, including:
 - previously prosecuted matters from the last five years subject to current orders;
 - formal reviews;
 - requests for explanation of decisions; and
 - raising new pre 7 December 2020 employment income debts.
- A dedicated workforce of staff specially trained in income apportionment has been established to support customers with these activities.
- The Agency has also established a dedicated telephone line for customers, employers and third parties to contact in relation to income apportionment: 1800 560 870.
- The staged approach to resumption will allow the Agency to:
 - Test the operational guidance to staff for clarity.
 - Gather feedback from customers, employers and third parties about their experience of the processes and communication products.
 - Build an understanding of how to best support Agency staff in delivering these activities.

- Work with DSS to resolve any complex policy issues that arise.
- Customers who are waiting for a review outcome or an explanation of a decision don't need to do anything. All activities will remain paused until the agency contacts them to explain the next steps.
- The Agency's website has also been updated to ensure people have access to the most up to date information about income apportionment.

Debt Recovery Pauses

- From 30 October 2023, the Agency paused debt recovery for debts identified as potentially impacted by income apportionment.
- Since the initial pause, and following further research and data analysis, the Agency identified further cohorts of debts that may also be impacted by income apportionment.
- From 11 April 2024, these additional cohorts commenced having their debt recovery paused.
- Debts that have had their debt recovery arrangements paused are not part of the recommencement work that the Agency has recently undertaken.
- The Agency is continuing to work with DSS on developing options for the Government, for how to address these and other historical debts that may be affected by income apportionment.
- Customers with paused debts will not need to make repayments on these debts.
- This does not necessarily mean that there will be no debt.
- If a customer has a debt that is not impacted by income apportionment, then debt recovery will continue.
- If a customer has concerns regarding an existing employment income debt, they can request a review of decision.

Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecution (CDPP) Matters

- The Agency, together with DSS, is meeting with representatives from the CDPP on a regular basis as we work together in relation to impacted criminal prosecutions.
- This includes progressing the development of an agreed strategy on how to approach historic, current, and future criminal prosecutions associated with income apportionment debts.

- The development of this strategy will directly address Recommendation 3 of the Ombudsman's August 2023 statement on the question of the lawfulness of income apportionment.

Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) Matters

- There are several matters related to income apportionment before the AAT.
- Applications before the Social Services and Child Support Division (AAT1) were previously placed on hold at the request of the Agency and DSS, pending resolution of the legal position. However, on 13 December 2023, the AAT1 advised that it would recommence issuing directions to the Agency to obtain further evidence in those cases and progress the cases, where possible.
- As at 30 April 2024, there were 110 applications on hand in AAT1 that are identified as impacted by income apportionment. The Agency is providing submissions in those cases consistent with the revised methodology for assessing employment income prior to 7 December 2020, as agreed with DSS.
- There are several AAT1 decisions that have not accepted the revised methodology.
- The Secretary has appealed these decisions to the AAT2 and one of those cases, *Secretary DSS v FTXB*, is to be heard as a test case before a three member bench, including the President.
- This matter is listed for hearing on 24 June 2024.
- The resulting decision will be influential on subsequent AAT1 and AAT2 decisions and may also inform advice to Government on options for addressing broader income apportionment matters, which will be led by DSS with agency input.

Timeline of recent or significant events

Date	Action
29 April 2024	Stage 1 recommencement of previously paused activities, including formal reviews, explanation of decisions, and new debt determinations.
26 April 2024	The Agency and DSS briefed the Ombudsman's Office on the Stage 1 recommencement of previously paused activities.
11 April 2024	The Agency commenced implementing a secondary pause on the recovery of debts potentially impacted by income apportionment.

11 April 2024	The Services Australia CEO received a letter from the DSS Secretary advising that work could recommence on previously paused activities based on the updated General Guidance for Decision Makers.
9 April 2024	The Agency received finalised General Guidance for Decision Makers from DSS.
15 March 2024	Further Solicitor-General's advice received by DSS and the Agency.
4 March 2024	The Agency received the revised General Guidance for Decision Makers from DSS for comment.
22 December 2023	Solicitor-General's advice received by DSS and the Agency.
4 December 2023	The Ombudsman released the Part 2 Report regarding the administration of the issue of income apportionment. CDPP advised there were no impacted matters remaining before court.
30 October 2023	The Agency implemented a pause on the recovery of debts potentially impacted by income apportionment.
2 August 2023	The Ombudsman made a public statement regarding the investigation into the lawfulness of income apportionment.
14 March 2023	The Ombudsman wrote to DSS and the Agency notifying of two Ombudsman Own Motion investigations.
17 February 2023	The Agency and DSS briefed officers from the Ombudsman on income apportionment.
12 December 2022	DSS Secretary formally agreed the General Instructions and wrote to the CEO providing the General Instructions for use.
30 March 2022	Final legal advice on the method for assessing employment income provided to DSS by an external law firm.
July – November 2021	The Agency paused formal reviews, explanations of decision and debt raising activities related to pre-7 December 2020 employment income, pending instructions from DSS (July). Referral of matters including income apportionment ceased being referred to the CDPP (November).
29 October 2020/ 25 March 2021	During Community Affairs Senate Committee hearings, former Senator Patrick raised concerns around apportioned employment income being used to raise debts.

Background

- In the 2019–20 Budget, the Changing the Social Security Income Assessment Model was announced. Subsequently, the *Social Security Act 1991* (the Act) was amended with effect from 7 December 2020 to significantly improve the reporting and processes for attribution of employment income.
- The amendments included that income is to be assessed on when it is paid by the employer, rather than when it is earned by the customer. The changes make reporting easier for customers, so they are more likely to receive correct social security payments and are less likely to incur a debt.
- Prior to 7 December 2020, a range of methods were used to calculate payments and raise debts involving employment income. The method under the Act differed according to payment type, and outcomes varied according to the customer's reporting patterns and the quality of the evidence of employment income available.
- In cases where an employment period did not align with a fortnightly Centrelink instalment period, section 1073B of the Act was applied to apportion employment income across instalment periods.

Media coverage

Date	Source	Item
9 December 2023	<i>The Saturday Paper</i>	Apportioning blame
7 December 2023	<i>The Guardian</i>	Two people were jailed for welfare debts that Centrelink may have calculated unlawfully.
4 December 2023	<i>The Guardian</i>	Centrelink should consider waiving 100,000 debts that may be unlawful, ombudsman report finds.
2 November 2023	<i>The Guardian</i>	Dozens of Centrelink fraud prosecutions dropped due to unlawful welfare debt calculations.
30 October 2023	<i>The Guardian</i>	Services Australia forced to pause Centrelink debt repayments for 86,000 people amid legality concerns.
23 September 2023	<i>The Saturday Paper</i>	Exclusive: Australia's welfare agency at risk of collapse.
31 August 2023	<i>The Guardian</i>	Centrelink payments much more inaccurate than Services Australia claims, audit office finds.
17 August 2023	<i>7am Podcast</i>	Centrelink's dodgy maths goes well beyond robo-debt.

Date	Source	Item
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12 August 2023	<i>The Guardian</i>	Prosecutions halted due to Services Australia bungle.
12 August 2023	<i>The Australian</i>	Services Australia: Dozens of prosecutions halted due to bungle.
2 August 2023	<i>The Canberra Times</i>	Departments miscalculated welfare debts (stroom.com.au).
2 August 2023	<i>Commonwealth Ombudsman Media Release</i>	Ombudsman Investigation – Lessons in Lawfulness.
2 August 2023	<i>The Commonwealth Ombudsman public statement</i>	Commonwealth-Ombudsman- public-statement-regarding-OMI- Income- Apportionment- Lawfulness.pdf.
2 August 2023	<i>The Guardian</i>	Up to 100,000 welfare debts or potential debts miscalculated over two decades, ombudsman finds Welfare The Guardian.
2 August 2023	<i>The Canberra Times</i>	Welfare debts miscalculated by federal departments The Canberra Times Canberra, ACT.

Relevant Ministerial Comments

Date	Minister	Details
2 August 2023	Minister Rishworth MP and Minister Shorten MP Joint Statement	Statement on historic income apportionment Department of Social Services Ministers (dss.gov.au).

Questions on Notice Estimates QONs

Hearing	Date	Senator - Question #	Broad topic
Supplementary Budget Estimates	25 October 2023	Senator Janet Rice - SQ23-00872	Income apportionment paused debts

Other QONs

Committee Inquiry	Senator/MP - Question #	Broad topic
Parliamentary Question on Notice	Senator Janet Rice - PQ23-000153	Income apportionment

Freedom of Information (FOI)

Request Date	Who	Relating to	Documents released
4 December 2023	s47F(1) (Right to Know)	Reports from second sampling process	nil
3 October 2023	s47F(1) (Right to Know)	Sampling reports	Available on the Agency's disclosure log.
10 August 2023	s47F(1) (Right to Know)	General instructions for decision makers	Available on the Agency's disclosure log.

	Name and Role	Group/Branch/Organisation	Phone (w)	Phone (mob)
Cleared By	Name: Rachael Clarke Role: A/g General Manager	Integrity Response Division	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Contact Officer	Name: Dan Blackmore Role: National Manager	Income Apportionment Response Branch	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Consultation	Name: Jeff Derix Role: Chief Counsel	Legal Services Division		s47F(1)

Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

TOPIC: **RESPONSE TO THE ROYAL COMMISSION INTO THE ROBODEBT SCHEME**

WITNESS: Chris Birrer
 Deputy CEO, Payments and Integrity

Strategic Narrative

- On 13 November 2023, the Australian Government published its response to the report of the Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme.
- The Government has accepted or accepted in principle all 56 recommendations made by the Royal Commission.
- On 13 November 2023, Services Australia (the Agency) established a dedicated Royal Commission Response Branch to coordinate the implementation of the Government's response to the Royal Commission's recommendations.
- The Agency leads the implementation of 26 of the recommendations.
- The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) is responsible for the whole-of-government coordination of the Government's response, including reporting to Government on implementation progress in May and November 2024.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- On 7 July 2023, Commissioner Catherine Holmes AC SC presented the Report of the Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme (the Report) to the Governor-General.
- On 13 November 2023, the Australian Government released its response to the Report. The Government accepted (49) or accepted in principle (7) of all the recommendations made by the Royal Commission.
- Services Australia is the lead Agency for 26 recommendations.

Talking Points

- The work the Agency is undertaking to implement the Government's response to the recommendations from the Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme is an opportunity to build on the work the Agency has already done to improve processes and customer interactions since the end of the Robodebt Scheme in 2019.
- The Agency is continuing to work across government and engage with key stakeholders, to implement recommendations that require more careful consideration or legislative change.
- This includes better and earlier consultation with vulnerable members of the community through peak advocacy groups. The piloting of an Advocates' Channel with Economic Justice Australia has provided opportunities to enhance how advocates can engage with the Agency.
 - 55 peak advocacy groups have also been invited to participate in a consultation exercise with the Agency on recommendations of interest to them.
- The Agency will continue to work with the Department of Social Services (DSS) on social security debt arrangements. This is in addition to improvements already made, such as ceasing the use of external collection agents and giving customers greater flexibility and control over their repayments, particularly during disaster and crisis events.
- The Agency continues to provide support to staff following the completion of the Royal Commission and release of its report. This includes:
 - forums for staff to share their experiences related to the Robodebt Scheme through 'Safe to Speak' and 'Listen to Learn' sessions;
 - wellbeing support is available to current and former customers, staff, and their families who may be affected; and
 - providing current and former Agency staff legal assistance where appropriate under Appendix E of the *Legal Services Directions 2017*.

Timeline of recent or significant events

Date	Action
22 March 2024	Senior Executive held a deep dive into approaches to implementing the recommendations. The deep dive emphasised the strong connections between the recommendations and the importance of engagement with stakeholder groups in solution design.
19 March 2024	Services Australia wrote to 55 Peak Advisory Groups seeking advice on which recommendations they had an interest in, and how they would like to engage with the Agency in relation to these. 20 organisations responded to the request, engagement will be facilitated via workshops, one-on-one meetings, written responses or a combination of these.
15 December 2023	The Agency and DSS jointly responded to a letter from the CEO of the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS). The response outlined both agencies' intent to continue to work with ACOSS and other peak bodies on matters relating to the Government's response through existing forums such as DSS' Community Services Advisory Group and the Agency's Civil Society Advisory Group.
14 November 2023	The Agency wrote to 68 representatives of various peak advisory group organisations advising that it is committed to continuing to work closely with them to help shape the future design and delivery of payments and services.
13 November 2023	The Australian Government released its response to the Report of the Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme.
8 September 2023	The Agency's CEO apologised to all Services Australia staff for Robodebt and how it affected them.
10 July 2023	The Secretary of PM&C and the Australian Public Service Commissioner (APSC) announced that a taskforce would be established, led by PM&C, the Attorney-General's Department and the APSC, to support Ministers in preparing the Government's response.

Background

- The Income Compliance Program (the Robodebt Scheme) was initiated in 2015, and was supported through the following measures:
 - 2015–16 Budget (Strengthening the Integrity of the Welfare System);
 - 2015–16 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook (Enhanced Welfare Payment Integrity – income data matching and Enhanced Welfare Payment Integrity non-employment income data matching);
 - 2016–17 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook (Better Management of the Social Welfare System); and
 - 2018–19 Budget (Social Welfare Debt Recovery).

Media coverage

Date	Source	Item
14 November 2023	<i>The Mandarin</i>	https://www.themandarin.com.au/234721-robodebt-response-triggers-extra-funding-for-oversight-agencies/
14 November 2023	<i>The Mandarin</i>	Robodebt response triggers extra funding for oversight agencies
14 November 2023	<i>Executive Career</i>	Robodebt response continues - ExecutiveCareer
13 November 2023	<i>9 News</i>	Robodebt royal commission: Government accepts all recommendations except one in response
13 November 2023	<i>9 News</i>	Moves to stop another Robodebt disaster - 9News Podcast - Omny.fm
13 November 2023	<i>ABC News</i>	Government formally responds to Robodebt royal commission, revealing 16 public servants being investigated over scheme
15 July 2023	<i>The Australian</i>	Robodebt report won't fix debacle in policymaking"
14 July 2023	<i>Inside story</i>	Do the Robodebt recommendations go far enough? Inside Story
10 July 2023	<i>The Canberra Times</i>	Ten things you should know from the Robodebt royal commission report The Canberra Times Canberra, ACT
08 July 2023	<i>ABC News</i>	The Robodebt Royal Commission has found that the scheme issues false and unlawful debt notices to around 400,000 Australians between 2015 and 2019
08 July 2023	<i>The Guardian</i>	Robodebt royal commission final report: what did it find and what will happen next? Royal commission into robodebt The Guardian
08 July 2023	<i>7 News</i>	Former Ministers and Senior Bureaucrats referred to the Federal Police following the Royal Commission's Robodebt Report. The report states Robodebt was a costly failure of public administration
07 July 2023	<i>The Canberra Times</i>	Here are the 57 robodebt royal commission recommendations The Canberra Times Canberra, ACT

Date	Source	Item
07 July 2023	ABC Radio National	The Saturday Paper's Rick Morton talks to host Patricia Karvelas about the final report into the Robodebt Scheme. He says a number of politicians involved may be referred to the National Anticorruption Commission
07 July 2023	7 News	Robodebt royal commission report delivered, flagging criminal prosecutions
07 July 2023	The New Daily	Robodebt royal commission final report to be handed down – with Liberals in crosshairs
07 July 2023	The Canberra Times	Robodebt royal commission findings released The Canberra Times Canberra, ACT

Relevant Ministerial Comments

Date	Minister	Details
13 November 2023	Australian Government	The Australian Government released its response to the Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme. https://pmc.gov.au/resources/government-response-royal-commission-robodebt-scheme
8 August 2023	Minister Shorten	On the 8 August 2023, the Hon Bill Shorten MP spoke about Robodebt in parliament. <i>“How will the Royal Commission into Robodebt improve the public service”</i> . Questions on the Robodebt Royal Commission Department of Social Services Ministers (dss.gov.au)
7 August 2023	Minister Shorten	On the 7 August 2023, the Hon Bill Shorten MP spoke about Robodebt in parliament. <i>“Who was responsible for ending Robodebt”</i> . Question Time Department of Social Services Ministers (dss.gov.au)
3 August 2023	Minister Shorten	On the 3 August 2023, the Hon Bill Shorten MP spoke about Robodebt in parliament. <i>“What did the Royal Commission find were the real consequences of the Robodebt Scheme”</i> . Minister Shorten in Question Time Department of Social Services Ministers (dss.gov.au)

Date	Minister	Details
2 August 2023	Minister Shorten	On the 2 August 2023, the Hon Bill Shorten MP spoke about Robodebt in parliament. <i>"In light of the Final Report of the Royal Commission into Robodebt, what are the lessons? Why should Australians have confidence in the conduct of the Royal Commission"</i> . Questions on the Robodebt Royal Commission Department of Social Services Ministers (dss.gov.au)
1 August 2023	Minister Shorten	The Hon Bill Shorten MP spoke about Robodebt in parliament. Minister Shorten in Question Time Department of Social Services Ministers (dss.gov.au)
1 August 2023	Minister Shorten	On the 1 August 2023, the Hon Bill Shorten MP spoke about Robodebt in parliament. <i>"What did the Royal Commission into Robodebt's Final Report find as to who the real victims of Robodebt were"</i> . Questions on the Robodebt Royal Commission Department of Social Services Ministers (dss.gov.au)
1 August 2023	Minister Shorten	The Hon Bill Shorten MP spoke about Robodebt in parliament. <i>"What did the Royal Commission into Robodebt's Final Report find as to who was responsible for the design, development and establishment of the cruel and unlawful scheme, and were there any other important observations made by the Commissioner"</i> . Minister Shorten Question Time transcript Department of Social Services Ministers (dss.gov.au)
7 July 2023	Minister Shorten	On the 7 July 2023, The Hon Bill Shorten MP spoke at a press conference at Parliament House on Robodebt Royal Commission final report. Minister Shorten press conference at Parliament House, Canberra Department of Social Services Ministers (dss.gov.au)

Date	Minister	Details
7 July 2023	Minister Shorten	The Hon Bill Shorten MP spoke at Doorstop interview about the Robodebt Royal Commission final report. Minister Shorten Doorstop interview to discuss the Robodebt Royal Commission final report Department of Social Services Ministers (dss.gov.au)

Questions on Notice

Estimates QONs

Hearing	Date	Senator - Question #	Broad topic
21 November 2023	20 December 2023	Senator Janet Rice PQ23-000152	Royal Commission Recommendations Progress

	Name and Role	Group/Branch/Organisation	Phone (w)	Phone (mob)
Cleared By	Name: Rachael Clarke Role: A/g General Manager	Integrity Response Division	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Contact Officer	Name: Boramin Keo Role: A/g National Manager	Royal Commission Response Branch	s47F(1)	s47F(1)

Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

TOPIC: NATIONAL ANTI CORRUPTION COMMISSION

**WITNESS: Chris Birrer
Deputy CEO, Payments and Integrity**

Strategic Narrative

- Services Australia (the Agency) is strongly committed to working with the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) to prevent and address corrupt behaviours and promote trust in the public service.
- The Agency has fraud and corruption controls to detect, investigate, and respond to fraud, corruption and related crime.
- The Agency has an anti-fraud and corruption capability, with experience in dealing with criminal investigations and working closely with external law enforcement stakeholders to ensure matters of corruption, fraud, or information misuse are appropriately investigated and prosecuted.
- The Agency has implemented new processes and procedures to support referrals and responses from and to the NACC.

Talking Points

- In preparing for the establishment of the NACC, the Agency reviewed and enhanced its operating procedures and policies, to achieve the following priority outcomes:
 - to ensure the Agency is equipped to respond to requests from the NACC;
 - that officials comply with mandatory referral obligations; and
 - that appropriate delegations and processes are in place to refer matters to the NACC.

Potential questions

Has the Agency referred any matters to the NACC?

- The Agency has complied with its obligations pursuant to *National Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2022* (the Act). These obligations include

the mandatory reporting obligations relating to serious and/or systemic corruption, but also include the ability for the CEO to voluntarily refer matters to the Commission as well.

- It would not be appropriate for the Agency to provide any further information on these matters as it may compromise matters under consideration by the NACC.

Has the Agency responded to any directions or notices?

- Yes. The Agency has responded to directions, notices or requests received. It would not be appropriate for the Agency to provide any further information on these matters as it may compromise matters under consideration by the NACC.

Background

- The NACC is an independent Agency with powers to investigate allegations of serious or systemic corrupt conduct within the Commonwealth public sector under the Act.
- The NACC has the power to:
 - require agencies to investigate a matter, including under the oversight and direction of the NACC;
 - require the production of information, documents or things to the NACC,
 - enter premises to inspect, copy or seize documents or items without a warrant;
 - intercept telecommunications with a warrant; and
 - conduct private hearings (or public hearings in exceptional circumstances) and summon individuals to give evidence at a hearing.
- Agency heads, their delegates, and certain officials performing functions under the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013*, are required to refer to the NACC issues that concern the conduct of a current or former staff member that they suspect could involve serious or systemic corrupt conduct, once they become aware of the issue. Any person may make a voluntary referral to the NACC.
- Associated amendments are also foreshadowed to the Fraud Rule in the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014 to:
 - expand the Fraud Rule to include corruption, meaning agencies will be required to put in place appropriate measures for preventing, detecting, investigating, recording and reporting corruption;
 - require accountable authorities to define the roles of senior leaders in countering fraud and corruption; and

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- require Commonwealth entities to review the effectiveness of existing fraud and corruption controls.

	Name and Role	Group/Branch/Organisation	Phone (w)	Phone (mob)
Cleared By	Name: Luke Morrish Role: A/g General Manager	Fraud Control and Investigations Division		s47F(1)
Contact Officer	Name: Leo Lahey Role: National Manager	Fraud Investigation Branch		s47F(1)

Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

TOPIC: ENHANCED INCOME MANAGEMENT

WITNESS: Kirsty Faichney
Deputy CEO, Program Design

Strategic Narrative

- Services Australia (the Agency) has worked with the Department of Social Services (DSS) to successfully implement changes to support the *Social Security (Administration) Amendment (Income Management Reform) Act 2023*.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- As at 29 March 2024, a total of 11,957 customers are on **enhanced Income Management**. Of these, 470 are volunteers.
- As at 29 March 2024, a total of 18,426 customers are on **Income Management (IM)**. Of these, 2,123 are volunteers.

Talking Points

Enhanced IM

- Enhanced IM expanded from 4 September 2023 to include:
 - existing IM customers in all IM locations can now choose to move to enhanced IM and access an enhanced IM account and a SmartCard; and
 - new customers who volunteer or profile for welfare quarantining will commence on enhanced IM.
- The demand for customers choosing to move to enhanced IM has been consistent and higher than previous demand for the Cashless Debit Card. On average, the Agency has supported around 140 customers per week to move to enhanced IM since 4 September 2023.
- Anecdotal feedback has been that customers are choosing to move due to the greater options for shopping online and with more merchants, or because they have family or friends with a SmartCard.
- The Agency provides customer support for the SmartCard and enhanced IM accounts through the dedicated SmartCard enhanced IM hotline.

- For customers in the Northern Territory who choose to have their enhanced IM account and SmartCard managed by the Traditional Credit Union (TCU), the card and account support is provided by TCU.
- The Agency continues to work closely with DSS and the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) on the reform of Income Management through supporting consultation and engagement with communities.

Service Delivery approach for customers moving to enhanced IM

- Customers can choose to move to, or volunteer for, enhanced IM by calling the SmartCard enhanced IM hotline or visiting a Services Australia service centre and providing consent. Once this has occurred, an enhanced IM account will be established, and a SmartCard issued.
- The Agency holds individual comprehensive discussions with IM customers who are considering moving to enhanced IM to ensure they understand how the change will apply to their circumstances and explain:
 - the differences between IM and enhanced IM;
 - how the enhanced IM account and SmartCard operates; and
 - the transition process for people moving from IM to enhanced IM.
- Customers are also offered further tailored support from the Agency, where staff explain and assist with:
 - support to use self-service options and assistance to access SmartCard website online tutorials and FAQ pages;
 - information about available payment options including BPAY and direct debit;
 - existing deductions from their IM account or payments, including Centrepay, and Rent Deduction Scheme and how these will be paid when they move to enhanced IM;
 - support for vulnerable customers with low digital literacy skills who may be at increased risk of fraud;
 - if required, referrals to internal support services, such as Financial Information Service Officers, who can provide information tailored to the customer's circumstances and assist the customer to make informed decisions about financial issues; and
 - information about, and if required referrals to, external support services including financial counselling services who can offer financial literacy, counselling, and budgeting advice.
- This support is also available to customers who are newly eligible for enhanced IM and ongoing.

- Information about the availability of enhanced IM has been disseminated in a tailored and culturally appropriate communication strategy, which utilised telephone, face to face and community engagement channels.

Timeline of recent or significant events

Date	Action
4 September 2023	Social Security (Administration) Amendment (Income Management Reform) Act 2023 changes came into effect.
3 July 2023	Social Security (Administration) Amendment (Income Management Reform) Bill 2023 received Royal Assent.
28 March 2023	Social Security (Administration) Amendment (Income Management Reform) Bill 2023 passed in the House of Representatives
6 March 2023	Enhanced Income Management commenced, and all participants were removed from the Cashless Debit Card by this date.

Background

- IM program rules apply under the enhanced IM program. This means:
 - The quarantine rate is between 50 per cent and 90 per cent of a customer's eligible payments, and 100 per cent of lump sum payments. The quarantine rate is determined by the enhanced IM measure a customer is on.
 - Restrictions apply to:
 - the purchase of tobacco and tobacco products;
 - the purchase of pornography;
 - the purchase of alcohol or home brew kits;
 - gambling or accessing gambling services;
 - the purchase of some gift cards and cash-like products; and
 - withdrawing cash.
- The same referring authorities are responsible for referring customers to enhanced IM as those that previously referred for the IM or Cashless Debit Card programs:
 - Family Responsibilities Commission (FRC) in Cape York and Doomadgee;
 - the Banned Drinkers Register in the Northern Territory Department of Health; and
 - the State or Territory Child Protection authorities.
- The Agency engages with merchants to support them with Product Level Blocking (PLB) and other options to prevent the sale of restricted items.

- PLB is a function on the point of sale (POS) system to ensure restricted items cannot be purchased with a SmartCard.

Comparison between the Cashless Debit Card (CDC), Income Management with a BasicsCard and Enhanced Income Management with a SmartCard

- The BasicsCard is ageing technology, with many large corporate merchants indicating it will become obsolete and not supported in coming years.
- Enhanced IM customers receive a SmartCard which provides contemporary technological functionality that many customers are familiar with through the use of their personal bank product, with access to internet banking via an online account. This allows for customers to manage their own payments.
- The SmartCard can be used at around 1 million terminals that accept EFTPOS and VISA around Australia, allows customers to shop online and outside Australia, and provides contemporary technology including contactless payments.
- Additional technology the SmartCard provides includes:
 - for customers to control contactless payments (tap and go chip enablement) this is now an opt in feature which adds additional protection for customers, previously auto enabled on the CDC; and
 - the ability to select between EFTPOS and VISA in the digital wallet (EFTPOS has lower surcharge than VISA transactions).

Media coverage

Date	Source	Item
21 August 2023	<i>Triple M Broome 102.9</i>	New figures have revealed the abolishment of the CDC has had little effect on crime rates in the Goldfields and East Kimberley.
	<i>ABC Kimberley</i>	The end of the CDC scheme has had little effects on crime statistics in Western Australia.
21 August 2023	<i>ABC Esperance</i>	City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder's Mayor John Bowler says, whilst crime has reduced after the removal of the Cashless Debit Card scheme, antisocial behaviour has not.
8 August 2023	<i>Radio 97 Tweed Heads</i>	The abolishment of the CDC has seen an increase in crime, alcohol abuse and violence in communities where the cards were withdrawn according to No campaigner Warren Mundine.
30 June 2023	<i>Sydney Criminal Lawyers</i>	The Albanese Government promised to abolish cashless welfare, but is now in the midst of setting up the stages of a rebranded scheme that does the same.

Date	Source	Item
1 June 2023	<i>The Courier Mail</i>	New card not so smart. Opposition slams 'change of name' for only 22 takers.
5 March 2023	<i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i>	'Switch to new cashless welfare card poses IT risks, minister warned' . Article reports on allegations from public service sources that Services Australia has advised the Minister for Social Services to delay the wider rollout of enhanced IM to avoid serious ICT risks.

Relevant Ministerial Comments

Date	Minister	Details
30 March 2023	The Hon Amanda Rishworth MP	Media release by the Hon Amanda Rishworth MP – Action plans and extra support for former Cashless Debit Card communities.
10 February 2023	Joint media release	Joint Media Release by the Hon Amanda Rishworth MP and the Hon Bill Shorten MP – enhanced IM to provide financial choice.
24 November 2022	The Hon Amanda Rishworth MP	Media release by the Hon Amanda Rishworth MP – Supporting former Cashless Debit Card communities with pathways to employment and infrastructure.
28 September 2022	Joint statement from multiple ministers	Joint media release announcing the Cashless Debit Card program to end following passage of legislation. Joint statement from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Hon Amanda Rishworth MP • The Hon Linda Burney MP • The Hon Bill Shorten MP • The Hon Justine Elliot MP
24 September 2022	Joint statement from multiple ministers	Joint media release 'Empowering communities with the abolition of the cashless debit card program'. Joint statement from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Hon Amanda Rishworth MP • The Hon Linda Burney MP • The Hon Bill Shorten MP • The Hon Justine Elliot MP

Questions on Notice Estimates QONs

Hearing	Date	Senator - Question #	Broad topic
Supplementary Budget Estimates	25 October 2023	Senator Maria Kovacic SQ23-000794	People using a Cashless Debit Card on 6 March 2023.
Supplementary Budget Estimates	25 October 2023	Senator Maria Kovacic SQ23-000795	CDC Participants who elected not to continue. Number of contacts by channel for IM, enhanced IM and CDC.
Supplementary Budget Estimates	25 October 2023	Senator Janet Rice SQ23-000801	Enhanced IM 'Exit' Process.

	Name and Role	Group/Branch/Organisation	Phone (w)	Phone (mob)
Cleared By	Name: Cathy Toze Role: General Manager	Program Design/Working Age and Pension Programs Division	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Contact Officer	Name: Ben Gallie Role: A/g National Manager	Program Design/Working Age and Pension Programs Division/Customer Financial Capability Branch	s47F(1)	s47F(1)

Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

TOPIC: CENTREPAY

WITNESS: Kirsty Faichney
Deputy CEO, Program Design

Strategic Narrative

- Centrepay is an important financial management tool used by more than 600,000 people every month.
- Services Australia (the Agency) is committed to improving and reforming the Centrepay program to ensure it continues to support and protect customers.
- As part of the Agency's reform of the Centrepay Program, extensive community engagement and consultation is underway to ensure that the Centrepay service meets the ongoing needs and expectations of the customers and the broader community.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

In the 2023–24 financial year to date (FYTD), up until 31 March 2024:

- An average of 603,123 customers per month used the Centrepay service.
- There was a total of 17.6 million Centrepay deductions worth \$2.1 billion.
- 80 per cent of the monies disbursed through Centrepay were for accommodation and utilities.
- As at 31 March 2024, there were 15,029 approved Centrepay businesses.
- The Agency conducted 309 reviews of Centrepay businesses, resulting in 9 businesses being removed from Centrepay.

Talking Points

Centrepay Overview

- Centrepay is a free and voluntary deduction service provided by the Agency to help customers manage their finances.
- The service supports access to a range of goods and services and is mostly used by customers to pay for rent, utilities and essential household items.
- Centrepay is a valuable budgeting tool for income support recipients as demonstrated by the total value of transactions. It helps reduce vulnerability by ensuring payments occur on time, protects against late fees and provides customers with access to goods and services that may not have been available to them without the guarantee of payment via the Centrepay service.
- Businesses cannot force customers to use Centrepay and must offer alternative payment options.
- In addition to Centrepay Policy and Terms, Centrepay businesses need to comply with all applicable Australian laws, including consumer protection laws, industry regulations and licensing or accreditation requirements.
- The Agency is committed to keeping customers protected and addresses potential exploitation of vulnerable customers.

Centrepay Reform Activities

- The Agency accepts there are improvements needed to Centrepay to ensure it meets the needs of customers. This is why the Agency has commenced priority work and consultation to reform Centrepay.
- The Agency has begun to make improvements to Centrepay to provide greater protection for customers including:
 - Developed a Discussion Paper on Centrepay Reform that has been released for public consultation.
 - Written to all Centrepay businesses reminding them of their obligations when using Centrepay, informing them of the intention to reform Centrepay.
 - Applied mandatory limits to target amounts and ongoing deductions for Basic Household Items and written to businesses to advise of this change.
 - Commenced work on a range of improvements across processes and procedures for overpayments.
 - Commenced withdrawing inactive businesses. To date, more than 600 businesses have been removed. This work will continue over coming months.

- Committed to reforming the program and has recently stood up a dedicated team, led by an experienced SES officer, to prioritise this important work.
- The Agency has been working with advocacy groups and external agencies, including the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC), to look at areas for reform, improvement and enhanced consumer protections within Centrepay.
- Consideration includes how Centrepay reform fits within broader financial capability reform agendas. The Agency is working with the Department of Social Services (DSS) to identify opportunities to provide customers with financial capability support and services.
- On 30 January 2024, a Design Workshop for Centrepay Reform was held, with advocates present from a range of areas representing financial counselling, First Nations peoples, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse and People with a Disability. Advocates provided honest insights into their views of the Centrepay service.
- This process was a key input into the Centrepay Reform Discussion Paper and was used to identify key priorities for Centrepay reform. The workshop looked at four main themes:
 - policy actions;
 - compliance actions;
 - customer experience; and
 - communication and education.
- Centrepay reform will continue to be informed by collaborative design in partnership with customers, advocacy groups, Agency staff and businesses to redesign policy, operations and compliance, and protect people from exploitation through use of the Centrepay service.

Centrepay Reform Consultation and Engagement

- To support the Agency's reform work, a dedicated Centrepay Reform Peak Advisory Reference Group (the reference group) has been established.
- The reference group is comprised of members representing peak community advocacy groups across the country, and meets regularly to provide advice and feedback on how the Centrepay program can be further refined and enhanced to better support and protect customers.
- As part of the Agency's wider public consultation approach, a Centrepay Reform Discussion Paper has been developed, inviting public submissions from key stakeholders and the community to support (and inform) the Agency's reform work.

- Additionally, the Agency has commenced preparation to undertake direct community engagement activities, including in-person Town Hall sessions in remote communities where Centrepay usage is high.
- As the reform work progresses, the Agency will convene a Centrepay Reform Peak Industry Group, which will focus on securing feedback and insights from key business representatives that will further support a fulsome reform of the Centrepay program.

Centrepay Compliance

- The Agency recognises that there are improvements needed to strengthen Centrepay compliance. Strengthening compliance is a key focus of Centrepay reform.
- In taking action against a business, the Agency is required to act consistently with the Centrepay Policy and Terms, and with administrative law principles, including procedural fairness.
- Enforcement action can only be taken by the Agency where there is clear and probative evidence of a breach of the Centrepay Policy and Terms by a business.
- Enforcement decisions by the Agency are subject to judicial review and other legal remedies. Aggrieved businesses may seek compensation for losses arising from Agency decisions.
- The Agency works closely with regulators including ASIC, Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) and the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) to refer businesses for potential regulatory action.
- Due to legislative restrictions the agency cannot discuss any specific details about individual businesses.

Centrepay Complaints

- The Agency investigates complaints, tip offs and feedback received from customers, business, advocates, and third-party organisations.
- Investigations of complaints that identify non-compliant behaviour by a Centrepay Business will be referred for a compliance review.
- Complainants are advised of the progress of the complaint where possible, taking into account privacy or legal limitations.

Overpayments and Recoveries

- The Agency is working with 4 businesses to return overpayments to customers.
- These potential overpayments are at various stages of the process - recovery and returning of funds to customers.
- The Agency's process for managing overpayments is currently under review. A range of customer and process improvements have been identified, focused on preventing overpayments and better supporting customers where overpayments have been identified. This includes:
 - developing a new overpayments policy and updated procedural information to identify overpayments as early as possible, and to ensure there is adequate support for customers; and
 - additional obligations on business where overpayments are identified (mandatory reporting obligations), and where ongoing or systemic issues resulting in overpayments are identified.

Consumer Leases and Centrepay

- On 12 June 2023, the Agency welcomed the *Financial Sector Reform Act 2022* (the Act) that came into effect.
- The Act imposes several obligations on consumer leasing providers including those on Centrepay. These include:
 - a cap on the total cost of a consumer lease; and
 - a protected earnings amount where a customer cannot spend more than 10 per cent of their income on consumer leases – not just for those using Centrepay.
- Consumer leases make up four per cent of the value of Centrepay deductions in the 2023–24 FYTD. This reflects the ongoing decline of the use of Consumer leases by Centrepay from 5.5 per cent in 2022–23, 6.6 per cent in 2021–22, 9.5 per cent in 2018–19 and 12.9 per cent in 2014–15.
- The Agency works closely with other government agencies, such as ASIC and the ACCC that regulate consumer lease businesses and enforce consumer protections.
- To assist ASIC in monitoring the consumer leasing industry's adherence to the *Financial Sector Reform Act 2022*, the Agency shares data with ASIC including values and percentage spent on consumer leases via Centrepay.

Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC)

- The Agency works closely with regulators, including ASIC to ensure the protection of Centrepay customers.
- The Agency provides regular data to ASIC on Centrepay businesses to support their regulatory functions and continues to work with ASIC where they have identified high risk businesses.
- We cannot discuss the specific details of these interactions as information is not public and disclosure may interfere with these engagements.
- In previous Estimates hearings, it was noted several consumer lease businesses had negative determinations made against them by ASIC and were still listed as active businesses on the Centrepay Business register.
 - Of the businesses noted, those still registered for Centrepay have continued to retain the necessary regulatory licencing or accreditation to provide the services relevant to their Centrepay approval.
- Where a regulator has commenced a formal investigation into a Centrepay approved business, the Agency considers whether enforcement action under the Centrepay Policy and Terms should be taken. However, enforcement action can only be taken by the Agency where there is clear and probative evidence of a breach of the Centrepay Policy and Terms by a business. All businesses must be afforded reasonable procedural fairness in these circumstances.
- If the Agency becomes aware of a possible regulatory breach, it is referred to the appropriate regulator, which may include ASIC.

Coral Coast Distributors (Cairns) Pty Ltd (CCDC) trading as Urban Rampage

- The Agency is committed to keeping customers protected and is addressing any potential exploitation of vulnerable customers who participate in the Centrepay program.
- On 28 February 2024, ASIC issued an interim stop order against CCDC, a registered Centrepay Business, this prevented CCDC from establishing any new agreements to pay for goods on credit through Centrepay deductions.
- The stop order was issued following initial findings by ASIC that CCDC had not met their obligations under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth) in relation to target market determinations.
- On 15 March 2024, ASIC made a further Interim Stop Order which remained in place whilst the delegate considered the case.
- On 24 April 2024, ASIC ordered that CCDC can no longer sign-up customers into Centrepay credit arrangements in its Urban Rampage stores.

- The Agency is considering the impact of the latest ASIC decision on existing Centrepay customers and to support them with next steps.
- It is important to note that the business cannot enter into any new arrangements and cannot increase existing arrangements. The Agency's focus is on ensuring existing customers are not subject to further financial risk.

Australian Energy Regulator (AER) court proceedings against AGL

- An AER media release of 16 December 2022 noted AER had instituted proceedings in the Federal Court against AGL Retail Energy Limited (AGL).
- AER alleges that AGL did not have appropriate arrangements in place to identify instances where customers have accrued significant excess Centrepay credits on their energy accounts and to refund overcharges.
- The Agency has previously provided information requested by AER about Centrepay terms and processes, and continues to be responsive to information requests from the AER.
- The Agency will not make further comment as the matter will be considered by the courts in June 2024.

Youpla, formerly the Aboriginal Community Benefit Fund (ACBF)

- The Agency recognises the deep cultural significance of Sorry Business to First Nations people.
- The Agency acknowledges the impacts that Youpla, formally known as the Aboriginal Community Benefit Fund (ACBF) has had on their customers since entering liquidation.
- In 2015, the Government announced that indefinite consumer leases and funeral insurance products would be removed from the Centrepay program.
 - This included ACBF, which was, at the time, registered for Centrepay as a funeral insurance provider.
 - ACBF operated as a registered Centrepay business from 2001 until February 2017, following a decision by the Full Court of the Federal Court of Australia.
 - No deductions via Centrepay have been made for indefinite consumer leases and funeral insurance products since its removal in 2017.
- Questions regarding the Government's Youpla Support Program should be directed to the National Indigenous Australians Agency.

Relevant media coverage

Date	Source	Item
19 April 2024	<i>The Guardian – Online</i>	Landlords charging Centrepay transaction fees to vulnerable tenants against scheme policy Centrepay The Guardian
12 April 2024	<i>NT News / Gold Coast Bulletin – Online</i>	‘We serve different needs’: Urban Rampage defends itself against unflattering Kmart price comparison
11 April 2024	<i>The Guardian – Online podcast</i>	How Centrepay plunged vulnerable Australians into debt - podcast Australia news The Guardian
4 April 2024	<i>The National Tribune – Online + Syndicated to Mirage News</i>	ASIC’s Discriminatory Centrepay Ban & Delay Tactics Against First Nations Shoppers Set for AAT Legal Challenge
3 April 2024	<i>The Guardian – Online item</i>	AGL was warned it was wrongly taking welfare payments from former customers but failed to act, court hears Centrepay The Guardian
1 April 2024	<i>The Guardian – Online item</i>	Second energy firm wrongly received money from welfare payments under Centrepay scheme Centrepay The Guardian
30 March 2024	<i>The Guardian – Online item</i>	‘I just kept paying’: Indigenous people are being exploited by businesses using Centrepay debit scheme Centrepay The Guardian

Date	Source	Item
28 March 2024	<i>The Guardian – Online item</i>	‘I had no access’: ex-residents of controversial rehab centre say welfare payments were taken against their wishes Centrepay The Guardian
23 March 2024	<i>NT News – Online item +Syndicated</i>	Urban Rampage: Financial advocates say no guardrails on transactions up to \$1000
21 March 2024	<i>NT News – Online item +Syndicated</i>	Urban Rampage rails against ASIC’s Centrepay ruling The Mercury
21 March 2024	<i>Sydney Morning Herald – Online item</i>	Indigenous affairs: ASIC hits back at claims Urban Rampage retail ban having a disastrous impact on First Nation communities (smh.com.au)
19 March 2024	<i>The National Tribune – Online item</i>	‘Click and pay for whites only, no credit for black fellas’: First Nations shoppers slam ASIC decision to cut off Centrepay The National Tribune
19 March 2024	<i>Mirage News – Online item</i>	ASIC Decision Slammed for Cutting Centrepay to First Nations Mirage News
17 March 2024	<i>The West Australian – Online item</i>	Urban Rampage controversy: Inside life of retail entrepreneur and founder Naomi Cuizon Hughes Morris The West Australian
14 March 2024	<i>Kimberley Echo – Online item</i>	Streetwear chain cops ban from Centrepay
14 March 2024	<i>Broome Advertiser</i>	Centrepay ban sparks anger
7 March 2024	<i>Kimberley Echo – Online item</i>	Urban Rampage defends business practices in remote communities amid regulatory scrutiny The West Australian

SERVICES AUSTRALIA

SB24-000113

Date	Source	Item
5 March 2024	<i>The West Australian – Online item</i>	Services Australia urged to restrict businesses using Centrelink credit after ASIC stop order on Urban Rampage The West Australian
1 March 2024	<i>ABC News – Online item</i>	ASIC issues retailer Urban Rampage interim stop order over use of Centrepay - ABC News
29 February 2024	<i>The National Tribune – Online item</i>	ASIC issues Urban Rampage with interim stop order over concerns of financial harm to First Nations consumers The National Tribune
29 February 2024	<i>BNN Breaking – Online news</i>	ASIC Cracks Down on Urban Rampage's Centrelink Deductions, Shieldi... (bnnbreaking.com)
22 February 2024	<i>The Western Herald Bourke – Print item</i>	Government unveils lifeline for Youpla victims
16 November 2023	<i>News.com.au – Online item</i>	'Unconscionable': Centrepay used to 'exploit vulnerable Aussies
16 November 2023	<i>ABC News – Online Item</i>	Appliance rental store charges disability pensioner \$6,670 for phone
13 September 2023	<i>Choice Media – Online item</i>	Disgraced business grew rich on Centrelink payments
31 August 2023	<i>ABC News – Online item</i>	ASIC launches civil action against former directors of funeral insurer ACBF over money sent to Vanuatu - ABC News
16 May 2023	<i>Insurance News – Online item</i>	Indigenous funerals at stake as ACBF Youpla scheme nears expiration Insurance Business Australia (insurancebusinessmag.com)

Date	Source	Item
24 April 2023	<i>Media organisation/ paper name (italics)</i>	Dodgy funeral company banked on Centrepay for payments Note: this article was syndicated across several publications
22 April 2023	<i>The Guardian – Online item</i>	Youpla profits surged after it was approved for federal government’s automatic payments system
28 March 2023	<i>The Guardian – Online item</i>	Youpla victims asking ‘when they should die’ to be eligible for funeral relief, advocates say
13 March 2023	<i>The Guardian – Online item</i>	‘A kick in the guts’: ACBF-Youpla victims still waiting for millions in compensation
8 February 2023	<i>ABC News – Online item</i>	Aboriginal elder who lost money to Youpla funeral insurance urges more protection for victims

Media enquiries

Enquiry date	Source	Response provided
17 April 2024	<i>The Guardian</i>	18 March 2024
11 April 2024	<i>The Guardian</i>	12 April 2024
1 April 2024	<i>The Guardian</i>	2 April 2024
22 March 2024	<i>abc.net.au</i>	25 March 2024
3 March 2024	<i>The West Australian</i>	4 March 2024

Relevant Ministerial Comments

N/A

Questions on Notice

Estimates QONs

Hearing	Date	Senator - Question #	Broad topic
Additional Estimates 2023–24	14 February 2024	Senator Lidia Thorpe SQ24-000006	Centrepay Compliance Review
Additional Estimates 2023–24	14 February 2024	Senator Lidia Thorpe SQ24-000007	Centrepay Compliance Issues
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2023–24	25 October 2023	Senator Louise Pratt SQ23-000809	Centrepay - Investigations
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2023–24	25 October 2023	Senator Louise Pratt SQ23-000785	Centrepay - ASIC Investigation
Budget Estimates 2022–23	31 May 2023	Senator Louise Pratt SQ23-000418	Centrepay – Esther House
Budget Estimates 2022–23	31 May 2023	Senator Louise Pratt SQ23-000419	Centrepay - Registration Process
Budget Estimates 2022–23	31 May 2023	Senator Louise Pratt SQ23-000420	Centrepay - Notification to customers of rights
Budget Estimates 2022–23	31 May 2023	Senator Louise Pratt SQ23-000421	Centrepay – Esther House accreditation
Budget Estimates 2022–23	31 May 2023	Senator Louise Pratt SQ23-000422	Centrepay - Organisation categories
Budget Estimates 2022–23	31 May 2023	Senator Louise Pratt SQ23-000483	Centrepay Arrangement with Esther House
Budget Estimates 2022–23	31 May 2023	Senator Louise Pratt SQ23-000485	Centrepay – Esther House known by another name
Budget Estimates 2022–23	31 May 2023	Senator Louise Pratt SQ23-000488	Centrepay - Eligibility and Nominee
Budget Estimates 2022–23	31 May 2023	Senator Louise Pratt SQ23-000492	Centrepay – Esther House accreditation

Hearing	Date	Senator - Question #	Broad topic
Budget Estimates 2022–23	31 May 2023	Senator Louise Pratt SQ23-000495	Centrepay - Accommodation
Budget Estimates 2022–23	31 May 2023	Senator Louise Pratt SQ23-000497	Centrepay - Eligibility
Budget Estimates 2022–23	31 May 2023	Senator Louise Pratt SQ23-000498	Centrepay – Esther House Arrangement and Nominee Numbers

Other QONs

Committee Inquiry	Senator/MP - Question #	Broad topic
Senate Question 5 April 2024	Senator Penny Allman-Payne PQ24-000026	Centrepay- Organisations Receiving Overpayments

Freedom of Information (FOI)

Request Date	Who	Relating to	Documents released
10 April 2024	s47F(1) for the NT News	LEX79055 Centrepay Compliance and Coral Coast	Requestor was asked to rescope his request as it was deemed too voluminous.
5 April 2024	s47F(1) for The Guardian	LEX78877 Centrepay Compliance in relation to AGL and Ergon Energy	No documents met the scope of the request
08 March 2024	s47F(1) for CHOICE	LEX78645 Listing of Centrepay businesses excl. accom and utilities	Full listing of businesses excluding accommodation and utilities
21 February 2024	s47F(1)	LEX78419 Business application forms and assessment documents for J Kaushik Pty Ltd and PM Trading Pty Ltd	Centrepay Business Applications for both businesses
11 July 2023	s47F(1)	LEX74606 Operational Blueprint in 2001 regarding conditions businesses needed to meet	No documents met the scope of the request
13 July 2023	s47F(1)	LEX4605 ACBF Centrepay application form, correspondence around application and agency notes around application	Agreement between Centrelink and ACBF and Centrepay approval letter

Attachments

Attachment A - Centrepay Programme Information Sheet May 2024.

	Name and Role	Group/Branch/Organisation	Phone (w)	Phone (mob)
Cleared By	Name: Cathy Toze Role: General Manager	Program Design / Working Age and Pension Programs Division / Services Australia	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Contact Officer	Name: Juleigh Cook Role: National Manager	Program Design / Working Age and Pension Programs Division / Services Australia	s47F(1)	s47F(1)

Program description

Centrepay is a free and voluntary bill paying service offered to Centrelink customers to pay regular expenses. Deductions are made before the balance of the customer's payment is deposited into their bank account. Centrepay first commenced in 1998. Customers can use Centrepay to pay for goods and services such as rent, utilities, and other regular expenses.

Eligibility

Customers

Customers in receipt of most regular Centrelink payments can use Centrepay. Customers cannot set up Centrepay deductions from irregular payments such as advances, arrears, supplements and one-off payments.

Businesses

A business must apply and be approved by Services Australia (the Agency) to offer Centrepay as a payment option to customers.

Approved Centrepay businesses enter into an agreement with the Agency that governs their ongoing obligations within the program.

Customer channels/access

Customers can start, stop or change a Centrepay deduction:

- through myGov via their Centrelink online account;
- through the Express Plus and myGov app;
- staff-assisted over the phone or face to face; or
- through the approved Centrepay business.

An approved business can use the Centrelink Business Online Service (CBOS) portal to establish or amend a deduction on a customer's behalf. A business must obtain and retain a copy of the customer's consent when establishing deductions on the customer's behalf.

Policy and Legislation

The Agency is the policy owner of Centrepay. It is not a legislated program. The *Social Security (Administration) Act 1999* (Cth) s61A and *A New Tax System (Family Assistance) (Administration) Act 1999* (Cth) s228A empowers the agency to make deductions from a person's payments (at their request).

Recent service improvements

A range of customer and process improvements are being implemented, focused on preventing overpayments and better supporting customers where overpayments have been identified.

In March 2024, we wrote to all Centrepay businesses reminding them of their obligations when using Centrepay, informing them of the intention to reform Centrepay.

Recent policy measures/changes

On 1 May 2024, the Agency applied conditions to mandate target amounts on deductions for Basic Household Items, these conditions will also cap the amount of this target amount. The Agency will assess requests to alter these conditions on a case by case basis.

Program specific information

Centrepay fees & revenue structure

- Centrepay generates s74 revenue by charging Centrepay businesses a transaction fee to use the service.
- Most businesses are charged a transaction fee (\$0.99 including GST) which cannot be passed on to customers.
 - A small number of active businesses (approx. 227) operate on a reduced fee, or fee free arrangement.

Table 1: Centrepay revenue & expense data

Financial year	Revenue	Expenses*	Profit/loss
2019-20	\$17,157,588	\$14,886,065	\$2,271,523
2020-21	\$17,045,574	\$14,692,798	\$2,353,777
2021-22	\$17,409,466	\$8,099,706	\$9,309,760
2022-23	\$15,721,339	\$8,513,292	\$7,208,047

*Centrepay costings have not been revised in a number of years and may not reflect the current expense profile for the agency. Some parameter corrections in 2021-22 resulted in lower operating expenses.

Program hot issues

To support the Agency's reform work, a dedicated Centrepay Reform Peak Advisory Reference Group, comprising of members representing peak community advocacy groups across the country has been established. This group meets regularly to provide advice and feedback on how the Centrepay program can be further refined and enhanced to better support and protect customers.

The Agency's process for managing overpayments is currently under review, including the development of a new overpayments policy and updated procedural information to ensure there is adequate support for customers and additional obligations on business where there are ongoing or systemic issues resulting in overpayments. The Agency is working with four businesses to return overpayments to customers and these are at various stages of the recovery and returning of funds process.

On 24 April 2024, ASIC placed a permanent stop order on all Urban Rampage businesses. The order permanently restricts Urban Rampage from entering customers into new Centrepay arrangements. It is expected that the business will launch a legal challenge against the decision. The Agency is currently considering the impacts of the latest ASIC decision. Our primary concern is to minimise the impact for customers with existing arrangements, noting the business would likely seek to recoup monies owed by these customers by other means, putting customers at potential financial risk.

Key data overview 2023-24 FYTD (as at 31 March 2024)

Table 2: Centrepay financial year data

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Average number of Centrepay customers per month	627,300	605,371	603,123
Total number of deductions	24.6 million	23.7 million	17.6 million
Average deductions per month	2 million	2 million	2 million
Total dollar value of all deductions	\$2.7 billion	\$2.7 billion	\$2.1 billion
Number of approved businesses	14,533	14,990	15,029
Number of active* businesses	10,512	10,205	9,973

*An active business received a successful deduction in the last month of the quarter or financial year. All figures are rounded

Table 3: Customer utilisation of Centrepay 2023-24 FYTD

Centrepay services (Top 4 uses)	Number of unique customers	% of total Centrepay customers	Total deduction value	% of total value of all deductions	Average fortnightly deduction
Accommodation	194,151	26%	\$1.37b	63.9%	\$440.41
Utilities	261,958	35%	\$346m	16.1%	\$56.99
*Court fines & Infringements	319,273	42.7%	\$162m	7.5%	\$38.39
^Consumer leases	59,799	8%	\$87m	4.1%	\$83.03

*Court fines and infringements are a sub-set of the Service Category – Legal & Professional Services
^Consumer leases are a sub-set of the Service Category – Household

Program audits, reviews and inquiries

Reviews and inquiries

A discussion paper on Centrepay Reform will be released for public consultation in May 2024. The paper is seeking advice on key policy changes to ensure the program meets the needs and expectations of the community.

Audit recommendations

The Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) had proposed a potential audit of the "Management of Centrepay" in their 2023-24 Draft Annual Audit Work Program. This audit has been withheld from the 2023-24 work program and is now likely to occur in the 2024-25 year.

Centrepay Compliance

How does the Agency manage Centrepay business compliance?

- The Agency targets potential non-compliance using a risk based, data informed approach. In addition, the Agency responds to customer complaints, tips-offs and information from regulatory agencies.
- A review can be undertaken when these sources indicate a business may be non-compliant. Random reviews are also undertaken to supplement the targeted reviews.
- As at 31 March 2024, 308 Centrepay compliance reviews have been conducted in the 2023-24 financial year. The Agency removed nine businesses from Centrepay as a result of these reviews.
- A business may remain on Centrepay if they demonstrate they have taken steps to resolve their non-compliance.
- Examples of potential non-compliance which may prompt further investigation include fee-passing, lack of consent from the customer to vary or restart a payment, a business providing a service that is not consistent with their approval and business administrative processes are not correctly followed (such as storing customer consent).

Other methods to strengthen compliance:

There are several actions the agency can undertake with or against a business to ensure ongoing compliance.

- Education, support and training – ad-hoc education may be conducted with businesses who are at risk of non-compliance. In addition, where a review is conducted on a business and they are found to be non-compliant, depending on the severity of the non-compliance, the Agency will work with that business to ensure they understand and adhere to the Centrepay Policy and Terms into the future.
- Additional conditions may be imposed on the business, these can range but are most commonly in relation to capped deduction or target amounts or imposing additional reporting requirements.
- Where required further compliance reviews may be undertaken 6 or 12 months after a compliance review has been finalised to ensure the business has remained compliant against the policy and terms.

Table 4: Centrepay compliance review activity

Financial Year	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 FYTD*
Total compliance reviews undertaken	205	331 random^ 55 targeted	54 random^ 254 targeted
Business contracts ended due to non-compliance	7	12	9

* 2023-24 figures include all compliance reviews undertaken between the 1 July and 31 March 2024.

^ Random reviews are selected from a stratified data set based on customer numbers. Targeted reviews are completed in response to complaints, tip-offs, media attention and/or data triggers. The Random reviews undertaken in the 23-24 FY were to complete the sample left over from the 22-23 FY.

Non-compliant reasons:

The top breach reasons for Centrepay, in order of most prevalent for all reviews completed FYTD:

- Business did not gain consent to start, restart or increase a deduction.
- Deduction Authority does not meet the minimum requirements.
- Business allowed access to Centrelink Business Online Services to unauthorised person/s.

Centrepay Data Specifics

Table 5: Centrepay Consumer lease figures

Approved Consumer Lease businesses			Total customers		Total deductions		Value of deductions	
Financial year		% of all Centrepay	Unique Count*	% of all Centrepay	Count*	% of all Centrepay	Count*	% of all Centrepay
2018-19	187	1.3%	129,000	20.0%	3 m	11.6%	\$246.7 m	9.5%
2019-20	179	1.3%	122,000	18.9%	3 m	11.4%	\$238.1 m	8.6%
2020-21	163	1.1%	111,079	13.1%	2.7 m	10.6%	\$219.3 m	7.9%
2021-22	152	1%	96,467	11.8%	2.3 m	9.3 %	\$179 m	6.6%
2022-23	143	1.2%	81,250	10.2%	1.9 m	8.1%	\$150.3 m	5.5%
2023-24 FYTD#	139	1%	59,799	8%	1.1m	6.6%	\$87 m	4.1%

#For 2023-24 FYTD, data is as at 31 March 2024. All figures rounded.

Key talking points to go with Table 5

- Consumer lease deduction values along with customer numbers have seen a steady decline over the reported periods. \$ value as a percentage of the total \$ value are, 9.5%, 8.6%, 7.9%, 6.6%, 5.5% and 4.1% respectively over the reported periods.

Table 6: Centrepay Service Category data for 2023-24 FYTD (as at 31 March 2024)

Service Categories	Total active businesses*	Total number of deductions	Total value of deductions	% of total value	Unique customers with a deduction	Average customer deduction (per fortnight)
Accommodation	5,884	3.3 million#	\$1.37 billion#	63.9%	194,151	\$440.41
Education & employment	2,650	620,812	\$42 million#	2%	45,332	\$67.34
Finance	163	878,976	\$42.4 million#	2%	61,592	\$48.80
Health	1,439	358,579	\$51.4 million#	2.4%	29,560	\$124.90
Household (inc. Consumer Leases)	630	1.6 million#	\$124.9 million#	5.8%	92,108	\$82.50
Legal & professional services (inc. court fines)	56	4.4 million#	\$162.8 million#	7.6 %	320,728	\$38.31
Social & recreational	28	5,874	\$326,271	0.0%	499	\$57.88
Travel & transport	66	100,609	\$7.5 million#	0.4%	15,164	\$74.36
Utilities	492	6.4million#	\$345.5 million#	16.1%	261,958	\$56.99

*An active business has received a Centrepay deduction in the last month of the quarter.

A business may appear in more than one Service Category where they are approved for several service reasons.

A customer may appear in more than one Service Category where they have multiple deductions.

All figures are rounded.

Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

TOPIC: PAID PARENTAL LEAVE

WITNESS: Kirsty Faichney
Deputy CEO, Program Design

Strategic Narrative

- From 1 July 2023, Parental Leave Pay (PLP) and Dad and Partner Pay (DAP) were combined into one payment and increased from 18 to 20 weeks.
- The total PLP available to families will increase by 2 weeks each July until 2026, when it reaches 26 weeks. From 1 July 2024, 22 weeks of payment will be available.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- Between 1 July 2023 and 31 March 2024, 159,906 claimants started receiving PLP.
- In the 2022-23 Financial Year, 171,282 claimants started receiving PLP.
- In the 2022-23 Financial Year, 88,643 claimants received DAP.
- A family income limit of \$350,000 adjusted taxable income (ATI) was also introduced in addition to the existing individual income limit of \$168,865 from 1 July 2023.
- A 10 day period is reserved for dads and partners, and up to 10 days can be taken concurrently by both parents.

Talking Points

March 2022–23 Budget measure

- The following changes to the Paid Parental Leave (PPL) scheme were announced in the 2022–23 March Budget, and commenced on 1 July 2023:
 - create a single 20-week payment under the PPL scheme by combining DAP with PLP;
 - introduce a family income limit of \$350,000 ATI in addition to the existing individual income limit (\$168,865 from 1 July 2023); and
 - increase the flexibility of PLP so that the entire entitlement will be able to be taken in blocks as small as one day at a time, with periods of work in between, within two years from birth or adoption

October 2022–23 Budget measure

- The Government introduced further changes in the October 2022 Budget that included:
 - increase the total PLP payable to families to 26 weeks by 1 July 2026;
 - introduce gender-neutral claiming so that either parent can claim PLP.
 - reserve a portion of PLP as a ‘use it or lose it’ entitlement for each parent;
 - allow parents to take PLP concurrently, and between periods of paid work, supporting parents to take leave at the same time; and
 - introduce the commencement date for the 2022–23 March Budget measure of 1 July 2023.
- Legislation for these changes received Royal Assent on 10 March 2023.

2023-24 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO)

- As part of the 2023-24 MYEFO, and following advice from the Women’s Economic Equality Taskforce (WEET), the Government provided additional funds to Services Australia to finalise the expansion of the PPL scheme to 26 weeks of payment by 2026.
 - The maximum amount of PLP available to a family will increase by 2 weeks each year from 1 July 2024 until 2026, when it reaches 26 weeks.
- Other changes will amend the policy that sets the number of days reserved on a ‘use it or lose it’ basis, as well as the total number of days parents can take PLP concurrently under the scheme.
 - From 1 July 2025, the number of days reserved for each parent will increase from 10 to 15 days, and increase again to 20 days from 1 July 2026.
 - The number of days that parents can take concurrently will increase from 10 to 20 days from 1 July 2025.
- Changes also include an amendment to the legislation that will introduce an exception to the PPL work test for fathers and partners of children born prematurely.
- Legislation for these changes received Royal Assent on 20 March 2024.

2024 Budget: Superannuation Payments on the Government-funded Parental Leave Pay Scheme

- The Government has announced that, subject to the passage of legislation, eligible parents will receive an additional 12 per cent of their Government-funded Paid Parental Leave as a contribution to their superannuation fund. The changes will apply to children born or adopted on or after 1 July 2025.

- Services Australia (the Agency) will work with the Department of Social Services (DSS) and the Australian Taxation Office to implement this measure.
- The Agency has been provided with \$14 million to implement this change.

2024 Budget: Improvements to employer administration support and customer communication products

- The Government is providing \$10 million to the Agency to improve the experience of employers, particularly small business, when administering Paid Parental Leave.
- In addition, the Agency has been provided with \$1.4 million to update communication products to make it easier for parents to understand how the Paid Parental Leave scheme is changing.
- ***If asked:*** The employer administration support package will be delivered over 2 years, and include the following activities:
 - Discovery and design sessions to explore and map pain points with small business employers to identify areas for improvement.
 - Communication product review.
 - Agency led quarterly information seminars for employers.
 - ICT system enhancements, informed by the discovery and design sessions, to improve the registration and online experience for employers required to administer PPL.
- ***If asked:*** The updates to communication products for parents include:
 - Customer insight research, including audience needs and preferences testing.
 - Updates to agency webpages and supporting communication products.
 - Amendments to the online claiming process and associated paper form.
 - The Agency is working with DSS and the Behavioural Economics Team of the Australian Government (BETA) in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet to develop these changes, which are expected to be released next financial year (2024-25).

Potential impacts of the Commonwealth Paid Parental Leave Scheme on small businesses and their employees

- On 30 March 2023, the Senate referred the potential impacts of the Commonwealth PPL Scheme on small businesses and their employees (to the Senate Education and Employment References Committee inquiry).

- The report, delivered on 31 August 2023, contained three recommendations that covered:
 1. the Agency pay PPL instalments directly to employees of small businesses with fewer than 20 employees except where the business opts in to pay directly to an employee;
 2. the Australian Government identify and fund improvements to the design and delivery of supports available to small businesses to help them meet their obligations under Commonwealth taxation and employment law; and the design and delivery of advice for small business should aim to minimise the administrative burden on small businesses by recognising and responding to the particular challenges they face, including time and capacity constraints; and
 3. the Australian Government task the Productivity Commission with conducting an inquiry into the impact of the Commonwealth Paid Parental Leave scheme on Australian businesses, including a particular focus on small business.
- A dissenting report was provided by Government and Greens Senators, which reinforced the Government's belief that employer engagement is essential for employee engagement and staff retention and is a key feature of the original policy design that does not require amendment.
- On 19 September 2023, the Agency and DSS co-hosted an engagement meeting with small business stakeholders to listen to their perspectives and gain some insight into the pain points experienced by small businesses who interact with the Agency to provide PLP to their employees.
- The meeting was attended by a range of small business and industry representatives, including the Council of Small Business Organisations Australia (COSBOA), the Australian Pharmacy Guild, the Australian Hairdressers Association, the Australian Retailers Association, and others.
- The Agency gained some valuable insight from the session as well as some useful ideas to consider in relation to communicating with and supporting small business. These ideas included updates and improvements to communications products, potential improvements to PRODA and Business Hub and changes to letters and will be incorporated where possible into future product updates.

Paid Parental Leave Processing Timeframes

- In late 2023, there were a number of media articles relating to parents waiting significant periods of time to receive their PLP from the Agency.
- The Agency recognises that some families have experienced delays in receiving their payments and encourages anyone in hardship to get in contact with the Agency so we can assist.

- The Agency encourages families to take advantage of early claiming for PPL and advise families they are able to lodge claims up to three months before their child is due to arrive.

Additional leave for parents of premature babies – Miracle Babies Foundation

- In late 2023, a series of media articles were ran calling on the Government to consider additional PLP for parents of children who are born prematurely.
- These changes are being advocated by an organisation called The Miracle Babies Foundation, whose purpose is to support premature and sick newborns, their families, and hospitals that care for them.
- Any changes to the existing policy for PLP are a matter for the government and are better referred to the Department of Social Services.

Background

Current PPL scheme arrangements

- The PPL scheme provides financial support that helps parents to stay at home with a new baby, or a child that has recently come into their care as part of an adoption process. It complements parents' existing birth or adoption entitlements to be paid and unpaid leave from their employers.
- The scheme aims to:
 - facilitate workforce participation;
 - improve the balance of family and work life in Australian families; and
 - assist in the promotion of gender equity.
- The Agency is responsible for administering payments under the scheme on behalf of DSS.
- PLP is a payment of up to 20 weeks, which helps eligible working parents who have care of a newborn or adopted child.
- PLP can be taken in blocks as small as a day at a time, with periods of work in between, so parents can use their weeks in a way that works best for them.
- PLP can be shared between claimants, with a reserved period of 10 days for dads and partners. Ten days can be taken concurrently.
- Employers must provide PLP for an eligible employee who:
 - has a newborn or recently adopted child;
 - has worked for the employer for at least 12 months before the expected date of birth or adoption;
 - expects to get at least 8 weeks of consecutive weekdays of PLP with no breaks, within one year of the child's birth or adoption;
 - will be employed until at least the last day of the block of PLP the employer delivers;
 - lives in Australia; and
 - be the first payment of PLP for this child.
- The Agency determines which employees the employer needs to pay and distributes funds in advance to the employer to pass on.
- Where payment is not required to be provided by the employer, the Agency pays the customer directly.

Media coverage

Date	Source	Item
7 March 2024	<i>ABC</i>	Super to be added to paid parental leave from next year
5 November 2023	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>	More support need for families of newborns who require neonatal care
12 September 2023	<i>A Current Affair</i>	A Current Affair: Aussies in desperate need of Centrelink support left on hold
11 September 2023	<i>ABC</i>	Calls for additional paid parental leave to support multiple-birth families
1 September 2023	<i>AFR</i>	Pocock hits at parental leave red tape
30 August 2023	<i>Sunrise on 7</i>	Families caught out with Centrelink payment taking months to come through
29 August 2023	<i>3AW</i>	Parents struggling with 'nightmare' Centrelink delays
27 August 2023	<i>7 News</i>	Services Australia General Manager Hank Jongen says claims of a widespread Paid Parental Leave error are incorrect

	Name and Role	Group/Branch/Organisation	Phone (w)	Phone (mob)
Cleared By	Name: Tony Piazza Role: General Manager	Families, Indigenous and Tailored Programs Division		s47F(1)
Contact Officer	Name: Leigh Allison Role: National Manager	Families and Childcare Branch		s47F(1)

Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

TOPIC: DETENTION RELEASE SUPPORT

WITNESS: Kirsty Faichney
Deputy CEO, Program Design

Strategic Narrative

- Services Australia (the Agency) continues to work closely with the Department of Home Affairs (Home Affairs) regarding people who have been released from held detention or residence determination arrangements because of the High Court decision.
- This includes assisting people, who upon release, decide to apply for Special Benefit (SpB) payment.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- On 8 November 2023, the High Court handed down a decision requiring the immediate release from immigration detention of an individual on the basis their detention was unlawful as there was no real prospect of removal from Australia.
- As of 31 March 2024, the number of people released (NZYQ cohort) from immigration detention who have sought support from the Agency is 113.

Talking Points

NZYQ Cohort – 8 November 2023 High Court Ruling

- On 9 November 2023, the Agency first became aware of the High Court ruling and met with the Home Affairs, then again with Home Affairs on 13 November 2023, and the Department of Social Services (DSS) on 15 November 2023.
- Discussions included:
 - the number of people potentially impacted by the High Court ruling;
 - any payments or services they may be eligible for from the Agency upon release; and
 - how services could be streamlined for people in this cohort to ensure Home Affairs' contracted Service Providers, customers, and Agency staff were supported appropriately.

- All SpB claims lodged by people from this cohort were processed in line with our current arrangements for vulnerable customers.
- There is no single date this cohort started receiving payments from the Agency. Those released from immigration detention were advised by their Service Provider to test their eligibility for SpB. Some people did this on release, others waited, and some have not claimed.
- Timeliness standards for processing SpB and SRSS:

As of 31 March 2024:

Payment	KPI	Avg days to process
SpB	80% within 21 days	23 days (for NZYQ cohort) 19.9 days for all claims*
SRSS	85% within 14 days	9.2 days for all claims.*

* SpB and SRSS are boutique payments. Both customer cohorts are smaller than other cohorts across the Agency and are processed by specialised staff. The Agency has seen a marked reduction in SRSS customers over the years, in 2019-20 there were over 4,500 customers who received SRSS payments compared to 1,167 YTD (as at 31 March 2024).

- As of 31 March 2024:
 - 128 customers from the NZYQ cohort have been granted SpB.
 - There were 1,247 SpB claims on hand.
- Any questions regarding the total number of people in this cohort, including those in receipt of the Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS) payment, will need to be referred to Home Affairs to respond as the Agency does not have visibility of this.
- The Agency first became aware incorrect visas were issued to people upon release on 13 March 2024. We are not aware of any payment impacts for the Agency as a result of this. Any questions regarding this matter should be referred to Home Affairs to respond.
- The Agency is aware of the person mentioned in the media regarding an alleged assault in Perth in April 2024. As this matter relates to a police investigation, which is now before the courts, it would not be appropriate to provide any further detail.

ASF17 Cohort

- On 16 February 2024, Home Affairs contacted the Agency to advise of the potential for more people to be released from immigration detention.
- On Friday 10 May 2024, the high court dismissed the claim for ASF17, finding that immigration detention is lawful where a person is 'voluntarily' refusing to cooperate in their removal.
- Home Affairs confirmed this advice with the agency.

Timeline of recent or significant events

Date	Action
30 April 2024	Person from the NZYQ cohort mentioned in the media regarding an alleged assault in Perth.
17 April 2024	High Court has reserved judgement in the case of ASF17
13 March 2024	Services Australia was made aware incorrect visas had been issued to some people upon release
8 November 2023	High Court Ruling decision handed down re NZYQ

Background

- Home Affairs' contracted Service Providers work closely with people impacted by this decision and support them in lodging their claim for SpB with the Agency.
- Customers in receipt of SRSS payments from the Agency were eligible to receive payment until their claim for SpB was granted or Home Affairs cancelled their payment.
- People who have been released from held detention will be financially supported by Home Affairs' contracted Service Providers.
- The Agency has put in place processes to assist in the identification of people in this cohort who lodged SpB claims.
- The Agency worked and continues to work closely with DSS and Home Affairs to provide information to support impacted people. This includes:
 - the process Service Providers need to follow to assist a person to initiate a SpB claim;
 - Proof of Identity (POI) requirements;
 - the application of a 13-week activity test exemption by the Agency for people in this cohort to ensure no impacts to payment; and

- other payments and support people may be eligible for outside of SpB, including Health Care Card, Family Tax Benefit, Parental Leave Pay, Child Care Subsidy, and Medicare.

Status Resolution Support Services Payment (SRSS)

- On 1 April 2014, the Agency commenced the administration of the SRSS payment on behalf of Home Affairs.
- The SRSS payment provides financial support to asylum seekers, as part of the broader SRSS program administered by Home Affairs.
- The SRSS program provides temporary, needs-based support to asylum seekers who are unable to support themselves while resolving their immigration status.
- Home Affairs determines a person's eligibility for SRSS and the Agency determines a customer's payability for SRSS.
- The rate of payment depends upon the customer's circumstances, and includes:
 - Living Allowance;
 - Rental Assistance Allowance (RAA) – where a customer is paying for private accommodation; and
 - Dependent Child Allowance (DCA) – where a SRSS family has one or more dependent children.
- Customers who are granted a bridging visa may be eligible for Medicare.
- SRSS payments are paid to eligible customers on a fortnightly basis.
- The SRSS payment is not a social security payment and customers receiving the payment do not have access to other Agency payments or services.
- SRSS payments are calculated as a percentage of equivalent social security and family assistance payments made to Australian residents and citizens.
- Timeliness standards for processing SRSS new claims is 85 per cent within 14 days.
- The Agency has assessed 303 SRSS new claims for the 2023-24 financial year to date. In 2022-23 the Agency assessed 272 SRSS new claims.

Special Benefit (SpB)

- The SpB payment has been available to eligible customers since 1945.
- The Agency administers the SpB payment on behalf of DSS.
- SpB is a discretionary payment for eligible people who:
 - for reasons beyond their control, are in financial hardship; and
 - are not able to earn enough income to support themselves and their dependants.
- To be eligible for SpB, a person must be:
 - unable to receive any other social security payment; and
 - in financial hardship and unable to obtain or earn a sufficient livelihood for themselves and any dependants; and
 - be in Australia throughout the period for which payment is sought, and
 - be an Australian citizen; or
 - be the holder of a temporary visa subclass 060, 070, 309, 449, 785, 786, 790, or 820; or
 - the holder of a Criminal Justice Stay Visa (CJSV).
- There are a range of reasons customers may be eligible for SpB including (but not limited to):
 - the person has an illness or disability or is of Age Pension age, but does not meet the 10 years' residence requirement to claim Disability Support Pension or Age Pension;
 - the person has suffered a substantial change in circumstances beyond their control, such as family or domestic violence, or the death of a partner during the newly arrived residents waiting period; or
 - the person holds an eligible temporary visa and has no other means of financial support.
- The Agency collects and holds the data of SpB customers to assess their initial and ongoing eligibility for payment.
- The Agency has assessed 10,562 SpB new claims for the 2023-24 financial year to date. In 2022-23 the Agency assessed 18,079 SpB new claims.

Media coverage

Date	Source	Item
30 April 2024	<i>ABC News</i>	Person from the NZYQ cohort mentioned in the media in regard to an alleged assault in Perth The bloodied and bruised image that puts a human face on the High Court fallout - ABC News
17 April 2024	<i>ABC News</i>	Lawyers tell High Court Iranian man facing deportation would rather be sent to Gaza than back to Iran Lawyers tell High Court Iranian man facing deportation would rather be sent to Gaza than back to Iran - ABC News
20 March 2024	<i>The Guardian</i>	The Guardian published an article on immigration detainees who could be freed if the Australian Government loses the High Court challenge in April. More than 170 immigration detainees could be freed if Australian government loses high court challenge Australian immigration and asylum The Guardian
12 March 2024	<i>The Guardian</i>	The Guardian published an article on invalid visas issued to 149 people released from indefinite detention. Invalid visas issued to 149 people released from indefinite detention, Labor admits Australian immigration and asylum The Guardian
12 February 2024	<i>The Guardian</i>	The Guardian published an article regarding the backgrounds of people released as a result of the High Court Ruling on 8 November 2023. Seven of the immigration detainees released in Australia were convicted of murder or attempted murder Australian immigration and asylum The Guardian
8 November 2023	<i>ABC News</i>	ABC News published an article on Landmark High Court ruling paves way to end indefinite detention for asylum seekers with nowhere to go. Landmark High Court ruling paves way to end indefinite detention for asylum seekers with nowhere to go - ABC News

Media enquiries

N/A

Questions on Notice

Estimates QONs

Hearing	Date	Senator - Question #	Broad topic
Hearing	14 February 2024	Senator Linda Reynolds SQ24-000028	NZYQ High Court Decision – Timeframe and Discussion Detail
Hearing	14 February 2024	Senator Linda Reynolds SQ24-000030	NZYQ High Court Decision – Multiple Questions
Hearing	14 February 2024	Senator Linda Reynolds SQ24-000038	NZYQ High Court Decision – Visa Class
Hearing	14 February 2024	Senator Linda Reynolds SQ24-000092	NZYQ – SRSS and Special Benefit Multiple Questions
Hearing	14 February 2024	Senator Maria Kovacic SQ24-000101	Special Benefit Processing Time
Hearing	14 February 2024	Senator Linda Reynolds SQ24-000102	SRSS Payments Start Date
Hearing	14 February 2024	Senator Maria Kovacic SQ24-000105	Special Benefit – Other Payments
Hearing	14 February 2024	Senator Maria Kovacic SQ24-000115	Special Benefit
Hearing	14 February 2024	Senator Linda Reynolds SQ24-000118	NZYQ – SRSS Recipients in Home Detention

Relevant Ministerial Comments

Date	Minister	Details
16 March 2024	Prime Minister, the Hon Anthony Albanese MP	Interview in Adelaide. Comments provided in an interview conducted in Adelaide regarding concerns about asylum seekers in held detention as a result of NZYQ and ASF17 hearings. NZYQ: Preventative detention cases will be brought against High Court cohort news.com.au — Australia's leading news site

Other QONs

N/A

Freedom of Information (FOI)

N/A

	Name and Role	Group/Branch/Organisation	Phone (w)	Phone (mob)
Cleared By	Name: Tony Piazza Role: General Manager	Program Design / Families, Indigenous and Tailored Programs / Services Australia	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Contact Officer	Name: Anita Bogdanovski Role: a/g National Manager	Program Design / Tailored Programs Branch / Services Australia	s47F(1)	s47F(1)

Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

TOPIC: VULNERABILITY STRATEGY

WITNESS: Kirsty Faichney
Deputy CEO, Program Design

Strategic Narrative

- Services Australia (the Agency) is committed to supporting people experiencing vulnerability. The Agency offers a range of payments, services, support and assistance that may be available to people experiencing difficult circumstances.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- As part of a whole of government approach, the Agency partners with government and non-government organisations to deliver support to people experiencing vulnerability, and to be responsive to people experiencing traumatic life events.
- In July 2021, the Agency launched an internal enterprise-wide Vulnerability Strategy. The Strategy outlines our approach to supporting people experiencing or at risk of experiencing vulnerability, with a focus on proactive identification and timely connection to services and support.
- On 7 July 2023, the Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme released its final report, delivering a number of recommendations specific to the concept of vulnerability.
- The Agency is responsible for 26 recommendations. Discovery, service design and stakeholder consultation has commenced to inform feasible and scalable solutions to address each recommendation.
- The Agency continues to implement the Strategy by delivering key initiatives focussed on improving the customer experience of vulnerable citizens, through staff capability uplift, designing person centred services and identifying ways to increase consistency and coordination across payments and services.

Talking Points

- Many people find themselves at risk of being vulnerable at different times of their lives.
- Where the Agency identifies people are experiencing vulnerability, we provide access to services and support based on an individual's needs, eligibility and presenting circumstances.
- People experiencing vulnerability may be entitled to a range of payments, each of which has its own eligibility requirements and can be accessed through all servicing channels.
- The Agency offers a range of additional supports and services. These include:
 - **Access to specialist referrals** including Social Workers, Multicultural Service Officers, Community Engagement Officers, Financial Information Service Officers, Aged Care Specialist Officers and Indigenous Service Officers.
 - **Access to money management services** to assist customers to manage their payments. For example, Centrepay, the Rent Deduction Scheme or payments to third parties such as nominees.
 - **Referrals to external service providers** to provide specialised support. These include welfare organisations, state and territory government services, housing providers and financial literacy services.
 - **Prioritising** a person's claim or review of decision where they are experiencing vulnerable or complex circumstances, including experiencing financial hardship.
 - **Considering circumstances that may impact compliance when completing job seeker compliance activities.** For example, the Agency takes the impact of personal circumstances into account when assessing the capability of a job seeker to meet their mutual obligation requirements prior to considering penalties within the Targeted Compliance Framework.
 - **Advocates' channel pilot** commenced in November 2023. The pilot aims to provide participating advocates direct access to the Agency to support vulnerable customers. Findings from the pilot will inform a long-term solution to improve access for advocates.

- The Agency also administers customised programs to support people who need additional or urgent assistance. Examples include:
 - **Emergency and disaster support** is the Agency's response to and preparation for emergency and rapid response events. The Agency delivers the Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment and Disaster Recovery Allowance.
 - **Crisis payment** is designed to provide immediate financial assistance for those experiencing an extreme circumstance and are in severe financial hardship. Between 1 July 2023 and 31 March 2024, the total number of crisis payments granted was 66,351.
 - **Urgent payment**, which is the early delivery of part of a customer's entitlement where the customer is experiencing severe financial hardship due to exceptional and unforeseen circumstances. Between 1 July 2023 and 31 March 2024, the total number of urgent payments granted was 623,286.
 - **Advance payment** is part of a customer's income support payment or Family Tax Benefit (Part A) delivered early and paid back, via instalments from their payment, later. Between 1 July 2023 and 31 March 2024, the total number of advance payments granted was 2,012,402.
 - **Hardship advance** is designed to assist people who are in severe financial hardship at the point of a new claim or restoration of payment, including those released from prison or psychiatric confinement. Between 1 July 2023 and 31 March 2024, the total number of hardship advances granted was 19,702.
 - **Weekly payment** is designed to help financially vulnerable customers, including those who are homeless or at risk, experiencing gambling or substance misuse, have limited literacy and numeracy skills, or are experiencing a traumatic relationship breakdown. As of 29 March 2024, 37,481 customers were in receipt of weekly payments. This figure is point in time and not cumulative.
 - **Medication program for homeless people** removes the PBS co-payment to assist people to continue receiving and taking their medication where non-medication could lead to undesirable medical or social consequences for people who are experiencing homelessness. Between 1 July 2023 and 31 March 2024, a total of 17,526 claims were granted for 1,639 customers.

- **Crisis Payment** is a one-off payment equal to one week (7 days) of the maximum basic rate of a customer's primary income support payment. A person must be in severe financial hardship and have experienced an extreme event to receive Crisis Payment.
 - The Agency is aware of timeliness issues with Crisis Payment.
 - The Agency continues to implement a range of changes to drive improvement of Crisis Payment timeliness outcomes for vulnerable people.
 - Measures implemented to date include:
 - Updated information within myGov, our website and the online claim to build customer knowledge of payment criteria and reduce the number of ineligible claims resulting in rejection.
 - Updates to internal reference systems and communication products to uplift staff knowledge.
 - Streamlining processes, reducing touchpoints and changes to work allocation processes for claims.
 - Trialling dedicated processing hubs for extreme circumstances family and domestic violence claims.
- The Agency has a range of training and support material available which assists service delivery staff to recognise and support people experiencing vulnerability.
 - The Customers Experiencing Vulnerability training package contains mandatory and recommended training modules for completion by all front line staff. This training supports staff to develop and maintain the confidence and capability for effective and respectful interactions with customers experiencing vulnerability. The package includes:
 - Mental Health Pathways – Suicide Awareness.
 - Customers Experiencing Vulnerability.
 - Child Safety – General Awareness.
 - The foundational 'Customers Experiencing Vulnerability' training is included in the mandatory induction training for all staff new to the Agency.
- Service delivery staff are encouraged through training to use verbal and visual cues to identify and prioritise assistance for customers experiencing hardship, safety concerns or other potential vulnerable circumstances.
 - This may include accessing current services and supports and/or referrals to specialists such as Social Workers or Financial Information Service Officers.

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Background

Vulnerable circumstances

- The Agency can record information in its systems that reflect complex circumstances in a person's life. The information captured does not always mean the person is vulnerable in all contexts, or that the person requires additional, tailored servicing.
- It does, however, suggest that the Agency consider a person's individual circumstances, including whether a more tailored servicing approach is appropriate.

Identifying vulnerability

- The Agency does not have a single 'vulnerability indicator'.
- There may be a vast array of information on a customer's record that may indicate they are experiencing vulnerable circumstances.
- This information supports staff to identify where customers may require additional assistance and support, such as prioritisation of claim processing or assessing capacity to meet mutual obligations.
- Information is captured and documented in various formats.

Our vulnerability strategy

- In July 2021, the Agency launched the first iteration of its inaugural *Our vulnerability strategy* (the Strategy). The Strategy reaffirms our commitment to supporting people experiencing or at risk of experiencing vulnerability, delivering timely connection to services and support.
- The Strategy does not define vulnerability, acknowledging that anyone can be vulnerable at any time and moves away from identifying vulnerability based on a person's cohort, instead considering their presenting circumstances.
- The Strategy recognises that vulnerability is complex and transient in nature.

- The strategy is principles-based, builds on structures the Agency has in place and lays the foundation for future work, by:
 - articulating the Agency’s broader approach for all people experiencing vulnerability, not just specific cohorts;
 - enhancing and delivering consistency in identifying people experiencing vulnerability, regardless of the servicing channel;
 - providing timely connection of people to the services and supports they need;
 - supporting the health and wellbeing of staff as they support people experiencing vulnerability; and
 - embedding guidelines into change management, policy design and service design to better support people experiencing vulnerability.
- Future iterations will build on these early foundations, by exploring processing and system enhancements, and advances in data capture.

Crisis Payment

- Crisis Payment has four administrative categories according to the extreme event:
 - Extreme Circumstances – Family and Domestic Violence (victim and perpetrator);
 - Extreme Circumstances – Other;
 - Release from Prison or Psychiatric Confinement; and
 - Humanitarian Entrants.
- Since online claiming commenced, the Agency has experienced an increase in claims with a large proportion of those claims being ineligible for payment and therefore requiring rejection.
- There has been an increase in the amount of claims being lodged prior to and on the weekend due to the accessibility of an online claim.

Questions on Notice

Estimates QONs

Hearing	Date	Senator - Question #	Broad topic
Supplementary Budget Estimates	25 October 2023	Senator Maria Kovacic SQ23-000738	Vulnerability indicators and flags
Supplementary Budget Estimates	25 October 2023	Senator Maria Kovacic SQ23-000783	Vulnerability definition
Supplementary Budget Estimates	25 October 2023	Senator Janet Rice SQ23-000797	Vulnerability indicators
Supplementary Budget Estimates	25 October 2023	Senator Maria Kovacic SQ23-000973	Vulnerability definition
Budget Estimates	31 May 2023	Senator Janet Rice SQ23-000454	Vulnerability indicators
Budget Estimates	31 May 2023	Senator Janet Rice SQ23-000449	Vulnerability indicators

Other QONs

Committee Inquiry	Senator/MP - Question #	Broad topic
Parliamentary	Senator Janet Rice PQ23-000140	Vulnerability strategy; Vulnerability indicators

Freedom of Information (FOI)

Request Date	Who	Relating to	Documents released
16 November 2023	Individual	Vulnerability strategy	Our vulnerability strategy released in full on 20 November 2023
17 March 2023	Individual	Vulnerability strategy	Our vulnerability strategy released in full on 12 April 2023

	Name and Role	Group/Branch/Organisation	Phone (w)	Phone (mob)
Cleared By	Name: Tony Piazza Role: General Manager	Program Design / Families, Indigenous and Tailored Programs / Services Australia	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Contact Officer	Name: Lauren Callinan Role: National Manager	Program Design / Tailored Programs Branch / Services Australia	s47F(1)	s47F(1)

Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

TOPIC: **GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE MYGOV
USER AUDIT**

WITNESS: Kirsty Faichney
Deputy CEO, Program Design

Strategic Narrative

- Government continues to deliver on its commitments to making myGov the ‘go to’ place and primary front door for individuals to access government services.
- Services Australia (the Agency) is working with a range of departments and agencies to implement the Government’s Response to the Audit, and to set the foundations as recommended to provide seamless, connected and secure services through myGov.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

In October 2023, Government considered and agreed the Response to the myGov User Audit.

- The agreed Response was published Monday 18 December 2023 ([Attachment A](#) – Government Response to the myGov User Audit).
- Government agreed, or agreed in principle, to 9 of the 10 recommendations and noted one recommendation with further detailed work to be undertaken.
- Government’s response to recommendation four has been achieved through the Operate and Maintain Budget measure, which provides ongoing resourcing of \$140.3m in 2024-25 and \$580.3m over the 2024-25 forward estimates to ensure myGov’s core capabilities remain accessible, secure, contemporary and people-focussed.
- Initial investment to uplift the safety, security and reliability of myGov are planned for delivery by 30 June 2025, including:
 - **Supporting people to better secure their myGov accounts** (\$10.8m) implements a personalised security feature to make people more aware of the security settings available to them, and proactively prompts users to better secure their accounts.

- **Strengthening myGov fraud prevention** (\$17.8m) delivers the myGov Incident Response System, which is a foundational piece of work to rapidly detect and disrupt fraudulent activities.
- **Improving digital communications** (\$11.5m) delivers enhancements that will allow government agencies to better communicate with individuals through the myGov inbox, emails and push notifications to the myGov app.
- **Supporting staff to deliver critical assistance to customers** (\$9.1m) will provide staff with a more complete view of a person's myGov account to provide better assistance to people when they contact for support.

Talking Points

- Government continues to make progress against the commitments outlined in the Response to the myGov User Audit ([Attachment B](#)).
- Investment priorities will continue to be developed for consideration by government, to make myGov the trusted 'go to' place for people.
- Foundational activities committed through 2023-24 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO) to maintain the safety and security of myGov have either been achieved or are in progress:
 - **The Digital Execution of Statutory Declarations** capability was released in myGov on 9 February 2024 (\$2.0m).
 - **Passkey technology to safeguard against phishing scams** (\$5.6m) will be introduced to myGov by 30 June 2024.
 - **The Interim Independent Advisory Board** (the Board) (\$1.3m) was established on 9 November 2023 to provide advice to the Minister for Government Services on services delivered through digital and non-digital channels.
 - The Board has met five times since it was established and will continue to meet in its current form until 30 June 2024.
 - Government has funded the Independent Advisory Board until 30 June 2028 as part of the Operate and Maintain Budget Measure.
 - Continuation of the Board will be established in line with the appointments process, outlined in the Cabinet Handbook.
 - The Board has provided expert advice on issues around the enduring value of myGov as critical national infrastructure. The expert panel has demonstrated their value by working to bring government services together for the benefit of the Australian Community.

- They have considered digital motivators that could be leveraged and a range of potential myGov improvements and digital barriers that could be addressed, to increase myGov adoption and improve its usability and overall value for Australians.
- Members of the Digital ID Expert Panel and the Board gathered in Melbourne on 18 April 2024, for a collaborative discussion of opportunities to lift government service delivery and citizen experience through the Digital ID program.
- This discussion brought together the Expert Panel's commitment to supporting a Digital ID system that is secure, convenient, and inclusive, with the Advisory Board's deep expertise on trust and ethics in digital – including myGov – and other service channels.
- A summary of the Board's meetings is available via the Department of Social Services website.
 - [Attachment C](#) – 18 December 2023 communique
 - [Attachment D](#) – 1 February 2024 communique
 - [Attachment E](#) – 15 March 2024 communique
 - [Attachment F](#) – 18 April 2024 communique
- **Legislation Discovery**
 - The Agency is leading a discovery piece into myGov's legislative eco-system (\$2.4m), to identify any policy and legislative barriers that are preventing government from providing a holistic and simplified view of Government services.
 - This discovery will identify potential pathways to address these barriers, and options that emerge from this research will be presented to government on 30 June 2024.

Background

myGov User Audit

- The Minister for Government Services, the Hon Bill Shorten MP, announced an independent user audit of myGov in September 2022.
- The Audit report was released in January 2023, delivering 10 findings and 10 recommendations addressing the systemic issues of myGov.
- Through its response to the Audit released in December 2023, Government agreed to four recommendations, agreed in principle to five recommendations and noted one recommendation.

- Governance arrangements between the Digital Transformation Agency and the Agency were formed to co-ordinate the whole of government Response to the myGov User Audit.

Interim Independent Advisory Board

- In October 2023, Government approved the establishment of the Interim Independent Advisory Board.
- The Interim Independent Advisory Board was announced on 9 November 2023.
- Members were identified based on their expertise and credentials covering six areas; governance and funding, ethics of service delivery, technology in the delivery of digital services, economic benefits and issues, citizen advocacy, and staff advocacy. The Board members are:
 - The Hon Victor Dominello (Chair)
 - Mr Amit Singh
 - Ms Caroline Edwards
 - Professor Angie Abdilla
 - Dr Simon Longstaff
 - Professor Ed Santow
 - Professor Johanna Weaver
 - Ms Karen Batt
 - Ms Leanne Ho
- The first meeting of the Board took place in Sydney on 18 December 2023, with the Minister for Government Services in attendance to engage with members and hear their early insights.
 - The Board noted the release of the Government’s response to the myGov User Audit, and the clear path and vision this provides to reshape government service delivery – with myGov being the ‘go to’ place for government services.
 - The Board welcomed the Government’s commitment to addressing the barriers many people face when accessing and navigating services.
 - Members were provided with an update on the work to date on the early implementation of myGov User Audit recommendations.
 - Members acknowledged initial investment of \$11.3 million over two years from October 2023 to respond to the findings in the Critical National Infrastructure myGov User Audit and expand myGov functionality.

Relevant media coverage

- Shadow Minister, the Hon Paul Fletcher MP, has noted the investment for myGov is 95 per cent less than the myGov User Audit recommended and drew attention to the Response being dated October 2023 but not released until December 2023.

Media coverage

Date	Source	Item
28 December 2023	<i>Riotact and republished on psnews.com</i>	‘Government Tables It’s Response to myGov User Audit’
21 December 2023	<i>Information Age</i>	myGov to ditch passwords in major overhaul Information Age ACS
20 December 2023	<i>Australian Financial Review</i>	‘myGov To Be Single Entry Portal After Agencies Told to Get On Board’
19 December 2023	<i>Paul Fletcher MP – Federal Member for Bradfield</i>	Media Release – ‘Bill Shorten’s myGov User Audit Response Too Little, Too Late’
19 December 2023	<i>The Mandarin</i>	‘Just Four of 10 myGov User Audit Recommendations Get the Nod’
18 December 2023	<i>InnovationAus.com</i>	‘myGov Audit Response Kicks Funding Decision down the Road’
18 December 2023	<i>The National Tribune</i>	Government response to myGov user audit The National Tribune
15 December 2023	<i>The Mandarin</i>	Gallagher unleashes APS Data and Digital Strategy out to 2030 (themandarin.com.au)
13 December 2023	<i>Paul Fletcher on X</i>	Paul Fletcher on X: "Nearly a year ago, Bill Shorten received his MyGov User Audit which recommended annual recurrent funding of \$138 million. In MYEFO, only \$11.3 million over two years has been allocated. At \$5.65 million a year, that’s 95 per cent less than the audit recommended."
9 November 2023	<i>InnovationAus.com</i>	‘Dominello to Lead myGov Advisory Group’

Relevant Ministerial Comments

Date	Minister	Details
22 February 2024	The Hon Bill Shorten MP	Minister Shorten's address at the Rebuilding trust and integrity in the Australia Public Service conference. Department of Social Services Ministers (dss.gov.au)
1 February 2024	The Hon Bill Shorten MP	Meeting of the Interim Services Australia Independent Advisory Board Department of Social Services Ministers (dss.gov.au)
19 December 2023	The Hon Paul Fletcher MP	MEDIA RELEASE – Bill Shorten's myGov User Audit Response Too Little, Too Late Paul Fletcher MP
18 December 2023	The Hon Bill Shorten MP	Government Response to myGov User Audit
18 December	The Hon Bill Shorten MP	Meeting of the Interim Services Australian Independent Advisory Board
9 November 2023	The Hon Bill Shorten MP	Minister Shorten Press Conference for the launch of the myGov Advisory Board

Questions on Notice

Estimates QONs

Hearing	Date	Senator - Question #	Broad topic
Supplementary Budget Estimates	09 April 2024	Senator Maria Kovacic SQ24-000104	myGov Advisory Board
Supplementary Budget Estimates	09 April 2024	Senator Maria Kovacic SQ24-000123	myGov User Audit Response
Parliamentary QoN	03 April 2024	The Hon Paul Fletcher MP PQ24-000022	Initiatives Provided to the Interim Independent Advisory Board
Supplementary Budget Estimates	25 October 2023	Senator Maria Kovacic SQ23-000769	National Multicultural Advisory Group – MyGov User Audit
Budget Estimates	31 May 2023	Senator Wendy Askew SQ23-000453	MyGov and Birth of a Child
Budget Estimates	9 November 2022	Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds CSC SQ22-000047	myGov User Audit - Consultation Summary

Hearing	Date	Senator - Question #	Broad topic
Budget Estimates	9 November 2022	Senator Slade Brockman SQ22-000185	myGov audit – Panel considerations
Budget Estimates	9 November 2022	Senator Slade Brockman SQ22-000184	myGov audit – Terms of Reference
Budget Estimates	9 November 2022	Senator Slade Brockman SQ22-000183	myGov audit – Panel recommendation
Budget Estimates	9 November 2022	Senator Slade Brockman SQ22-000182	myGov audit – submissions made public
Budget Estimates	9 November 2022	Senator Slade Brockman SQ22-000181	myGov audit – promotions
Budget Estimates	9 November 2022	Senator Slade Brockman SQ22-000180	myGov audit – surveys
Budget Estimates	9 November 2022	Senator Slade Brockman SQ22-000179	myGov audit – panel meetings
Budget Estimates	9 November 2022	Senator Slade Brockman SQ22-000178	myGov audit - written submissions

Freedom of Information (FOI)

Request Date	Who	Relating to	Documents released
15 April 2024	s47F(1)	LEX 79151	With myGov Core systems
04 March 2024	s47F(1)	LEX 78593 Any correspondence, including letters and emails, issued by members of the myGov Advisory Board to external stakeholders.	Completed
02 January 2024	s47F(1)	LEX 77663 Any material, written or electronic, produced by, or prepared for, the MyGov Advisory Group, including material subsequently sent by the Advisory Group to the Minister's office, from 9 November 2023 to date.	Completed

Request Date	Who	Relating to	Documents released
14 December 2023	s47F(1)	Material, written or electronic, produced by, or prepared for, the MyGov Advisory Group.	Completed

Attachments

- Attachment A – Government's Response to the myGov User Audit.
- Attachment B – Progress against Government's Response to the myGov User Audit.
- Attachment C – Interim Independent Advisory Board Communique 18 December 2023.
- Attachment D – Interim Independent Advisory Board Communique 1 February 2024.
- Attachment E – Interim Independent Advisory Board Communique 15 March 2024.
- Attachment F – Interim Independent Advisory Board Communique 18 April 2024.

	Name and Role	Group/Branch/Organisation	Phone (w)	Phone (mob)
Cleared By	Name: Brendan Moon Role: General Manager	Health Delivery Transformation Division	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
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Australian Government

Response to the myGov User Audit Report

Independent Audit 'Critical National Infrastructure – myGov User Audit'

October 2023

Introduction

myGov is one of the most heavily used digital platforms in Australia, providing a centralised entry point for people to access critical government services. It has become an indispensable piece of Australian national digital infrastructure, serving as a fundamental link to connect people to government.

myGov started as a secure authentication solution for a few government services and has grown to become one of the most heavily relied upon government platforms, with approximately 26 million active accounts, 3.3 million app users and more than 782,000 sign ins per day. Currently, it provides secure and rapid access to a range of government services, some whole-of-government content, and a number of supporting capabilities, such as the inbox.

The myGov User Audit commenced in September 2022 and was conducted by an independent audit panel. The aim of the audit was to review the current state and possibilities for myGov and make recommendations to shape its future direction.

The independent audit panel consulted with users, industry, and peak bodies, and engaged all tiers of government to inform their findings.

The critical national infrastructure–myGov User Audit report (the report) was publicly released by Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher, Minister for Finance and Minister for Women and the Public Service, and the Hon Bill Shorten, Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme and Minister for Government Services, on 31 January 2023.

Volume 1 of the report contains the panel's 10 findings and 10 recommendations. These go to the heart of systemic issues and set the pathway to fulfil myGov's potential as critical national infrastructure.

Volume 2 of the report contains detailed analysis and guiding actions to meet Australians' needs and expectations for digital government services.

In the 2023–24 Budget, Government invested a further \$134.5 million to operate and maintain the myGov platform.

Foreword

We welcome the myGov User Audit Report (the report) which presents us with an opportunity to fundamentally reshape the way government services are delivered.

Thank you to the independent panel chaired by Mr David Thodey AO, with Professor Edward Santow, Professor Emily Banks AM, Commissioner Julie Inman Grant and Mr Amit Singh, for their comprehensive review and thought-leadership.

myGov is a recognised government brand and is part of most Australians' lives. Today there are more than 26 million myGov accounts with more than 782,000 sign ins per day and 3.3 million app users.

It has become an indispensable national infrastructure delivering essential digital public services to support people through their lives, including during emergencies and disasters.

Clearly, we need to implement the future of digital government service delivery through myGov.

The 10 findings and recommendations of the report go to the heart of systemic issues holding us back. We agree we need to address these issues to unlock the value of government policies and simplify government services.

Like many other countries in the world, the Australian government aims to create a digital ecosystem where services are connected, secure and seamless.

Our response to the report is part of setting a clear pathway to achieve that ecosystem in lockstep with the Data and Digital Government Strategy and Digital ID work.

The establishment of a dedicated team to make early progress towards the strategy and implementation of myGov as a primary front door shows we understand the need for well thought-out implementation, and whole-of-government action to deliver on the government's position.

We are committed to establishing the foundations and to investing in and scaling myGov to deliver the world class digital services Australians expect.

Minister Bill Shorten

Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme, Minister for Government Services

Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher

Minister for Finance, Minister for Women, Minister for the Public Service

Summary of Responses

myGov Audit Response Overview	Position
<p>Recommendation 1</p> <p>Confirm myGov as the ‘go to’ place for people to access services online from the Australian Government and communicate with all Australians.</p>	<p>Agreed</p>
<p>To support citizens to navigate government services and to drive efficient and effective digital investment, Government agrees to a unified and pragmatic whole-of-government approach to myGov as a primary front door. Government will define a decision-making framework in consultation with whole-of-government input to provide clear guidelines for agencies to determine where their service fits into the broader delivery of government services to curb the proliferation of new front doors, consolidate the existing digital ecosystem, and identify opportunities to reuse systems and reduce duplicative investment.</p> <p>Government notes that seamless and connected services are constrained by government organising structures which makes achieving the full extent of this recommendation difficult and costly.</p> <p>Removing barriers to implementation will be further explored by Government in progressing work under recommendations 3 and 7. Government has commenced work towards this recommendation, however there is a need to increase whole-of-government oversight of investments in the digital service delivery ecosystem.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 2</p> <p>Ensure myGov leaves no one behind and upholds Australians’ human rights.</p>	<p>Agreed</p>
<p>Government will develop a Digital Inclusion Standard that ensures services are designed and delivered to leave no one behind. This new standard will set levels of acceptable delivery of digital services to Indigenous communities, designing and building services that are inclusive and accessible, and uphold human rights. Government agrees to ensure myGov is designed and delivered according to this standard.</p> <p>Government has agreed through the Data and Digital Ministers Meeting to progress initiatives related to digital literacy, inclusion and connectivity across all tiers of government.</p> <p>Government notes Services Australia has broad reaching infrastructure and capabilities including service centres, remote and regional support and telephony services that could be leveraged to support a collective approach in delivering to citizens.</p>	

<p>Recommendation 3</p> <p>Legislate myGov as national service delivery infrastructure.</p>	<p>Noted</p>
<p>Government recognises the potential for legislating myGov as national infrastructure. The current legislative environment for myGov impedes service delivery, particularly around data and personal information that may hinder the realisation of the aspirations outlined in the Audit. Government will invest in further discovery work to inform decisions and actions toward this recommendation.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 4</p> <p>Provide ongoing annual funding of myGov at the same level as sustainment funding in 2021–22 and the Enhanced myGov Program and establish a ‘myGov development fund’ to resource onboarding of new services and improvement of existing linked services</p>	<p>Agreed in-principle</p>
<p>Government agrees in-principle to fund myGov as national infrastructure with appropriate allocations to preserve and operate the service, ensuring it remains secure and contemporary. Noting \$134.5 million was committed in 2023–24 Budget to operate and maintain myGov for one year. Further analysis will be completed and brought back in the 2024–25 Budget context for ongoing operate and maintenance needs.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 5</p> <p>Publish during 2023 a rolling 5 year roadmap for developing myGov, updated annually.</p>	<p>Agreed in-principle</p>
<p>Government agrees in-principle to develop a rolling roadmap that sets out new services and functionality through myGov that will be integrated and published for citizens, including, as part of the implementation plan for the Data and Digital Government Strategy. Major improvements and enhancements will be prioritised and overseen by the governance outlined in recommendation 7.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 6</p> <p>Accelerate development of Australia’s national digital identity ecosystem, prioritising the protection of security, privacy, safety, and other human rights with a view to government digital identity being safe, easy to use and secure.</p>	<p>Agreed</p>
<p>Digital ID is a voluntary, secure and trusted way for Australians to use the government services they rely on. The expanded use of Digital IDs will ensure that in the future, government services are easier for citizens to access. Government supports accelerated development of Australia's national digital identity ecosystem and the introduction of legislation to support its broader rollout. Implementation of this recommendation will be guided by the outcomes of the Department of Finance led Digital Identity Taskforce. The</p>	

Government has invested to sustain and develop the next stage of the Digital ID Program, as it transitions to an economy-wide Digital ID ecosystem with an independent regulator.	
<p>Recommendation 7</p> <p>Introduce by mid-2023 citizen-centred governance and operational arrangements for myGov and myGovID to overcome government siloes and drive inclusion and performance.</p>	Agreed in-principle
<p>Government will develop revised governance arrangements to support the future of myGov. The first step will be the establishment of an independently chaired advisory board that will provide expert advice to the Minister of Government Services to shape the future of government services.</p> <p>Governance of myGov and myGovID will remain separate, with myGovID remaining part of the Digital ID Program, to consider whole of economy impacts, whilst myGov focuses on Government service delivery.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 8</p> <p>Partner with the states and territories on a 5 year plan to make it easy for people to find and do what they need to across all levels of government.</p>	Agreed
<p>Government will continue to work with jurisdictions to deliver connected services for citizens. Government will establish a Commonwealth and state and territory working group, through the Data and Digital Ministers Meeting, to develop a plan. The plan would expand beyond the Audit's recommendation by covering digital service integration across all sectors, leveraging work on life events, digital identity and verifiable credentials, and a plan to develop interoperability standards. The plan will intersect with the roadmap for myGov as outlined in recommendation 5.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 9</p> <p>Design and build myGov in alignment with a refreshed and enforced Australian Government Architecture, incorporating the Design System and the Service Standard.</p>	Agreed in-principle
<p>The Digital Transformation Agency has launched a refreshed platform to better navigate and apply the Australian Government Architecture to digital investments.</p> <p>Government, through the Digital Transformation Agency, has developed a new Digital Service Standard to standardise the way digital services are designed, delivered and maintained, and better support agencies through enhanced guidance materials that accounts for varying levels of digital maturity. Adherence to these standards and policies will be monitored and governed under recommendation 7. The Standard is supported by a whole-of-government digital service performance framework, providing measurements to assess and improve the quality of Australian Government digital services, in line with its</p>	

digital government vision and as part of the Data and Digital Government Strategy's measurement framework.	
<p>Recommendation 10</p> <p>Services Australia develop and adopt a new world-class approach to service and support to government agencies utilising myGov.</p>	<p>Agreed in-principle</p>
<p>To realise the vision for myGov, Government acknowledges the need for myGov to be the most responsive and contemporary part of the delivery system and make pragmatic changes to ensure myGov is offering contemporary support and solutions to agencies. Government will progress work to develop a new approach to enable the opportunity to build once and use many times to meet the needs of a range of service delivery challenges. It will also provide an opportunity to explore government services being delivered in new, non- traditional and flexible ways that avoids additional costs to Government through the development of duplicated and bespoke solutions and delivers a better service for Australians.</p> <p>Government, through Services Australia, will review its current approach to operating and delivering across government agencies. This will be done in consultation with existing and potential new partner services focusing on ways to deliver value easily and quickly. Achieving a new world-class approach to service and support for agencies utilising myGov will be underpinned and further enabled under recommendations 4, 5 and 7.</p>	

Recommendation 1

Confirm myGov as the 'go to' place for people to access services online from the Australian Government and communicate with all Australians.

Government **agrees** to the recommendation.

Government notes services are still widely distributed across multiple websites and apps, meaning people have to navigate multiple sources of information built around complex government structures to access the support they need. Government will establish a Digital Access Standard through whole-of-government consultation that sets the decision-making criteria to promote digital consolidation, identify opportunities to reuse systems and reduce duplicative investment.

It is the Government's ambition that myGov provides a primary front door for individuals to access digital Government services as a future state. Simplifying and consolidating the broader service delivery ecosystem provides opportunity for economic, social and service delivery benefits. Further decisions by government will inform the future of myGov and its role.

Government has commenced work towards this recommendation, however there is a need to increase whole-of-government oversight of investments in the digital service delivery ecosystem.

Document execution makes interacting with government services easier

Government has commenced addressing the audit recommendations to make services simple through the delivery of a document execution function within myGov, meaning people no longer need to find someone to manually witness their statutory declaration. Moving forward, there is potential for this capability to be re-used across government services enabling a seamless user experience, such as for passport renewals.

Recommendation 2

Ensure myGov leaves no one behind and upholds Australians' human rights.

Government **agrees** to the recommendation.

Digital and online platforms are a huge part of our everyday lives, but 1 in 4 people in Australia are currently facing barriers to accessing or making best use of them – Hon. Minister Amanda Rishworth

Government will develop a Digital Inclusion Standard that sets requirements for agencies to deliver inclusive and accessible government digital services to ensure services are designed and delivered to leave no one behind. These standards will set levels of acceptable delivery of digital services to all communities including Indigenous, those living with or caring for someone with a disability, and culturally and linguistically diverse.

Government acknowledges a greater emphasis on consultation with citizens, peak bodies, advocacy groups and front-line service delivery staff throughout the design and development of new government services and capabilities is required.

Government will explore avenues to reducing language and literacy barriers for people accessing a digital service. Government notes Services Australia has experience and significant broad-reaching infrastructure and capabilities, including service centres, remote and regional support and telephony services that could be leveraged to support a collective approach in delivering services to people. Government will consider further decisions needed in relation to ensuring people can switch to another channel if myGov does not work for them.

Government recognises there is an important role in improving digital literacy for all people in Australia, as a way to reducing barriers to access digital services. Government has agreed through the Data and Digital Ministers Meeting to progress initiatives related to digital literacy, inclusion and connectivity across Commonwealth, state and territory governments.

Government notes the outcomes of the Privacy Act Review will have implications for the delivery of this recommendation, including how government progresses consent and nominee arrangements.¹

Connecting vulnerable people to government services

Government has implemented a pilot to provide support to vulnerable people in Australia with complex circumstances to access essential government services. Services Australia is

¹Department of Social Services [website] accessed July 2023, <<https://ministers.dss.gov.au/media-releases/8936>>

working alongside, and onsite, with community organisations to connect vulnerable customers who don't have access to apps and computers to claim payments and connect with government and community services based on their individual circumstances.

In the 2023–24 Budget, Government provided:

- \$10.0 million over 3 years for broadband and mobile services upgrades to support digital connectivity needs for First Nations people in Central Australia through the Regional Connectivity Program.
- \$0.3 million to provide mobile and internet for Wi-Fi connectivity in Alice Springs Town Camps through the Digital Connectivity Project.

Recommendation 3

Legislate myGov as national service delivery infrastructure.

Government **notes** the recommendation.

Government notes that a number of practical barriers remain in place that inhibit the vision for myGov to join-up service delivery for individuals. This includes the interplay between key parts of program legislation, secrecy provisions and statutory requirements that prevent end-to-end information sharing and connected experiences.

Government agrees to exploring pathways that will support the joined-up delivery of government services and will invest in further discovery work to investigate what, if any, are the legislative barriers in realising the potential of myGov, how legislation could further improve citizen's rights and confidence in digital services, and to inform government's decisions and actions toward this recommendation.²

Technology and the digital world is accelerating and legislation has not kept pace

Government have finalised their response to the Privacy Act Review, aimed at strengthening and modernising Australian Privacy Laws. The outcomes of this review will have implications for future practices, procedures and systems for handling personal information.

Recommendation 4

Provide ongoing annual funding of myGov at the same level as sustainment funding in 2021–22 and the Enhanced myGov Program and establish a 'myGov development fund' to resource onboarding of new services and improvement of existing linked services.

Government **agrees in-principle** to the recommendation.

Government acknowledges that the investment made to date to enhance myGov has created a secure, scalable foundation to support the onboarding of new services and capabilities. The 2023–24 Budget invested \$134.5 million to operate and maintain myGov, ensuring it remains contemporary, secure and user-friendly.

²Attorney-General's Department [website] accessed August 2023, <<https://www.ag.gov.au/rights-and-protections/publications/privacy-act-review-report>>

Government will make a decision on appropriate ongoing funding for myGov in the 2024–25 Budget to preserve and operate the platform, ensuring it remains secure and contemporary.

Government invested more than \$2 billion for digital and ICT capabilities in the 2023–24 Budget.

The Data and Digital Government Strategy highlights the need for new funding models to provide secure, ongoing funding to support whole-of-government digital and ICT delivery. Services Australia will explore funding options for onboarding and future improvements to myGov.

Recommendation 5

Publish during 2023 a rolling 5-year roadmap for developing myGov, updated annually.

Government **agrees in-principle** to the recommendation.

Government agrees to develop a rolling roadmap for myGov that sets out services and functionality through myGov that will be reviewed every 12 months, and published to citizens as part of the broader government implementation plan for the Data and Digital Government Strategy. The roadmap will set out the strategic vision for myGov and will be informed by government priorities, policies, insights from customer research and feedback.³

The Australian Government will deliver simple, secure and connected public services for all people and business through world class data and digital capabilities by 2030 – Data and Digital Government Strategy

Government's vision for the future of digital government services

Government has set their vision for the future of digital government services through the Data and Digital Government Strategy. The strategy confirms commitment for the Commonwealth to work collaboratively, and with all tiers of government, industry and academia to progress towards the 2030 vision.

Recommendation 6

Accelerate development of Australia's national digital identity ecosystem, prioritising the protection of security, privacy, safety, and other human rights with a view to government digital identity being safe, easy to use and secure.

Government **agrees** to the recommendation.

Australia's approach to identity resilience needs to keep pace with our economic and social activities, and the changing nature of identity crime – National Strategy for Identity Resilience.

Government notes that a Digital Identity (Digital ID) provides a secure way for people to access their online services. Creating and using a Digital ID is a voluntary, secure and

³Data and Digital [website], Data and Digital Government Strategy, released 2023
<<https://www.dataanddigital.gov.au>>

convenient way for Australians to access government services they rely on. The Australian Government Digital ID provider is myGovID and can be used as credentials to sign in to myGov, reducing the need to remember usernames and passwords. Using a Digital ID to access services includes the ability to allow people to digitally confirm their identity when accessing services.

Government supports accelerated development of Australia's national digital identity system and the introduction of legislation to support its broader rollout. Implementation of this recommendation will be guided by the outcomes of the Department of Finance-led Digital ID Taskforce, including to progress Digital ID legislation. The Government has invested to sustain and develop the next stage of the Digital ID Program, as it transitions to an economy-wide Digital ID ecosystem with an independent regulator. The expanded use of Digital ID will ensure that, in the future, services will be able to choose to use Digital ID instead of collecting people's personal information, thereby helping to minimise the impact of future potential data breaches involving identity data.⁴

Working together to protect people from identity crime

The National Strategy for Identity Resilience was released and demonstrates the commitment by the Commonwealth and state and territory governments to work together to better protect the people of Australia from identity crime. This strategy is an important part of the broader whole-of-nation cyber security efforts, including the development of the 2023–2030 Australian Cyber Security Strategy.

Recommendation 7

Introduce by mid-2023 citizen-centred governance and operational arrangements for myGov and myGovID to overcome government siloes and drive inclusion and performance.

Government **agrees in-principle** to the recommendation.

Future governance arrangements will be considered as part of long-term funding for myGov in the Budget process. Renewed governance arrangements will be designed to underpin a joined-up service delivery model through ongoing collaboration across government to put citizens at the heart of the decision-making process, and give a voice to partner services in myGov decisions. An interim Independent Advisory Board was established in December 2023 to provide expert advice to the Minister for Government Services on projects, policies and initiatives ensuring they are ethical, uphold human rights, have a focus on customer service and are beneficial to Australians and the economy.

In alignment with the Government's Digital ID program, Government agrees that governance of myGov and myGovID will remain separate, with myGovID remaining part of the Digital ID Program, to consider whole of economy impacts, whilst myGov focuses on Government service delivery.⁵

⁴Department of Home Affairs, National Strategy for Identity Resilience – Resilient identities – hard to steal, and if compromised, easy to restore 2023.

⁵Data and Digital [website], Data and Digital Government Strategy, released 2023
<<https://www.dataanddigital.gov.au>>

Governance mechanisms are strong, however there is more to do

Government confirms through the Data and Digital Government Strategy that there are strong governance mechanisms in place to coordinate cross agency efforts with state and territory governments. This includes the inter-jurisdictional forums like the Data and Digital Ministers Meeting and cross-APS bodies such as the Secretaries' Digital and Data Committee.

Recommendation 8

Partner with the states and territories on a 5-year plan to make it easy for people to find and do what they need to across all levels of government.

Government **agrees** to the recommendation.

Government has partnered with states and territories to develop a life events model to make it easier for people of Australia to access the services they need across all levels of Government. Getting married, having a child, retiring or death of a loved are some examples where joining up information and services can help the experience people have with government.

The Commonwealth will lead the implementation of recommendations of the cross-jurisdiction program Life Events Review in collaboration with states and territories through the Data and Digital Ministers Meeting (DDMM), as part of a renewed National Life Events Program.

Data and Digital senior officials from the Commonwealth and all states and territories agreed in May 2023 to the establishment of a Data and Digital Ministers Meeting (DDMM) working group with representatives from all jurisdictions, to lead work to develop a 5-year plan that provides a coordinated approach to digital service delivery and joined-up experiences for people using them.

Government notes the scope of the state and territory plan would expand beyond myGov, as noted in the Audit's recommendation by covering digital service integration across all digital services, not just those limited to myGov. The plan would leverage existing Government efforts on life events, Digital ID and verifiable credentials. The plan will intersect with the roadmap for myGov as outlined in recommendation 5.

Working with states and territories to connect tiers of government services

The Birth of a Child trial is delivering a streamlined experience, in select sites, for birth mothers to enrol their newborn with Services Australia. The trial aims to reduce the burden of filling out forms and interacting with government by re-using data government already holds. The future of the trial intends to enrol newborns in Medicare, streamline family claims with Centrelink and assist in registering births with state-based Births, Deaths and Marriages registries. With consent, data is exchanged meaning birth mothers will no longer have to complete three forms, and interact with three government organisations to register their baby for services.

Recommendation 9

Design and build myGov in alignment with a refreshed and enforced Australian Government Architecture, incorporating the Design System and the Service Standard.

Government **agrees in-principle** to the recommendation.

Government has released a vision for scalable, secure and resilient architecture, through the Data and Digital Government Strategy.

Government continues to support the development of the Australian Government Architecture (AGA)—a collection of digital artefacts and guidance materials to align to the digital direction of government. Government will expand the AGA by incorporating new policies and standards that will improve interoperability and inclusion of digital services addressing gaps in the digital policy landscape.

Government will take the lessons learnt from the previous design system and consider how this can be refreshed to be used by partner services to support more seamless and connected services with myGov.

Government has updated the Digital Service Standard to set the requirements for how to design and build digital services for the community, business and employees that are user-designed, inclusive and measurable.

Following advice from the Australian Signals Directorate's Australian Cyber Security Centre, Government does not support the recommendation to publish open-source code due to cyber security concerns of such an approach.

Government notes a collective approach will strengthen safety and security, and reduce the risks of cyber-attacks, imitation, and phishing of sign in pages. A whole-of-government approach to reviewing and maintaining the security and resilience of myGov and its partner agencies will be progressed to support the expansion of myGov.⁶

Strengthening Australia's cyber security position

On 3 July 2023, Australia's inaugural National Cyber Security Coordinator (the Coordinator) commenced. The Coordinator, together with the National Office of Cyber Security (NOCS) within the Department of Home Affairs, serves as a focal point for Australia's strategic response to cyber security threats, challenges and opportunities, and will work closely with industry and critical infrastructure owners and operators to build a cyber resilient Australia.

Government will soon release the 2023–2030 Australian Cyber Security Strategy, which commits to Australia being a world-leading cyber secure and resilient nation by 2030.

⁶Prime Minister of Australia [website], accessed August 2023 <<https://www.pm.gov.au/media/appointment-national-cyber-security-coordinator>>

Australian Government Department of Home Affairs [website], accessed August 2023 <<https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/about-us/our-portfolios/cyber-security/strategy/2023-2030-australian-cyber-security-strategy>>

Recommendation 10

Services Australia develop and adopt a new world-class approach to service and support to government agencies utilising myGov.

Government **agrees in-principle** to this recommendation.

The Government's ambition is to shift myGov to be the primary front door for government services, where possible and appropriate. Government acknowledges the need for myGov to be the most responsive and contemporary part of the delivery system, including making pragmatic changes to ensure myGov is offering contemporary support and solutions to agencies. Government will progress work to develop a new approach to enable the opportunity to build once and use many times to meet the needs of a range of service delivery challenges.

It will also provide an opportunity to explore government services being delivered in new, non-traditional and flexible ways that avoid additional costs to Government through the development of duplicated and bespoke solutions and deliver a better service for Australians. Initiatives such as the Digital Traineeship Program will ensure that Government is positioned with the skills needed to deliver digital services.

Government, through Services Australia, will review the current approach to development and operations and explore options and feasibility for a whole-of-government approach to the design, development and delivery of products for myGov.

Digital skills for the future of Australia's economy

Government has established a Digital Traineeship Program, with placements for 1000 digital trainees over the next 4 years. Further, Government is also exploring a digital and data internship program, and further initiatives to build the capability needed and attract and retain data and digital skills in the APS to meet the growing emerging skill need.

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Summary of Key Actions to implement the Government's Response to the myGov User Audit

This document provides an overview of the key actions/activities committed to in the 2023-24 MYEFO submission, as part of the Government Response to the myGov User Audit.

Note: whilst these recommendations are presented individually, there are multiple interdependencies across these activities.

Recommendation	Government Response	Progress
<p>Recommendation 1 Confirm myGov as the go to place for people to access services online from the Australian Government and communicate to Australians</p>	<p>Agreed: To support citizens to navigate government services and to drive efficient and effective digital investment, Government agrees to a unified and pragmatic whole of government approach to myGov as a primary front door. Government will define a decision-making framework in consultation with whole-of-government input to provide clear guidelines for agencies to determine where the services fit into the broader delivery of government services to curb the proliferation of new front doors, consolidate the existing digital ecosystem, and identify opportunities to reuse systems and reduce duplicate investment.</p> <p>Government notes that seamless and connected services are constrained by government organisational structures which makes achieving the full extent of this recommendation difficult and costly. Removing barriers to implementation will be further explored by Government in progressing work under Recommendations 3 and 7. Government has commenced work towards this recommendation, however there is a need to increase whole of government oversight of investments in the digital service delivery ecosystem.</p>	<p>Underway: Government confirmed myGov as the go to place and primary front door for individuals to access government services through the 2023-24 MYEFO process.</p> <p>The Digital Transformation Agency (DTA) has developed a Digital Experience Policy that new services and digital investments will be required to adhere to from 1 January 2025. This includes a Digital Access Standard to ensure integration with existing platforms considered through planning and design phases.</p> <p>This recommendation will only be fully achieved through continuous improvement and ongoing services and capabilities to myGov which will require whole-of-government collaboration to ensure the vision of myGov is realised.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2 Ensure myGov leaves no one behind and upholds Australians' human rights</p>	<p>Agreed: Government will develop a Digital Inclusion Standard that ensures services are designed and delivered to leave no one behind. This new standard will set levels of acceptable delivery of digital services to indigenous communities, design and build services that are inclusive and accessible, and uphold human rights. Government agrees to ensure myGov is designed and delivered according to this standard.</p> <p>Government has agreed through the Data and Digital Ministers Meeting to progress initiatives related to digital literacy, inclusion and connectivity across all tiers of government.</p> <p>Government notes Services Australia has broad reaching infrastructure and capabilities including service centres, remote and regional support and telephony services that could be leveraged to support a collective approach in delivering to citizens.</p>	<p>Partially Achieved: As part of the Digital Experience Policy, the DTA has developed a Digital Inclusion Standard to drive accessibility and inclusion across Commonwealth government digital service delivery.</p> <p>New services and digital investments will be required to adhere to this standard from 1 January 2025, and existing services by 1 January 2026.</p> <p>This recommendation requires ongoing whole-of-government support and action. Activities will continue to be identified to make progress on this recommendation.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3 Legislate myGov as national service delivery infrastructure</p>	<p>Noted: Government recognises the potential for egos at myGov as national infrastructure. The current egos at the environment for myGov impedes service delivery, particularly around data and personal information that may hinder the realisation of the aspirations outlined in the Audit. Government will invest in further discovery work to inform Government decisions and actions toward this recommendation.</p>	<p>Underway: Discovery into myGov's egos at the eco-system and exploration of opportunities to support joined-up delivery of government services, is underway. Legislation to remove barriers in realising the vision and options to improve citizens' rights and confidence in digital government services will be identified, with findings to be provided to relevant Ministers by 30 June 2024.</p>
<p>Recommendation 4 Provide ongoing annual funding of myGov at the same level as sustenance funding in 2021-22 and the Enhanced myGov program and establish a myGov development fund to resource onboarding of new services and improvement of existing linked services</p>	<p>Agreed in Principle: Government agrees in principle to fund myGov as national infrastructure with appropriate allocations to preserve and operate the service, ensuring it remains secure and contemporary. Noting \$134.5 million was committed in 2023-24 Budget to operate and maintain myGov for one year. Further analysis will be completed and brought back in the 2024-25 Budget context for ongoing operation and maintenance needs.</p>	<p>Achieved: Government announced through the Operate and Maintain Measure ongoing annual funding for myGov from 1 July 2024 to ensure myGov's core capabilities remain accessible, secure, contemporary and people-focused.</p>

Recommendation	Government Response	Progress
<p>Recommendation 5 Publish during 2023 a rolling 5-year roadmap for developing myGov, updated annually</p>	<p>Agreed in Principle- Government agrees in principle to develop a rolling roadmap that sets out new services and functionality through myGov that will be integrated and published for citizens, including as part of the implementation plan for the Data and Digital Government Strategy Major improvements and enhancements will be prioritised and overseen by the governance outlined in Recommendation 7</p>	<p>Underway: Services Australia is developing a public facing myGov roadmap to demonstrate current and future services and capabilities available via the platform, to be published on the Services Australia website by 30 June 2024 Services Australia are working with the Digital Transformation Agency (DTA) to publish myGov initiatives in the Data and Digital Government Strategy implementation plan</p>
<p>Recommendation 6 Accelerate development of Australia's national digital identity ecosystem, prioritising the protection of security, privacy, safety, and other human rights with a view to government digital identity being safe, easy to use and secure</p>	<p>Agreed- Digital ID will be a voluntary, secure and trusted way for Australians to use the government services they rely on. The expanded use of Digital IDs will ensure that in the future, government services are easier for citizens to access. Government supports accelerated development of Australia's national digital identity ecosystem and the introduction of e-signatures to support its broader rollout. Implementation of this recommendation will be guided by the outcomes of the Department of Finance led Digital Identity Taskforce. The Government has invested to sustain and develop the next stage of the Digital ID Program, as it transitions to an economy-wide Digital ID ecosystem with an independent regulator</p>	<p>Partially Achieved: On 27 March 2024, enabling e-signatures on the Digital ID system passed the Senate. It is yet to be tabled in the Lower House. The Digital ID Bill 2024³, establishes an accreditation scheme for entities providing digital ID services, expands the Australian Government Digital ID System, and provides for privacy safeguards and a range of governance arrangements, including establishing the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission as the Digital ID Regulator and expanding the role of the Information Commissioner to regulate privacy protections for digital IDs</p>
<p>Recommendation 7 Introduce by mid-2023 citizen-centred governance and operational arrangements for myGov and myGovID to overcome government silos and drive inclusion and performance</p>	<p>Agreed in Principle- Government will develop a revised governance arrangements to support the future of myGov. The first step will be the establishment of an independent advisory board that will provide expert advice to the Minister of Government Services to shape the future of myGov. Governance of myGov and myGovID will remain separate, with myGovID remaining part of the Digital ID Program, to consider who else of economy impacts, where myGov focuses on Government service delivery</p>	<p>Partially Achieved: The Interim Independent Advisory Board was established 9 November 2023 and has been extended until 30 June 2028 through the Operate and Maintain myGov Budget Measure Services Australia are currently reviewing governance arrangements for myGov and are looking to establish a Who-e-of-Government Committee that ensures future investment proposals for myGov focus on making myGov the trusted go-to place for individuals to access government services</p>
<p>Recommendation 8 Partner with the states and territories on a five-year plan to make it easy for people to find and do what they need to across all levels of government</p>	<p>Agreed- Government will continue to work with jurisdictional counterparts to deliver connected services for citizens, Government will establish a Commonwealth and state and territory working group, through the Data and Digital Ministers Meeting, to develop a plan. The plan would expand beyond the Auditor's recommendation by covering digital service integration across all sectors, leveraging work on life events, digital identity and verifiable credentials and a plan to develop interoperability standards. The plan will intersect with the roadmap for myGov as outlined in Recommendation 5</p>	<p>Underway: The DTA are currently negotiating the transition of the Direction and Framework for a National Life Events Program to Services Australia. A 5-year plan including life events initiatives informed by jurisdictional counterparts, including any specific patterns and standards required to support them, will be brought forward for Data and Digital Ministers Meeting consideration</p>

Recommendation	Government Response	Progress
<p>Recommendation 9 Design and build myGov in alignment with a refreshed and enforced Australian Government Architecture (AGA), incorporating the Design System and Service Standard</p>	<p>Agreed in Principle: The Digital Transformation Agency has launched a refreshed platform to better navigate and apply the Australian Government Architecture to digital investments</p> <p>Government, through the Digital Transformation Agency, has developed a new Digital Service Standard to standardise the way digital services are designed, delivered and maintained, and better support agencies through enhanced guidance materials that accounts for varying levels of digital maturity. Adherence to these standards and policies will be monitored and governed under Recommendation 7. The Standard is supported by a whole-of-government digital service performance framework, providing measurements to assess and improve the quality of Australian Government's digital services, in line with the digital government vision and as part of the Data and Digital Government's Strategy's measurement framework</p>	<p>Partially Achieved: On 4 December 2024, the DTA launched the revised Digital Service Standard 2.0</p> <p>As part of the Digital Experience Policy, the DTA have developed a Digital Performance Standard that sets the requirements for government to monitor the performance and effectiveness of digital services. Digital and ICT investments will need to adhere to this Standard from the 2025-26 Budget process</p>
<p>Recommendation 10 Services Australia develop and adopt a new work-cass approach to service and support to government agencies using myGov</p>	<p>Agreed in Principle: To realise the vision for myGov, Government acknowledges the need for myGov to be the most responsive and contemporary part of the delivery system and make pragmatic changes to ensure myGov's offering contemporary support and solutions to agencies</p> <p>Government will progress work to develop a new approach to enable the opportunity to build once and use many times to meet the needs of a range of service delivery challenges. It will also provide an opportunity to explore government services being delivered in new, non-traditional and flexible ways that avoids additional costs to Government through the development of duplicated and bespoke solutions and delivers a better service for Australians</p> <p>Government, through Services Australia, will review its current approach to operating and delivering across government agencies. This will be done in consultation with existing and potential new partner services focusing on ways to deliver value easily and quickly. Achieving a new work-cass approach to service and support for agencies using myGov will be undertaken and further enabled under Recommendations 4, 5 and 7</p>	<p>Underway: Services Australia is reviewing its approach to delivering whole-of-government services through myGov. A Whole-of-Government Committee will be established to facilitate the adoption of myGov and integrate of whole-of-government strategic priorities to drive the future vision of myGov</p> <p>The DTA are currently negotiating the transition of a library of patterns and standards for a Commonwealth agencies and jurisdictions to Services Australia, which will be published via the Australian Government Architecture website, to enable common approaches to the design and delivery of life events and a more consistent and connected customer experience. Services Australia will ensure these standards are implemented once developed and investigate the ability to leverage what has been developed to meet a range of service delivery challenges</p>



Australian Government

Services
Australia

Meeting of the Interim Services Australia Independent Advisory Board

18 December 2023

myGov Update

The Board acknowledged that there are challenges in relation to myGov. The Board is looking to ensure myGov can be trusted by users to enable reliable access to services and tangible benefits in areas such as health and wellbeing.

The Board was pleased to hear from Services Australia on the progress made to date to improve myGov for Australians. Members acknowledged, through government's continued investment, myGov has become the largest Australian Government authenticated online system.

The Board acknowledged myGov is an integral part of the government digital services ecosystem, and the need to consider improvements to myGov in this broader context.

Vision for government services

The Board noted the release of the Government's response to the myGov User Audit, and the clear path and vision this provides to fundamentally reshape government service delivery—with myGov being the 'go to' place for government services. The Board welcomed the government's commitment to addressing the barriers many people face when accessing and navigating services.

Members were provided with an update on the work to date on the early implementation of myGov User Audit recommendations including passkeys to keep myGov sign in details secure and expanding myGov's capabilities by delivering digital statutory declarations. Further, members welcomed the recent investment of \$11.3 million over two years from 2023–24 to respond to the findings in the Critical National Infrastructure myGov User Audit and expand myGov functionality, with further ongoing funding to operate and maintain myGov to be considered as part of the upcoming Budget process next year.

The Board noted the government's approach will be to build momentum in the delivery of new services and capabilities, with these new services and capabilities to become part of the Data and Digital Government Strategy implementation plan.

The Board will play a significant role in providing advice and insights to inform decisions and assist government in navigating the challenges impeding myGov from delivering on peoples' expectations.

Advice to government

Minister for Government Services the Hon. Bill Shorten MP thanked the Chair and members for their advice and tasked them with holding government to account for a people-centred, digital future for service delivery during their Board tenure.

Members agreed myGov is foundational to equity, fairness and capacity in the delivery of all government services and intends to address related key matters in future meetings— including leveraging emerging technologies, safeguarding vulnerable Australians, and supporting the workforce who deliver the services behind the platform.

The Board will hold the first in a series of meetings in early 2024 refining initiatives that will deliver practical value to the community over the next year to improve the wellbeing and health outcomes.



Australian Government



Services
Australia

Meeting of the Interim Services Australia Independent Advisory Board

Thursday 1 February 2024

At their second full day meeting, members engaged in a constructive review of work being undertaken to deliver on the myGov user audit's recommendations.

The Board advocated for cross-government engagement and commitment to myGov as the universal front-door when accessing online government services. Drawing on diverse areas of expertise, members see value in building a connected, cost-effective, robust, and trusted platform which is the first choice for all people dealing with government.

The Board noted the significance of the date, reflecting the 40th anniversary of Medicare, and acknowledged the availability of the Medicare card in the myGov wallet.

myGov usability

Members engaged with synthesised research data and themes to further their awareness of: current usage of myGov; the breadth of user experiences; and ways digital motivators might be leveraged and digital barriers addressed to lift myGov adoption.

They reflected on key insights including:

- the three lenses of digital inclusion—access, affordability, and ability
- the importance of first impressions, good experiences, reliability, and trust in keeping people in digital service channels
- vulnerability, geography, literacy and other circumstances which require tailored and responsive service options within, or complementary to, myGov.

Members recognised that trust in myGov is impacted by people's experiences of the services they access via myGov and the support available to navigate these services. The quality of the services provided by government agencies through myGov will be integral to building trust in myGov. Investment to maintain and improve the quality of non-digital channels as part of a successful myGov model, such as face to face and telephone support, needs to continue.

myGov enhancements

The Board discussed a range of potential myGov improvements. Members shared their expert perspectives on how these initiatives may affect myGov's usability, reach and overall value for Australians, and how both new and current myGov customers may benefit from the changes.

The Board was pleased to see Services Australia iterate the proposed initiatives to make it clear the value each would provide in helping people accessing and communicating with government.

Members are keen to support the Minister for Government Services in solving for known problems and pain points, including that:

- people need to use many different online platforms to engage with government services
- eligibility rules and conditions for payments and services are complex and can be overwhelming to people

- government messages can be confusing about their legitimacy and what to do next
- trust in digital is eroded by personal experiences of fraud.

Members considered practical ways government can use the reach and capabilities of myGov to better serve the community including:

- Proactively reaching out to people who may be entitled to assistance. For example, letting people know they may be eligible for government assistance with their child's needs.
- Making it easier to find information about payments and services in one place without having to go to multiple government websites and channels.
- Improving digital communication from government by providing more context and guiding people through the things they need to do.

Members are conscious of the challenge for Services Australia in enhancing and growing myGov given the structures and processes of government do not readily support joined up services.

The Board encourages government to continue driving a mandate for myGov, building on the foundations of the current service offering.

myGov sustainability

Members considered issues around the enduring value of myGov as national infrastructure, and potential implications of how myGov is funded into the future while ensuring:

- myGov's overall value, security and operability is maintained
- investment in foundational and current initiatives remains supported and effective
- there are demonstrated benefits for new services considering joining myGov
- funding mechanisms are transparent and drive value for people.

Joining up different digital agendas

The Board sees value in connecting its work to the broader digital transformation agenda and is motivated to connect efforts in Digital ID and myGov to explore how people can safely use their credentials in the community.

This ambition is grounded in the Board's understanding of the opportunity for people to have a secure way to prove their identity and use their personal information online. The Board acknowledges the complex legislative, ethical, security and regulatory environment that needs to be understood in order to provide practical advice on the way to move forward.

The Board looks forward to its next meeting in March, when members will have an opportunity to learn more about the Services Australia service delivery ecosystem to further understand these options.



Australian Government



Services
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Meeting of the Interim Services Australia Independent Advisory Board

Friday 15 March 2024

The Interim Independent Advisory Board (the Board) met in Canberra for their third meeting. Members engaged with Services Australia's Chief Executive Officer and had detailed discussions with several of the Agency's Executive team. The members heard about Services Australia's operations, design approaches and tailored, inclusive service delivery.

Board members reflected on the scale of operations including delivery of Centrelink, Medicare, Child Support and other payments and services. Members further discussed the Agency's critical role in responding to emergencies and providing service delivery surge assistance across government agencies.

Members were appreciative of the opportunity to observe the management and delivery of services first hand; in particular the scale and complexity involved. The Board heard from the Services Australia CEO on focussed efforts to improve the Agency's performance. Members discussed the Agency's critical role in building and maintaining public trust in addition to maintaining access to important services.

The Board also advocated for greater use of pilots to trial incremental improvements to service delivery, highlighting this as a way to trial services that are designed with inclusion front of mind.

Services Australia's operations

Members were briefed on the breadth of Services Australia's operations, including providing insights into the 9.4 million customer contacts received per week, and the challenges that Services Australia faces administering the essential, but diverse, services Australians need on a day-to-day basis.

The Board offered observations including:

- Complications in end-to-end digital relate to policy and legislative barriers where parts of assessing or processing a transaction require human intervention or judgement.
- Single parts of the delivery ecosystem cannot be managed in isolation, for example, diverting resources to answer calls more quickly results in a higher number of claims on hand, which in turn leads to additional customer calls to enquire on the status of their claim.
- The importance of reflecting the knowledge and deep experience of the delivery of services in policy development.

Designing services with the customer at the centre, based on research and insights

The Board explored the comprehensive customer experience framework Services Australia has developed and shared across government, which informs a strategic design approach. Members discussed how knowledge gained from customer insights is operationalised in service design and to influence government policies.

The Board offered advice to inform strategies to manage the challenges of designing customer centric services in government. Members are motivated to influence how good practice and use of technology could safely support service delivery to help customers get timely responses to enquiries and faster finalisation of their claims.

Targeted and tailored servicing and approaches for people experiencing vulnerability

The Board was briefed by Services Australia on the multi-layered services it provides to people in accordance with its Vulnerability Strategy and Action Plan, and Reconciliation Action Plan. Members discussed the best way for Services Australia staff to have the awareness of individuals' circumstances required to enable them to provide a targeted and tailored service response, particularly for people in crisis situations and with complex needs.

The Board recognised that simplistic categorisation of people as "vulnerable" risks reinforcing negative stereotypes about particular cohorts. Labelling people as "vulnerable" also risks people 'falling through the cracks' when they do not identify with the term. Recognising that anyone could find themselves in a vulnerable position due to changes in their circumstances, members provided insights on improvements to the system that could help people to maintain resilience in the face of circumstances that may lead to vulnerability.

First Nations engagement

The Board was briefed on the service delivery network and deep connections Services Australia has in support of First Nations customers and communities.

Members discussed the ongoing work of Service Australia's National Agreement on Closing the Gap Implementation Plan. The Board congratulated officials on their approach and encouraged them to continue this very important work.

myGov legislation

The Board was briefed on the progress of the myGov User Audit, Recommendation 3 – to legislate myGov as national service delivery infrastructure. Members acknowledge the intent behind Recommendation 3 was to introduce legislation that would provide a framework for myGov's commitment to, experience, and transparent and accountable management, of its performance.

Board members observed other challenges in delivering joined up services including:

- Privacy and secrecy laws restricting the sharing and use of information across different programs even when it could improve service delivery.
- Jurisdictional boundaries arising from various levels of government (e.g. federal and state) complicating effort to integrate services and remove frictions arising from the need to share the same information multiple times to different government departments.
- myGov has no primacy legislation that enables the flow of personal information across services. Currently, service delivery at Commonwealth level is bound by the statutory provisions for each service.
- As noted in the myGov user audit, fixing myGov also means addressing challenges beyond myGov.
- Clarity and specificity are needed in drafting of legislation to address specific needs and avoid ambiguity.

The Board welcomed reviewing the draft findings and next steps for legislating myGov to further evaluate and provide insights on the findings, ahead of the report being considered by the Minister in mid-2024.



Australian Government



Services
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Meeting of the Interim Services Australia Independent Advisory Board

Thursday 18 April 2024

Meeting for the fourth time, members of the Interim Independent Advisory Board explored two key matters:

- the application of automation in claims processing, and
- opportunities presented through the emergence of digital identity.

The Board members considered approaches to address the complex legislative, policy, implementation and people related matters in both these issues. This included methods of how these initiatives could be used support people who need access to government services.

In discussion with the Hon Bill Shorten MP, Minister for Government Services, the Board reflected on ways they can inform government thinking and innovation in the use of digital identity in practice to ensure service offers are useful, safe and coordinated.

Members were pleased to hear of progress made by Services Australia to continually strengthen the security of myGov, as well as the government services available in myGov, through the initial introduction of passkeys as a deterrent to phishing of credentials. With the technology new to government services, trialling this as a private beta will help shape readiness and approach to role this out for all myGov users.

Members also spoke with the Minister about other priority work being done in Services Australia to lift performance and enhance the customer experience. In particular the board contributed views on current efforts to apply automation to claims processing in a safe and ethical way. Further, the Board provided their support for efforts to introduce frameworks and lift staff capability to further build consistent service delivery across the agency's extensive geographic and policy/program footprint.

Members also reflected on their experience on the Board to date, and canvassed some opportunities to ensure their advice remains useful, targeted and actionable.

Automation in Services Australia

Members were briefed on automation as a critical enabler for the agency in delivering outcomes for customers, Services Australia staff, and government policy partners. They looked deeply at the agency's approach to uplifting its automation capability, while acknowledging the challenges with respect to the increased use of automation in customer service delivery – including legislative constraints and rebuilding trust with the public.

The Board discussed how early sharing of the automation frameworks and uplifting capability in frontline community organisations is a critical part of ensuring that future automation provides intended benefits to people most in need of services and avoids unintended harm.

Members supported Services Australia's automation future state and operating model and provided insights into how Services Australia can continue to evolve these. They supported the criticality of Services Australia's use of automation to be ethical, legal, and transparent, and be designing in a human centred way to deliver better experiences for all Australians and Services Australia staff.

Joint session with the Digital ID Expert Panel



Australian Government
Department of Finance
Services Australia

Members of the [Digital ID Expert Panel](#) and the [Interim Independent Advisory Board](#) gathered in Melbourne for a collaborative discussion of opportunities to lift government service delivery and citizen experience through the Digital ID program.

Members engaged with officials from the Department of Finance, Australian Taxation Office and Services Australia to understand the whole of economy scope of the program and explore emerging approaches being considered by government.

The discussion brought together the Expert Panel's commitment to supporting a Digital ID system that is secure, voluntary, convenient, and inclusive, with the Advisory Board's deep expertise on trust and ethics in digital—including myGov—and other service channels.

Recognising that Australia's future Digital ID system needs to support government service delivery and the broader digital economy, members provided insights on driving forward the Digital ID program in a safe and comprehensive way, considering issues such as privacy, accessibility, regulation, inclusion strategies and consumer choice and experience.

There was a strong recognition the cooperative approach between the bodies could assist both Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher and the Hon Bill Shorten MP in a shared agenda to modernise, enhance and secure government digital service delivery—including in the emerging area of verifiable credentials and digital wallets.

Collaboration between the expert groups has been facilitated by the shared Chair of the two fora, Victor Dominello. The Expert Panel and Advisory Board undertook to continue their discussion and promote the opportunities identified today through their ongoing advocacy to government.

Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

TOPIC: UNPAID MEDICARE BENEFITS

WITNESS: Kirsty Faichney
Deputy CEO, Program Design

Strategic Narrative

- Services Australia (the Agency) pays Medicare benefits by electronic funds transfer. If the Agency doesn't have a customer's bank account details or they are incorrect, the payment is held.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- On 29 November 2023, the Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the Minister for Government Services announced an initiative to reunite Australians with their unpaid Medicare benefits.
- At the time of the Minister's announcement, over \$238 million in unpaid Medicare benefits was owed to nearly 1 million people.
- From 1 December 2023 to 31 March 2024, over \$48 million in Medicare benefits has been successfully paid to customers who have updated bank account details.
- As of 31 March 2024, the state breakdown of unpaid Medicare benefits is:

Claimant state	Number of claimants (total)	Amount owed (total)
ACT	15,249	\$4,238,508
NSW	275,852	\$73,218,505
NT	7,553	\$1,604,686
QLD	195,685	\$46,175,388
SA	74,043	\$17,500,699
TAS	20,070	\$4,631,530
UNK	1,495	\$347,856
VIC	232,411	\$59,121,280
WA	114,853	\$26,957,557
AUS	937,211	\$233,796,009

Talking Points

- Unpaid Medicare benefits occur when a Medicare claim has been lodged and granted but for which there are no valid bank account details stored with Medicare.
- The Agency is focussed on preventing unpaid Medicare benefits and reuniting customers with these funds.
- On 29 November 2023, the Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the Minister for Government Services announced an initiative to reunite Australians with their unpaid Medicare benefits.
- At the time of the announcement, almost one million Medicare customers were owed approximately \$238 million in unpaid Medicare benefits.
- Following the announcement, the Agency sent a myGov inbox message to over 600,000 customers with unpaid Medicare benefits. This message advised the customer of a simple, digital task to record their bank details.
- Further waves of myGov notifications have been delivered in February 2024 and April 2024.
- In April 2024, the task messages were updated to display the amount of money owed to the customer in unpaid benefits.
- Customers can check and update their bank account details using the:
 - Medicare online account through the myGov website;
 - Medicare online account through the myGov app;
 - Express Plus Medicare mobile app; and/or
 - Medicare phone line or visiting a service centre.
- The Agency pays Medicare benefits by electronic funds transfer and, once bank details are provided, any unpaid Medicare benefits are usually paid within three days.
- In the period 1 December 2023 to 31 March 2024, over \$48 million in held payments was paid to approximately 220,000 customers with unpaid Medicare benefits. This equates to approximately \$220 per customer with unpaid Medicare benefits.

Background

- The Agency routinely reminds customers to update their personal information, including bank account details, when people contact Medicare. It also requests this information in correspondence after they have enrolled in Medicare.
- The Agency also regularly publishes information on social media and its website, encouraging people to check that their personal information is up to date.

- Additionally, the Agency continues to work on improving awareness and communication by targeting various consumer cohorts (e.g. students and linguistically diverse customers) through newsletters, multicultural advisory forums, financial information services webinars, and enhancements to our online services.

Relevant media coverage

Media coverage

Date	Source	Item
26 April 2024	<i>Triple M Coffs Harbour (Radio)</i>	Service Australia Hank Jongen talks Medicare held payments on Triple M radio
19 April 2024	<i>3AW (Radio)</i>	Service Australia Hank Jongen talks Medicare held payments on 3AW radio
18 April 2024	<i>ABC Capricornia (Radio)</i>	Service Australia Hank Jongen talks Medicare held payments on ABC Capricornia radio
18 April 2024	<i>2GB (Radio)</i>	Service Australia Hank Jongen talks Medicare held payments on 2GB radio
16 April 2024	<i>ABC Radio Sydney</i>	Service Australia Hank Jongen talks Medicare held payments on ABC Sydney radio
15 – 29 April 2024	<i>Advertisement (Spotify, Facebook and Snapchat) also in medical waiting rooms)</i>	It could be you! Update your bank details... - Services Australia Facebook
11 April 2024	<i>7 NEWS Sunrise</i>	Aussies have 200 million owed to them
18 December 2023	<i>9 NEWS (Online)</i>	Aussies are yet to claim \$110 million in Medicare benefits. Are you eligible?
17 December 2023	<i>Toowoomba Chronicle Syndicated by Sky News, Daily Telegraph, Courier Mail and The Australian</i>	Aussies miss out on \$222m
30 November 2023	<i>ABC News</i>	ABC TV News
29 November 2023	<i>Yahoo!finance</i>	Medicare's \$234m payout before Christmas: How a million Aussies can get cash boost within three days
29 November 2023	<i>Isentia</i>	Sky TV News

Date	Source	Item
29 November 2023	ABC Online	Unclaimed Medicare benefits totalling more than \$230 million yet to be handed out

Relevant Ministerial Comments

Date	Minister	Details
16 February 2024	The Hon Bill Shorten MP	Media Release. Minister announces the Australian Government has delivered more than \$25 million in unpaid Medicare benefits to over 116,000 Australians.
18 December 2023	The Hon Bill Shorten MP	Media Release. Minister announces that 55,000 have shared in more than \$12 million in Medicare payments
29 November 2023	The Hon Bill Shorten MP	Media Release. Minister urges Australians to check their bank account details are up to date to reunite them with unclaimed Medicare benefits
17 March 2023	The Hon Bill Shorten MP Senator Anne Urquhart	A joint media release. Minister for Government Services and the Chief Government Whip and in the Senate and Senator for Tasmania, urged Tasmanians to check their eligibility to claim close to \$4 million of unpaid Medicare benefits

Questions on Notice

N/A.

Freedom of Information (FOI) – Nil

N/A.

	Name and Role	Group/Branch/Organisation	Phone (w)	Phone (mob)
Cleared By	Name: Stuart Turnbull Role: General Manager	Health Programs Division	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Contact Officer	Name: Phil Hoyle Role: National Manager	Digital Health Branch	s47F(1)	s47F(1)

Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

TOPIC: SUPERANNUATION NOT ASSESSING AT AGE PENSION AGE

WITNESS: Kirsty Faichney,
Deputy CEO, Program Design

Strategic Narrative

- A customer's superannuation is generally excluded from assessment under the income and assets test.
- Once a person turns Age Pension age their superannuation is assessable.
- Superannuation is also used for Aged Care Means Test Assessments, to determine the level of government support provided for Aged Care, and the contribution required by the customer or resident.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- In November 2022, a system error meant superannuation was not included in the income and asset assessments for some customers turning Age Pension age.
- The system issue was corrected on 3 December 2022.
- Services Australia (the Agency) identified approximately 11,000 customers, with varying complexity in their circumstances, who may have been affected by this issue, which media referred to as a "system glitch".
- At Budget Estimates in February 2024, the Agency advised a target date to correct all records was 30 June 2024. The Agency is on track to meet this deadline with close to 98 per cent of records examined and corrected.
- No debts have been raised because of this system issue.
- There are approximately 2.6 million customers receiving Age Pension payments every fortnight.
- Potentially impacted customers represents less than half a per cent of all Age Pension customers.

Talking Points

- The Agency identified a system issue that meant, for a small subset of income support customers, superannuation was incorrectly excluded from the income and assets tests assessment when customers turned Age Pension age.
- The Agency identified 11,000 customers (less than half of one per cent of 2.6 million Age Pension customers) who may have received an incorrect rate of payment – either an under or over payment.
- The Agency's experienced staff are reviewing and correcting records of customers, with varying complexities in their circumstances, whose payment may have been affected.
- Consistent with legislation, the Agency may waive debts created because of the administrative error. Each case must be considered on an individual basis.
- No debts have been raised because of this system issue.
- The system issue was corrected on 3 December 2022. The Agency has reviewed internal processes to find how the error occurred and to prevent it recurring.

Timeline of recent or significant events

Date	Action
16 January 2023	Staff began correcting impacted customer records, including contacting customers if necessary.
3 December 2022	A system fix was released to prevent further errors.
5 November 2022	Potentially impacted customers were identified.

Background

- The system issue occurred when superannuation was coded on a record prior to the customer reaching Age Pension age. For example, when a customer lodged an early claim for Age Pension or transferred to Age Pension from another payment.
- A query from staff processing claims led to the identification of the issue.
- The system issue was fixed on 3 December 2022.

Media coverage

Date	Source	Item
23 April 2024	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	\$8m Age Pension bungle Dailytelegraph.com.au Subscribe to The Daily Telegraph for exclusive stories
24 November 2023	<i>Herald Sun</i>	Sum thing's not right – media article – Herald Sun, Melbourne Heraldsun.com.au Subscribe to the Herald Sun for exclusive stories

Media enquiries

Enquiry date	Source	Response provided
10 April 2024	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	10 April 2024
22 November 2023	<i>News.com.au</i>	23 November 2023

Relevant Ministerial Comments

Date	Minister	Details
23 April 2024	<i>The Hon Paul Fletcher MP</i>	Labor presides over \$8 million Age Pension bungle. Media Release – Labor Presides Over \$8 Million Age Pension Bungle Paul Fletcher MP
24 November 2023	<i>The Hon Paul Fletcher MP</i>	Labor sweeps Services Australia superannuation bungle under the political rug – Media Release – The Hon Paul Fletcher MP Media Release – Labor Sweeps Services Australia Superannuation Bungle Under the Political Rug Paul Fletcher MP, Member for Bradfield

Questions on Notice

Estimates QONs

Hearing	Date	Senator - Question #	Broad topic
Budget Estimates	14 February 2024	Senator Maria Kovacic SQ24-000111	System errors of a similar nature in past financial year

SERVICES AUSTRALIA

SB24-000119

Hearing	Date	Senator - Question #	Broad topic
Budget Estimates	14 February 2024	Senator Maria Kovacic SQ24-000108	Superannuation not assessing at pension age system error Remediation Team
Supplementary Budget Estimates	25 October 2023	Senator Maria Kovacic SQ23-000713	Debts relating to superannuation not assessing at Age Pension age

	Name and Role	Group/Branch/Organisation	Phone (w)	Phone (mob)
Cleared By	Name: Laura Gannon Role: General Manager	Older Australians and Veterans Division	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Contact Officer	Name: Melissa Haines Role: National Manager	Older Australians and Veterans Division / Seniors Carers International Branch	s47F(1)	s47F(1)

Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

TOPIC: TELEPHONY PERFORMANCE

WITNESS: Jarrod Howard,
Deputy CEO Customer Service Delivery

Strategic Narrative

- In a record 10 weeks, 3,000 additional frontline staff were progressively onboarded and trained to accelerate claims processing times and improve access for customers.
- As a result, Services Australia (the Agency) has reduced congestion messaging by 51 per cent since February 2024.
- Call wait times have also improved by more than 10 minutes for Medicare customers, two minutes for Centrelink and almost four minutes for Child Support.
- The Agency is on track to meet the target to get claims volumes down to usual levels by mid-year, reducing demand into the telephony channel as customers do not need contact about the progress of their claim.
- New recruits have answered over a million calls since they began progressive onboarding and training from 27 November 2023.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- On average, the Agency hosts 9.2 million customer contacts every week. Of these, around 7.7 million (86 per cent) arrive via digital channels and 1.3 million (14 per cent) via service centres or over the phone.
- Between 1 July 2023 and 31 March 2024, the Agency handled nearly 42.3 million phone calls, with service officers answering approximately 14.3 million phone calls.

For the 2023–24 financial year as at 31 March 2024:

- Centrelink (including Payments & Integrity) services received the greatest telephony demand, making up more than 33.9 million of the 42.3 million calls the Agency received.

- Of those 33.9 million Centrelink calls:
 - 7.7 million calls were answered by service officers;
 - Approximately 11.0 million calls were handled within the Self Service channel, an aspect that isn't widely recognised but is popular for completing routine tasks from reporting income to checking balances;
 - 11.3 million were directed to congestion messaging during periods of high demand, where customers don't join the queue and are instead provided information about online alternatives; and
 - 3.3 million were terminated by customers who either chose to try again later or followed the advice provided through proactive Interactive Voice Response (IVR) messaging.
- There has been over 34,000 calls answered on the Emergency Information Line during the current financial year as at 31 March 2024.
- Currently 4 million customers connect with the Agency using their voiceprint. More than 291,000 customers registered their voiceprint last financial year (2022–23), with 122,000 registered so far this financial year (2023–24) as at 31 March 2024.
- A voiceprint is another way to use your unique features with the Agency to identify who you are, similar to a fingerprint. A voiceprint uses distinctive features in your voice, including its sound, rhythm and pattern to securely prove your identity.
- Using a voiceprint provides customers a more personalised Interactive Voice Response (IVR) experience, including the ability to complete multiple transactions without needing to talk to a service officer.

Talking Points

- As new recruits become operational in telephony, the Agency pivots experienced staff to process claims, which creates additional capacity.
- The Agency continues to work hard to improve the customer experience and reduce the use of congestion messaging.
 - This includes trialling options for how congestion is used for repeat callers.
- The Agency provides information to Social Security and Welfare customers on the estimated wait times they may experience across the main business lines.
- By advancing technology and building the capability of our workforce, the Agency is improving its ability to serve customers in a more holistic way.
 - The Digital Assistant is available to help people navigate the Agency's online services and find information; and

- The Agency continues to simplify telephony operations, reducing the number of virtual queues by 68 per cent (over 1,100 since September 2022), making it easier for customers to get through to the right person the first time.
- Additionally, the Agency delivers cross-government and critical surge capacity services on behalf of Government, including Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) contact centre services for elections.
- This financial year, the Agency continued to support people impacted by natural disasters and emergencies.
- The Agency also provides telephony services for whole of government responses to sensitive overseas incidents such as the Gaza crisis.

Background

Demand pressures

- The Agency entered the 2023–24 financial year with a reduced budget following the cessation of pandemic-era funding.
- In 2023, policy changes that expanded eligibility for some payments and services, resulted in a higher volume of claims overall.
- In October 2023, the Australian Government boosted the Agency’s workforce by 3,000 staff to improve access to Centrelink and Medicare services.
- Staff were progressively onboarded and began training from 27 November 2023.
- The Agency supports almost every Australian at some point in their lives, including through key life events such as having a baby, accessing childcare, retiring from the workforce or entering aged care.

The following definitions apply to telephony:

- **Handled Calls** are calls that have reached the Agency and include:
 - Centrelink successful IVR calls;
 - Health Customer – answered calls, calls handled in Health Customer IVR applications (Child Dental Benefits Scheme, Office Locator and Tax Statement);
 - Health Provider – answered calls, calls handled in the Health Provider IVR application (Optometric and Concessional Entitlement Status Confirmation);
 - Health PBS – answered calls; and
 - Child Support – answered calls.
- **Answered calls** are calls answered by a Service Officer.

- **Terminated by customer calls** have progressed through the IVR, entered a queue waiting to be answered and the call is ended (hung up) before it is answered by a Service Officer. They were formerly known as 'Abandoned calls'.
- **Average Speed of Answer** is the average time it takes for a call waiting in the queue to be answered. The speed of answer is measured from when a call leaves the IVR menu (i.e. joins the queue to be answered) to when it is answered by a Service Officer.
- **Busy signals** ceased being used as a method to manage demand from 1 July 2020.
- **Congestion Messaging** is only activated in periods of high demand and provides detail of the digital services available to customers. The message encourages callers to conduct their business through self-service options rather than repeatedly calling.

Relevant media coverage

- Wait times regularly receive media attention during times of seasonal peak demand and following the release of performance data through Senate Estimates hearings.

Media enquiries

Enquiry date	Source	Response provided
29 February 2024	Yahoo Finance (s47F(1)) - Customer case and call wait times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unfortunately our phone wait times are longer than we'd like and we sincerely apologise to people who are waiting longer than they should. • While we can't comment on individual cases, we extend an offer to work directly with the customer to ensure she's getting the support she is eligible for. • We manage around 1 million phone contacts a week. • We encourage anyone who needs to speak with us to try again – people are getting through, and our staff are working hard to answer calls. • We now have 3,000 new staff to help process claims and take calls. They're being comprehensively trained and are already helping with calls and claims across the board. • By April, we expect to see positive impacts on claim processing times and call wait times as these staff become fully trained.

Enquiry date	Source	Response provided
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are here to help people in financial hardship, and encourage anyone in these circumstances to contact us to chat to one of our staff members who can also connect people to social work support.
16 January 2024	<i>SBS News</i> (s47F(1)) - Call wait Times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our wait times are longer than we'd like and we're sorry some people are waiting longer than they should be. We manage around 1 million phone contacts a week. We encourage anyone who needs to speak with us to try again – people are getting through, and our staff are working hard to answer calls. The Australian Government has recently boosted Services Australia staff by 3,000 to help improve the customer experience. The last of these are being onboarded and will begin training by the end of this week. These new staff will predominantly work on processing claims and answering calls as they are onboarded and trained. We have around 10 million customer interactions on any given week and 90 per cent of those are digital. We are continuing to improve our digital services so people have the option of managing their business 24/7, when it suits them. If you can go online, please do. We have simple yet detailed information on the payments and services available to customers on our website, and we also have Digital Coaches in offices to guide people in using our online services. Seasonal peaks also occur such as during tax time, and as childcare and education activities resume. If anyone is in financial hardship, please visit your local Services Australia office if you can, and our staff can help you.

Questions on Notice**Estimates QONs**

Hearing	Date	Senator - Question #	Broad topic
Additional Estimates	14 February 2024	Senator Louise Pratt SQ24-000053	Claim Processing Times Effect on Call Wait Times
		Senator Janet Rice SQ24-000058	IVR and Congestion Messaging
		Senator Janet Rice SQ24-000124	National Relay Service
		Senator Maria Kovacic SQ24-000157	Voice Biometrics

Attachments

Attachment A – Telephony Report – 2022–23.

Attachment B – Telephony Report – 2023–24 FYTD 31 March 2024.

	Name and Role	Group/Branch/Organisation	Phone (w)	Phone (mob)
Cleared By	Name: Jarrod Howard Role: Deputy CEO	Customer Service Delivery	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Contact Officer	Name: Bo Robertson Role: General Manager	Operations Management Division	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Consultation	Name: Garrett McDonald Role: Chief Data Officer	Strategy and Performance/Data and Analytics Division	s47F(1)	s47F(1)



Services
Australia

Services Australia Telephony Report

2022/23 Financial Year as at 30 June 2023

Multicultural and Tailored Services	38,833		38,833	2,692	1:06	
New Customers	132,776		132,776	12,439	4:58	
Specialised Assessments	32,567		32,567	1,153	1:43	

- a. 'Handled Calls' are calls that have reached the Agency and include:
- Centrelink successful IVR calls.
 - Payments and Integrity successful IVR calls.
 - Health Customer - answered calls, calls handed in the Health Customer IVR applications. (Child Dental Benefits Scheme, Office Locator and Tax Statement).
 - Health Provider - answered calls, calls handled in the Health Provider IVR application.
 - Health PBS - answered calls.
 - Child Support - answered calls.
- b. 'Self-Managed' are calls that are finalised in the IVR and include:
- Centrelink (SSW) - calculated as "Handled Calls' minus sum ('answered', 'terminated by customers' and congestion messaging').
These are calls completed in the IVR and not required to be answered by a Customer Service Officer. these are calls handled in a number of IVR applications. (Reporting Employment Income, Advance Payments, Urgent Payments, Document Requests, BasicsCard Balance Enquiry, Payment Information and Debt)
 - Payments and Integrity - not applicable.
 - Health Customer - calculated as "Handled Calls' minus 'answered'. These are calls handled in the Customer IVR application (Child Dental Benefits Scheme, Office Locator and Tax Statement)
 - Health Provider - calculated as 'handled calls' minus 'answered'. These are calls handled in the Health Provider application (Optometric and Concessional Entitlement Status Confirmation).
 - Health PBS - not applicable.
 - Child Support - not applicable.
- c. 'Answered calls' are calls answered by a Service Officer.
- d. 'Terminated by customer' calls are calls that have progressed through the IVR, entered a queue waiting to be answered and the call is ended, (hung up), before it is answered by a Service Officer. 'Terminated by customer calls' were formerly known as 'Abandoned calls'.
- e. 'Average Speed of Answer' (ASA) is the average time it takes for a call waiting in the queue to be answered. The speed of answer is measured from when a call leaves the IVR menu (i.e. joins the queue to be answered) to when it is answered by a Service Officer.
- f. 'Congestion Messaging' is activated in periods of high demand and provide an alternative service option for customers when their call cannot be answered. The message encourages callers to conduct their business through self-service options rather than repeatedly calling. Congestion Messaging is not used on Child Support lines.
* Congestion Messaging is influenced by a number of factors, including annual peaks in demand - such as Students and Families peak periods, and policy changes made throughout the year. In 2022-23,
- g. 'Disabilities, Sickness and Carers' includes calls associated with Carer Allowance, Care Payment, Disability Support Pension and Mobility Allowance.
- h. 'Employment Services' includes calls associated with JobSeeker Payment, Special Benefit, Assurance of Support, Crisis Payment and Employment Services Providers.
- i. 'Families and Parenting' includes calls associated with Child Care Subsidy, Dad and Partner Pay, Double Orphan Pension, Family Tax Benefit, Parental Leave Pay and Parenting Payment.
- j. 'Older Australians' includes calls associated with Age Pension, Commonwealth Seniors Health Card Bereavement assistance, Pensioner Concession Card and the Home Equity Access Scheme.
- k. 'Youth and Students' includes calls associated with Austudy, Low Income Health Care Card, Pensioner Education Supplement, Tertiary Access Payment and Youth Allowance.
- l. 'Other' includes several telephone lines including Australian Victim of Terrorism Overseas Payment, Income Management (including Basics Card), myGov, Emergency response, NDIA (National Disability Insurance Agency), APIS (Australian Passport Information Service), International Services and Multilingual services.
- m. 'Participation' includes calls are associated with activity tested recipients who may not have met obligations. Primarily recipients are required to actively participate in approved activities. This line differs from the Employment Services line as its purpose is for compliance discussions with recipients.
- n. Income Management and BasicsCard share the same 1800 phone number which is why handled calls are counted for both call types. Calls can only be separated once the customer has made a selection in the IVR.



Services Australia Telephony Report

1 July 2023 - 31 March 2024

1 Jul 2023 - 31 Mar 2024

	Answered			Terminated by customer ^d	ASA ^e (mm:ss)	Congestion messages ^f
	Handled Calls ^a	Self-Managed ^b	By Service Officer ^c			
Centrelink (Social Security and Welfare - SSW)	33,288,257	11,600,217	7,214,734	3,205,127	31:55	11,268,179
Disabilities, Sickness and Carers ^g	3,021,711	548,698	318,331	165,521	47:49	1,989,161
Employment Services ^h	4,706,598	748,532	539,146	288,626	49:21	3,130,294
Families and Parenting ⁱ	6,591,894	513,588	1,109,381	542,844	51:59	4,426,081
Older Australians ^j	1,949,590	668,672	381,900	226,887	47:16	672,131
Youth and Students ^k	1,566,422	268,842	215,287	98,329	45:38	983,964
Other ^l	15,452,042	8,852,016	4,650,689	1,882,920	22:08	66,417
- Participation ^m			69,479	41,034	41:29	131
- Emergency Management	100,105	44,674	50,222	5,209	4:21	
- Income Management ⁿ			52,446	19,306	24:40	
- BasicsCard enquiry, BasicsCard balance enquiry	2,493,816	1,093,797	979,818	420,201	16:38	
- Balance enquiry	1,401,877	1,401,877				
Payments and Integrity (separated from SSW)	628,952	113,009	462,693	53,250	4:51	
Health Customer	1,516,901	17,195	1,499,706	773,546	23:26	1,126,086
Medicare	1,206,244	17,195	1,189,049	657,975	25:02	
Australian Immunisation Register	44,571		44,571	19,361	13:08	
Medicare myGov						
Centrelink Aged Care	177,971		177,971	78,519	24:09	477,327
Other	88,115		88,115	17,691	5:36	648,759
Health Provider	2,927,082	1,660,494	1,266,588	223,249	5:03	
Medicare Provider	2,021,862	1,660,494	361,368	42,865	3:18	
PBS General	128,974		128,974	14,029	2:26	
PBS Improved Monitoring Entitlements.	189,567		189,567	15,098	1:35	
Other	586,679		586,679	151,257	7:50	
Health PBS Authorities	2,903,774	N/A	2,903,774	130,604	1:36	
Child Support	1,008,405	N/A	1,008,405	161,604	10:05	
Compliance	82,459		82,459	4,475	1:52	
Mainstream	786,443		786,443	137,819	11:29	
Multicultural and Tailored Services	36,614		36,614	2,889	1:22	
New Customers	83,212		83,212	15,101	10:25	
Specialised Assessments	19,677		19,677	1,320	3:21	

The 'Participation', Emergency Management', 'Income Management', 'BasicsCard enquiry', 'BasicsCard balance enquiry' and 'Balance enquiry' lines are subsets of the 'Other' total.

- m. 'Participation' includes calls are associated with activity tested recipients who may not have met obligations. Primarily recipients are required to actively participate in approved activities. This line differs from the Employment Services line as its purpose is for compliance discussions with recipients.
- n. Income Management and BasicsCard share the same 1800 phone number which is why handled calls are counted for both call types. Calls can only be separated once the customer has made a selection in the IVR.

Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

TOPIC: CLAIMS PROCESSING

WITNESS: Jarrod Howard,
Deputy CEO, Customer Service Delivery

Strategic Narrative

- In a record 10 weeks, 3,000 additional frontline staff were progressively onboarded and trained to accelerate claims processing times.
- This has seen the backlog of Centrelink and Medicare claims reduce in just 10 weeks by 500,000.
- All the new staff were onboarded by mid-January 2024 and finished training in early April 2024.
- During training this year, 4.85 million new claims came in and the backlog peaked at 1.35 million.
- The Agency is on track to meet the target to get claims volumes down to usual levels by mid-year.
- Reducing the outstanding claims is helping to bring down call wait times, resulting in fewer people contacting regarding the progress of their claim.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- From 1 July 2023 to 31 March 2024, the Agency processed more than 345.8 million Social Security and Welfare claims and Medicare services, in addition to 127,000 Australian Disaster Recovery Payment and Disaster Recovery Allowance claims.
- The Agency has also completed 3 million Child Support activities, supporting families to help with the costs of raising children.
- The Agency is also managing five emergency activations with 123,000 claims finalised and \$77.1 million paid to Australians since October 2023.
- Since 27 November 2023 (as at 21 April 2024), the new recruits have processed over 677,000 claims and the agency has made significant inroads to eliminate the backlog.

Across Social Security and Welfare, we have reduced:

- Commonwealth Seniors Health Card claims on hand by 70 per cent and over standard claims by 84 per cent.
- Low Income Card claims on hand by 86 per cent and over standard claims by 96 per cent.
- Parenting (Partnered and Single) claims on hand by 50 per cent and over standard claims by 66 per cent.
- JobSeeker (including Youth Allowance JobSeeker) claims on hand by 58 per cent and over standard claims by 79 per cent.
- Carer Allowance claims on hand by 35 per cent and over standard claims by 75 per cent.
- Paid Parental Leave (PPL) claims on hand by 7 per cent and over standard claims by 24 per cent.
- Childcare Subsidy (CCS) claims on hand by 22 per cent (noting there is no standard for this claim type).

Across Health, we have reduced:

- Medicare Online Accounts claims on hand by 68 per cent and completely wiped out over standard claims by 100 per cent.
- Medicare Newborn Enrolments claims on hand by 86 per cent and all over standard claims by 100 per cent.
- Provider Registration Application claims on hand by 47 per cent and over standard claims by 98 per cent.
- PBS Safety Net claims on hand by 39 per cent and over standard claims by 19 per cent.
- Medicare Entitlement Statements on hand by 91 per cent and over standard claims by 94 per cent.

Across Child Support, we have reduced:

- Intrays on hand by 19 per cent and over standard intrays by 21 per cent.

Background

Demand pressures

- The Agency supports almost every Australian at some point in their lives including through key life events such as having a baby, accessing childcare, retiring from the workforce or entering aged care.
- The Agency processes millions of claims a year and works hard to finalise these as quickly as possible. Processing timeframes vary depending on the payment type and complexity of the claim.
- The Agency entered the 2023-24 financial year with a reduced budget following the cessation of pandemic-era funding.
- In 2023, policy changes that expanded eligibility for some payments and services resulted in a higher volume of claims overall.
- The Agency apologises to anyone who is waiting longer than they should and asks customers to let the Agency know if they are in hardship to help the Agency prioritise claims.
- In October 2023, the Australian Government boosted the Agency's workforce by 3,000 staff to improve access to Centrelink and Medicare services.
- Staff were progressively onboarded and began training from 27 November 2023.

Social Security and Welfare

- Peaks in demand occur all year round that impact processing times and levels of work on hand, most notably:
 - The Families peak starts in July with balancing of Family Tax Benefit in line with tax lodgement, it continues into August with balancing of Child Care Subsidy, and again in October with the deadline for lodging tax returns. There is also a smaller peak in January with the commencement of the school year and new childcare placements.
 - The Student peak occurs from January to March due to the commencement of the school year, with a smaller peak in July with the start of the second semester, and another peak in September to November with study updates and other reviews to determine ongoing entitlement.
- While most customers choose to lodge claims through digital channels, our staff are focused on providing one-on-one support over the phone or in-person, where required, to increase confidence in using online services.

- Wherever possible, the Agency encourages people to claim early. Customers may lodge an early claim for an eligible Social Security and Welfare payment up to 13 weeks before their first day of qualification for payment.
- The time it takes for customers and/or third parties, including employers and nominees, to provide the information to support claim assessment is included in the overall processing time.
- The Agency makes every effort to contact customers via the phone where additional information may be required to finalise a claim.

Health

- There are several Medicare and Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) peaks throughout the year that impact processing timeliness and levels of work on hand, including:
 - Safety Net peak begins around May and continues to December. This peak traditionally commenced around October each year. However, eligibility threshold changes have resulted in higher demand.
 - Provider Registration peak from November through to March.
 - Entitlement Statements have a peak period in line with tax lodgements between July and October.
 - Australian Immunisation Register peak in line with Flu season from April to August.

Child Support

- Child Support peaks occur throughout the year, which impact on processing timeliness and levels of work on hand, including:
 - Mainstream seasonal peak, which is driven by the lodgement of tax returns, commences in July and continues through to September.
 - New Customers peak occurs between January and February, which is typically associated with an increase in separations and changes in financial circumstances.
 - Employer Services experience a peak in workload from December through to January as a result of employers closing for Christmas and condensed processing timeframes to reconcile payments.
 - There is a range of assessments impacting work that also increases across most business areas as a result of the Mainstream seasonal peak. Specialist areas are diverted to assist with the increased Mainstream telephony demand resulting in increased work on hand.

Relevant media coverage

- Processing times regularly receive media attention during times of seasonal peak demand and following the release of performance data through Senate Estimates hearings.

Media enquiries

Enquiry date	Source	Response provided
19 March 2024	s47F(1) (News.com) Processing Delays by LGA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services Australia processes millions of claims a year and we work hard to do these as quickly as possible. We acknowledge our claims processing wait times are longer than we'd like, and we sincerely apologise to people who are waiting longer than they should. We now have 3,000 new staff to help process claims and take calls. They're being comprehensively trained and are already helping with calls and claims across the board. They've processed more than 380,000 Centrelink claims and Medicare activities such as enrolments and handled almost 600,000 calls. We are starting to see early signs of improvement in some claim types and expect claim numbers to continue reducing over the coming months.

Questions on Notice

Estimates QONs

Hearing	Date	Senator - Question #	Broad topic
Additional Estimates	14 February 2024	Senator Louise Pratt SQ24-000053	Claim Processing Times Effect on Call Wait Times
		Senator Maria Kovacic SQ24-000121	Crisis Payment Timeliness
		Senator Maria Kovacic SQ24-000140	Average Progressing Days for SSW Claims
		Senator Maria Kovacic SQ24-000142	Claim Timeliness
		Senator Maria Kovacic SQ24-000144	Claim Processing
		Senator Maria Kovacic SQ24-000145	SSW Claims on Hand
		Senator Maria Kovacic SQ24-000043	SSW Average Days to Process
		Senator Maria Kovacic SQ24-000002	Health Average Days to Process

SERVICES AUSTRALIA

SB24-000129

Hearing	Date	Senator - Question #	Broad topic
		Senator Maria Kovacic SQ24-000003	Claims Completed and Claims over KPI
		Senator Maria Kovacic SQ24-000004	SSW Claims on Hand and Over Standard
		Senator Maria Kovacic SQ24-000005	SSW Claims on Hand as at 01 January 2024

	Name and Role	Group/Branch/Organisation	Phone (w)	Phone (mob)
Cleared By	Name: Jarrod Howard Role: Deputy CEO	Customer Service Delivery Group	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Contact Officer	Name: Bo Robertson Role: General Manager	Operations Management Division	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Consultation	Name: Garrett McDonald Role: Chief Data Officer	Strategy and Performance/Data and Analytics Division	s47F(1)	s47F(1)

Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

TOPIC: SECURITY RISK MANAGEMENT REVIEW

WITNESS: Jarrod Howard, Deputy Chief Executive Officer

Strategic Narrative

- Services Australia (the Agency) is committed to safety and security for all staff working to provide vital services for the Australian community.
- The Agency takes seriously its obligations to manage the health and safety of staff in accordance with the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Cth)*.
- On 3 May 2024, the Government committed a further \$314.1 million over two years (2024-25 and 2025-26) to improve the safety of Agency staff and customers.
- The new funding is in addition to the \$46.9 million the Government already committed in 2023-24 to immediately respond to the Security Risk Management Review (the Review) strengthening security at the Agency. This was announced through the 2023-24 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO).
- The Review outlined the extensive range of measures the Agency already has in place to protect staff, and provided recommendations to improve these measures.
- The Key Findings and 44 Recommendations cover security capabilities, service centre design, managed service plans and the adequacy of legislation to prevent and respond to customer aggression.
- The Agency is acting on all recommendations from the Review and responded immediately. The safety of all staff is paramount, and the Agency is committed to ensuring that all staff can serve the Australian public without fear of violence.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- The Review made 44 recommendations to improve staff safety and reduce customer aggression.
- The Agency has 318 service centres across Australia.
- Social workers are currently located at most service centre locations with high levels of customer aggression and vulnerability. Alternative social work servicing strategies are in place for locations without a face-to-face service.
- The Agency continues to undertake recruitment of social workers.

	FY 2022-2023	FYTD As at 31 December 2023	FYTD As at 31 March 2024
Service centre engagements	>10 million	5.3 million	8.1 million
Customer aggression incidents in service centres	8,993	6,092	9,182
Number of staff in Face-to-Face Services Division	6,470 (as at 30/6/23)	6,207	6,581
Number of social workers in service centres	417 in 188 service centres (as at 30/6/23)	385 in 180 service centres	376 in 179 service centres

Talking Points**2024-25 Budget Announcement**

- The additional funding over 2024-25 and 2025-26 will assist the Agency to improve staff and customer safety including:
 - Continue the legislative amendments which will see the progress of a Commonwealth Workplace Protection Order Scheme, which enables Commonwealth agencies to seek a Workplace Protection Order in response to physical or non-physical violence directed at staff or at Commonwealth workplaces.

- Fund up to 606 security guards to ensure there are two guards at service centres at high risk of high levels of customer aggression.
- Transform an additional 35 service centres at risk of high levels of customer aggression, to the contemporary service centre design including enhanced security features.
- Establish a centralised Security Operations Centre to help the Agency respond in real time to customer aggression incidents.
- Expand the roll out of Customer Self Check-in Kiosks to minimise frustrations caused by queues, and provide real time information to service centre leaders about presenting customers and any known risks.
- Continue the delivery of Advanced Customer Aggression training to all frontline service delivery staff.
- Implement a new agency-wide system to better record, view and manage incidents of customer aggression.
- Liaise more closely with law enforcement to ensure better intelligence so that the Agency can service customers safely.
- Work with the Department of Social Services to enhance the policy and accessibility of urgent payments, including the use of a digital Electronic Benefits Transfer Card to reduce customer traffic and safely service customers who don't have access to a bank account.

Stakeholder engagement

- The Review recommendations were informed by comprehensive staff engagement.
- Mr Ashton visited service centres across New South Wales and Victoria, including Airport West Service Centre, and engaged directly with hundreds of staff in forming his views.

Communication of the findings and recommendations

- On 13 October 2023, Minister Shorten announced the Key Findings and Recommendations as well as the actions, that are immediately being progressed in response to the Review. As the Review discusses the Agency's security processes at length and recommendations that directly relate to the safety of staff members, the Agency is limited in what details can be made public to ensure the release of information does not compromise staff safety.

Airport West incident specifically

- As the circumstances of the incident are the subject of criminal proceedings and a Comcare Investigation, it would not be appropriate to provide comment on the specific incident itself.

Implementation progress to date

- Seven recommendations from the Review have been implemented in full. Actions taken to improve the security and safety of staff include:
 - Legislative amendments have been progressed by the Attorney-General's Department to strengthen offences for acts of violence and aggression against Commonwealth frontline staff. The Criminal Code Amendment (Protecting Commonwealth Frontline Workers) Bill 2024 was introduced in the Autumn 2024 Parliamentary sitting period;
 - Increased security guard utilisation to ensure service centres at risk of high levels of customer aggression are attended by two security guards at all times.
 - Approximately 260 additional frontline staff have received Advanced Customer Aggression training, skilling them with the practice and confidence to respond and de-escalate customer aggression;
 - The Airport West Service Centre design has been enhanced. Work is on track to remediate another five service centres by 30 June 2024, which will receive additional security features, such as the enhanced 'lobby' design with a customer self-check-in kiosk; and
 - Improved visibility of risk information for staff in the event that a customer that has caused serious customer aggression presents at a service centre.

Timeline of recent or significant events

Date	Action
3 May 2024	Minister Shorten announced the government, through the 2024-25 Budget, will commit \$314 million over two years to significantly strengthen safety and security in Agency Service centres.
13 October 2023	Minister Shorten announced the government, through MYEFO, committed \$46.9 million in 2023-24 to immediately respond to the recommendations, and the Security Risk Management Review key findings and recommendations were published on the Agency's website.
31 July 2023	Mr Ashton completed the Security Risk Management Review and briefed Minister Shorten and the Agency.
24 May 2023	Minister Shorten announced the Services Australia Security Risk Management Review be undertaken by former Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police, Mr Graham Ashton AM APM.
23 May 2023	Staff member injured at Services Australia, Airport West Service Centre.

Background

- The Review undertaken by former Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police, Mr Graham Ashton AM APM, was initiated by the Hon Bill Shorten MP on 24 May 2023 following an incident on 23 May 2023, at the Airport West Service Centre in Melbourne, where a staff member was seriously injured by a customer.

Relevant Media coverage

- There was significant broadcast and print media about the Airport West Service Centre incident when it occurred on 23 May 2023, with the volume of activity reducing markedly within the following week.
- There was media activity associated with a press conference and media release on 13 October 2023. This includes a print media article by the Herald Sun interviewing the staff member and Mr Ashton.
- There was media activity associated with the early 2024-25 Budget announcement on 3 May 2024 including:

Date	Source	Item
3 May 2024	<i>ABC Radio National</i>	Minister for Government Services, Bill Shorten, has announced a major security funding Radio coverage on the major security funding boost.
3 May 2024	<i>Sky News</i>	Interview with Minister for Government Services Bill Shorten Radio coverage from Airport West Service Centre referencing the Government commitment of \$314 million over the next two years.
3 May 2024	<i>The Canberra Times</i>	Services Australia receives \$314 million security boost Article mentions the \$314 million security boost to protect customers and staff at Services Australia centres.
3 May 2024	<i>The Age</i>	Joanne was stabbed while at work at Centrelink. She says it should never have happened Article includes quotes from the staff member.
3 May 2024	<i>Channel 7</i>	Security will be beefed up at Services Australia News coverage including Minister Shorten's announcement.

Date	Source	Item
3 May 2024	10 News	Budget Boost - \$314 million support for Australian service centres News coverage including security footage and the announcement from Airport West Service Centre.
3 May 2024	Sky News	Services Australia: Hundreds of security guards announced for Centrelink, Medicare centres after violent attack on staff member. Article referencing the Government commitment of \$314 million over the next 2 years.
3 May 2024	Community and Public Sector Union – Media release	CPSU Applauds Government's \$314 Million Investment in Safety for Services Australia. Media release references that the CPSU welcomes the Government investment in the safety of staff and customers in Services Australia workplaces.

Media enquiries

Enquiry date	Source	Response provided
11 October 2023	<i>Herald Sun</i>	12 October 2023
7 July 2023	<i>Herald Sun</i>	7 July 2023
20 July 2023	<i>Herald Sun</i>	20 July 2023

Relevant Ministerial Comments

Date	Minister	Details
3 May 2024	Minister Shorten	The Minister held a press announcement and announced a commitment of \$314 million over two years to significantly strengthen safety and security at Services Australia Service Centres in communities.
28 March 2024	Joint with Minister Shorten and the Attorney General	The Minister issued a public statement about the introduction of the Criminal Code Amendment (Protecting Commonwealth Frontline Workers) Bill 2024. Noting the stronger protections for Commonwealth frontline workers.
22 February 2024	Minister Shorten	The Minister provided a speech at the Rebuilding trust and integrity in the Australian Public Service conference. The Minister referenced the Security Risk Management Review as an example of how seriously the government takes staff safety.

Date	Minister	Details
19 October 2023	Minister Shorten	The Minister updated the government on the Security Risk Management Review into staff safety at Services Australia.
13 October 2023	Minister Shorten	The Minister issued a public statement and announced that there will be stronger protections for frontline staff and the government will prioritise stronger legislation to combat violence and aggression against public sector workers as recommended by the Review.
13 October 2023	Minister Shorten	The Minister held a press announcement and announced a commitment of more than \$40m to strengthen security and that the government will act on all 44 recommendations of the Security Risk Management Review by former Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police, Graham Ashton AM APM.
24 May 2023	Minister Shorten	The Minister issued a public statement and announced that a Security Risk Management Review for Services Australia, to be led by former Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police, Graham Ashton AM APM.

Questions on Notice Estimates QONs

Hearing	Date	Senator - Question #	Broad topic
Supplementary Budget Estimates	29 September 2023	The Hon Paul Fletcher MP PQ23-000118	Security Risk Management Review

Freedom of Information (FOI)

Request Date	Who	Relating to	Documents released
21 August 2023	s47F(1)	Services Australia Security Risk Management Review	This request has been completed and documents released.

	Name and Role	Group/Branch/Organisation	Phone (w)	Phone (mob)
Cleared By	Name: Jarrod Howard Role: Deputy Chief Executive Officer	Customer Service Delivery Group	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Contact Officer	Name: Jodie Robinson Role: General Manager	Child Support and Tailored Services Division	s47F(1)	s47F(1)

Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

TOPIC: CONTACT CENTRE MANAGEMENT IN SERVICES AUSTRALIA

WITNESS: Jarrod Howard,
Deputy CEO, Customer Service Delivery

Strategic Narrative

- Services Australia (the Agency) operates the largest contact centre in the southern hemisphere, with a network of over 79 contact centres (also known as smart centres) located across Australia delivering telephony and processing services for Centrelink, Child Support, and Medicare.
- As at 31 March 2024, there were approximately 24,000 staff in the Customer Service Delivery Group (CSDG) including approximately 3,000 leaders.
- Staff handle over 55 million calls, provide over \$219 billion in payments and process more than 465 million claims a year.
- To ensure the Agency can deliver customer outcomes on such a large scale, industry standard contact centre tools are used including schedules and auxiliary codes (AUX codes).
- AUX codes are not used for monitoring purposes, but to enable the Agency to provide accessible, quality and timely services.
- The Agency is proactive in managing the impacts of work demands, and promotes healthy workplaces, which include the physical environment, psychosocial environment, health and wellness, and work-life balance.
- In recent years, the Agency has made significant efforts to skill leaders in contemporary, human-centred practices that support staff.
- The Agency values our staff's contribution to the 2023 APS Employee Census and has several programs in place to respond to our workforce's identified needs.

Talking Points

- The Agency does not instruct leaders to monitor bathroom breaks or undertake surveillance of staff.
- AUX codes have been used for many years and are a standard contact industry tool to manage workforce availability to meet customer needs.
- The Agency needs Service Officers to be available to take customer calls or process claims when they are scheduled to do so. This is balanced with staff wellbeing, availability, breaks and opportunities.
- Staff have a five-minute screen break every hour, 15 minute tea breaks morning and afternoon, and at least half an hour for lunch. Staff are not limited to those times for toilet or water breaks, and can select a screen-based break AUX code to prevent calls from being delivered.
- The Agency encourages leaders to consider staff performance holistically and based on trends, through contemporary coaching approaches aimed at supporting Service Officers to achieve customer outcomes.
- Contemporary leadership development has been a focus for the Agency, including training leaders in psychological safety and human-centred performance in a contact centre environment.

Background

- At the previous round of Senate Estimates in February 2024, the Agency received questions regarding the alleged monitoring of toilet breaks. The CEO and Deputy CEO CSDG advised that they would look into the allegations to ensure that it was not occurring.
- On 16 February 2024, Deputy CEO CSDG wrote to all staff in CSDG, reiterating that the monitoring of toilet breaks does not align to the Agency's culture or leadership expectations. He invited all staff to reach out to him, or other senior leaders in the group, if they have any concerns to ensure that issues could be solved as they arise.
- On 19 February 2024, the CEO wrote to all staff in the Agency to reiterate that monitoring of toilet breaks is not the Agency's policy or practice. The CEO encouraged staff to report any occurrences to their senior leaders if it ever occurs.
- In February and March 2024, Deputy CEO CSDG met with leaders at all levels across CSDG reinforcing the expectations set out in previous communications, including the focus on human-centred leadership.
- On 4 March 2024, Deputy CEO CSDG again wrote to all staff in CSDG thanking them for their feedback and advising that there were a very small number of areas that needed extra support, and conversations with those leaders had occurred.

- Deputy CEO CSDG will continue to seek feedback from staff and encourage them to raise any concerns.

AUX codes and schedule adherence

- Contact centre staff schedules contain information on start and finish times, tea break and mealtimes, activities (work queues and types) and exceptions (off phone events) undertaken for the day.
- Schedule adherence is a critical piece of information regarding how often a Service Officer can complete their scheduled activities during the day. This information helps the Agency meet its service delivery requirements by trying to closely match Service Officers' working arrangements to forecast demand.
- Services Officers may have unanticipated events throughout the working day, which impacts adherence and the ability to complete scheduled activities.
- AUX codes are entered by Service Officers to inform what they are doing each day, including activities that are unanticipated. The information captured through AUX codes supports the Agency's continual planning processes including forecast demand and handle time.
- AUX codes also support the Agency to create a healthy and balanced work environment. As an example, the Workplace Health and Safety AUX code enables the Agency to understand customer aggression incidents and how staff can best be supported.

APS Employee Census results and attrition

- The APS State of the Service Report 2023 compared ongoing attrition/separation rates of agencies, excluding moves to other APS agencies, in the period from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023. The Agency rate of approximately 9 per cent for the period may be compared to:
 - Whole of APS rate of approximately 8 per cent.
 - Australian Taxation Office rate of approximately 7 per cent.
 - Department of Defence rate of approximately 9 per cent.
 - Department of Home Affairs rate of approximately 7 per cent.
- Approximately 40 per cent of the Agency's ongoing separations are due to employees taking up roles in other APS agencies.
- The Agency is committed to creating a safe and healthy environment for all its employees and continually looks for opportunities to build healthier workplaces.
- The Agency has a range of resources to promote mentally healthy workplaces. These include strategies and tools to identify and manage work-related risks, build capability to respond to and promote positive aspects of work that contribute to good mental health, including:
 - Leader Wellbeing Conversations Toolkit;
 - mental health training;

- safe service focus – a trauma informed approach;
- mentally healthy learning bites;
- My Wellbeing Plan;
- Staff Distress Response toolkit; and
- APS mental health capability framework.

Media coverage

Date	Source	Item
14 February 2024	ABC News	Services Australia employees publicly shamed for toilet breaks over 5 minutes.
18 January 2024	The Guardian	Centrelink staff claim toilet breaks are being timed by management in crackdown.

Media enquiries

Enquiry date	Source	Response provided
17 January 2024	The Guardian	17 January 2024

	Name and Role	Group/Branch/Organisation	Phone (w)	Phone (mob)
Cleared By	Name: Jarrod Howard Role: Deputy CEO	Customer Service Delivery Group	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Contact Officer	Name: Nicky Bell Role: General Manager	Smart Centres Operations Division	s47F(1)	s47F(1)

Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

TOPIC: EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

**WITNESS: Jonathon Thorpe
Deputy CEO, Service Delivery Excellence**

Strategic Narrative

- The Australian Government is committed to supporting people impacted by natural disasters and Services Australia (the Agency) plays a key role in the delivery of support and services for those affected.
- The Agency continues to work closely with the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) in responding to the 2023-24 High Risk Weather Season.
- In the case of an emergency event, the Minister for Emergency Management has the delegation to activate Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payments (AGDRP), the Disaster Recovery Allowance (DRA), and their ex-gratia equivalents for eligible New Zealand citizens.
- The Agency has responded to five declared emergencies during the 2023-24 higher risk weather season:
 - Western and Darling Downs Bushfires – October 2023: AGDRP & DRA (activated on 31 October 2023);
 - Tropical Cyclone Jasper – December 2023: AGDRP & DRA (activated on 20 December 2023);
 - South East Queensland Severe Storms and Flooding – December 2023 to January 2024: AGDRP & DRA (activated on Monday 8 January 2024 for 27 suburbs and extended on 15 January 2024 to include an additional 10 suburbs. A further extension was activated on 25 January 2024 to include another 26 suburbs and again on 12 February 2024 to include an additional four suburbs);

- Heavy Rainfall and Flooding – City of Moreton Bay – January 2024 (suburb of Bray Park): AGDRP (activated on Wednesday 14 February 2024); and
- Western Victoria Bushfires – February 2024: AGDRP and DRA (activated on Monday 4 March 2024).
- The Agency was able to deliver on NEMA's recommendation of declaring AGDRP/NZDRP for suburbs significantly impacted in the South East Queensland Severe Storms and Flooding – December 2023 to January 2024, and subsequent events.
- This new approach provides a contemporary means to deliver payments, in addition to Local Government Areas (LGAs), enabling a more targeted approach to support eligible customers most directly impacted by a disaster.
- In 2023-24, the Agency received \$238.1 million to establish a cost-effective emergency capability, to ensure the Agency can rapidly respond to natural disasters. This measure includes 850 trained staff ready to be quickly mobilised to support communities affected by natural disasters.
- In addition, the Agency has made additional improvements:
 - As of 31 October 2023, the Agency has implemented AGDRP automation after the Social Security Amendment (Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment Bill 2023) passed both Houses of Parliament on 14 September 2023.
 - The Emergency Management Strategy 2023-26 and Emergency Management Playbook outline the Agency's emergency management strategic direction and formalises the preparedness and activation tasks required to be delivered in the case of an emergency.
- As of 12 January 2024, the total number of staff who have volunteered to be part of the Agency's Emergency Reservists sits at 687 across the country.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES**Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment (AGDRP) & Disaster Recovery Allowance (DRA)**

In the 2023-24 financial year, emergency payments have been activated for 5 events:

- Western Victoria Bushfires – February 2024: AGDRP (activated on Wednesday 21 February 2024 for one suburb and extended on Monday 4 March 2024 to include an additional two suburbs).
- Heavy Rainfall and Flooding – City of Moreton Bay – January 2024 (suburb of Bray Park): AGDRP (activated on Wednesday 14 February 2024).
- South East Queensland Severe Storms and Flooding – December 2023 to January 2024: (AGDRP & DRA activated on Monday 8 January 2024 for 27 suburbs and extended on 15 January 2024 to include an additional 10 suburbs. A further extension was activated on 25 January 2024 to include another 26 suburbs and again on 12 February 2024 to include an additional four suburbs).
- Tropical Cyclone Jasper December 2023: AGDRP & DRA (activated on 20 December 2023).
- Western and Darling Downs Bushfires October 2023: AGDRP & DRA (activated on 31 October 2023).

In the 2022-23 financial year, emergency payments were activated for 9 events:

- New South Wales Floods July 2022: AGDRP & DRA (activated on 6 July 2022);
- New South Wales Floods September 2022: AGDRP (activated on 30 October 2022) & DRA (activated on 13 October 2022);
- Victorian Floods October 2022: AGDRP & DRA (activated on 16 October 2022);
- Tasmanian Floods October 2022: AGDRP & DRA (activated on 16 October 2022);
- South Australian Floods November 2022: DRA only (activated on 25 November 2022);
- Western Australia Ex-Tropical Cyclone Ellie (December 2022 – January 2023): AGDRP (activated on 14 January 2023) & DRA (activated on 8 January 2023);
- Northern Territory Ex-Tropical Cyclone Ellie (December 2022 – January 2023): DRA only (activated on 8 January 2023);

- Northern Queensland Monsoon and Flooding (December 2022 – March 2023): AGDRP and DRA (activated on 17 March 2023); and
- Northern Territory Northern Region Flooding February 2023: AGDRP and DRA (activated on 29 March 2023).

For disaster payments activated in the 2023-24 financial year, from 1 July 2023 to 31 March 2024:

- 33,200 calls have been answered on the Australian Government Emergency Line (180 22 66);
- 53,300 claims for AGDRP have been granted, with \$62.1 million paid; and
- 3,400 DRA claims have been granted, with \$15.1 million paid.

For disaster payments activated in the 2022-23 financial year, from 1 July 2022 to 31 March 2024:

- 253,000 calls were answered on the Australian Government Emergency Information Line (180 22 66);
- 1.1 million claims for AGDRP were granted, with \$1.2 billion paid; and
- 15,200 DRA claims were granted, with \$58.7 million paid.

Talking Points - *If asked:*

- The Agency delivers AGDRP on behalf of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA).
- The Agency's capacity to deliver these payments has been supported through the *Social Security Amendment (Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment) Act 2023* which received Royal Assent on 28 September 2023.
- The amendments provide greater certainty in supporting automation processes and ensure the timely payment of claims for AGDRP in the 2023-24 High Risk Weather Season and beyond.
- If the Agency's automated decision-making system identifies that someone did not meet the criteria for AGDRP, the claim will be referred to an Agency staff member to be assessed manually.
- No claims for AGDRP will be refused through automation. Refusal decisions will be a result of manual processing by the Agency.
- Automated processes in place to support AGDRP only relate to the granting of claims and does not apply to debt recovery.

If asked: How long from activation till payments can be provided?

- Once activated, the Agency is able to provide emergency payments to eligible Australians in declared areas as directed by NEMA, within 24 hours plus 2pm.
- AGDRP provides \$1,000 per eligible adult and \$400 per eligible child directly into bank accounts.
- The DRA provides assistance for claimants who have lost income for a period of up to 13 weeks, starting from the first day their income was impacted which can be from the event start date, as written in the signed Instrument.
 - The ex-gratia payment equivalent of AGDRP provides one-off financial assistance to eligible New Zealand citizens residing in Australia who hold a “non-protected” Special Category (subclass 444) visa.
 - The ex-gratia allowance equivalent of DRA provides short-term income support to eligible New Zealand citizens residing in Australia who hold a “non-protected” Special Category (subclass 444) visa.
- As there are many challenges facing the community when a disaster occurs, the Agency provides different channels for people to claim disaster support:
 - The fastest and easiest way to claim is online. People with internet access can claim disaster payments online via an individual’s Centrelink Online Account in myGov;
 - Agency staff who are on the ground can assist people face-to-face; and
 - People can also claim by calling 180 22 66, between 8am and 5pm local time Monday to Friday.
- The Agency can tailor a response that is targeted and provides accessible services for customers in remote or isolated communities. For example, the Agency can:
 - establish temporary offices and provide access to mobile devices for customers to lodge their claims;
 - provide on the ground support to assist customers with how to claim and provide any additional assistance where required;
 - provide information in-language, or link people with interpreters, including our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander customers; and
 - offer dedicated culturally sensitive remote servicing staff that are available to help streamline the claiming process.

Talking Points - General**Western Victoria Bushfires – February 2024**

- On Wednesday 21 February 2024, AGDRP was activated for eligible people in the suburb of Pomonal affected by the Western Victoria Bushfires. On

4 March 2024, AGDRP was extended to include two additional suburbs of Dadswell Bridge and Raglan.

- The claiming period for AGDRP is until 28 August 2024
- From 21 February 2024 to 31 March 2024:
 - 1,300 claims have been received for AGDRP and DRA;
 - 100 claims have been granted;
 - \$142,000 in total paid; and
 - 300 calls have been answered.

Heavy Rainfall and Flooding – City of Moreton Bay – January 2024 (suburb of Bray Park)

- On 12 February 2024, it was announced that people who suffered serious damage or injury as a result of heavy rainfall and flooding at the end of January 2024 in the suburb of Bray Park within the City of Moreton Bay Local Government Area (LGA) will be able to apply for AGDRP from 2pm Wednesday 14 February 2024.
- The claiming period for AGDRP is until 11 August 2024.
- From 12 February 2024 to 31 March 2024:
 - 2,200 claims have been received for AGDRP and DRA;
 - 300 claims have been granted;
 - \$397,000 in total paid; and
 - 600 calls have been answered.

South East Queensland Severe Storms and Flooding – December 2023 to January 2024

- On 8 January 2024, AGDRP and DRA (and the discretionary equivalents for NZ citizens residing in Australia) were activated for eligible people in 27 suburbs affected by severe storms and flooding in Queensland.
- On 15 January 2024, AGDRP extended to include an additional 10 suburbs.
- On 25 January 2024, AGDRP extended to include an additional 26 suburbs.
- On 12 February 2024, AGDRP extended to include an additional four suburbs.
- NEMA recommended the declaration of suburbs for AGDRP and LGAs for DRA for the purpose of this event.
 - The total number of suburbs for this event is 67.
 - The total number of LGAs for this event is 3.
- The claiming period for AGDRP is until 11 August 2024.
- The claiming period for DRA is until 3 July 2024.

- From 8 January 2024 to 31 March 2024:
 - 51,600 claims have been received for AGDRP and DRA;
 - 21,200 claims have been granted;
 - \$26.9 million in total paid; and
 - 10,900 calls have been answered.

Tropical Cyclone Jasper December 2023

- On 20 December 2023, AGDRP and DRA (and the discretionary equivalents for NZ citizens residing in Australia) were activated for eligible people affected by Tropical Cyclone Jasper in Queensland.
 - The total number of LGAs for this event is nine.
- The claiming period for these payments is until 17 June 2024.
- From 20 December 2023 to 31 March 2024:
 - 83,600 claims have been received for AGDRP and DRA;
 - 34,000 claims have been granted;
 - \$48.4 million in total paid; and
 - 19,900 calls have been answered.

Western and Darling Downs Bushfires October 2023

- On 31 October 2023, AGDRP and DRA (and the discretionary equivalents for NZ citizens residing in Australia) were activated for eligible people affected by the bushfires in Queensland.
 - The total number of LGAs for this event is two.
- The claiming period for these payments is until 26 April 2024.
- From 31 October 2023 to 31 March 2024:
 - 10,900 claims have been received for AGDRP and DRA;
 - 1,000 claims have been granted;
 - \$1.2 million in total paid; and
 - 1,500 calls have been answered.

Timeline of recent or significant events

Date of Activation	Event
4 March 2024	AGDRP extended for Western Victoria Bushfires – February 2024 to include additional suburbs of Dadswell Bridge (in the city of Horsham) and Raglan (in the city of Pyrenees)
21 February 2024	AGDRP activated for the suburb of Pomonal (in the city of Ararat) for the Western Victoria Bushfires – February 2024
14 February 2024	AGDRP activated for the suburb of Bray Park (in the city of Moreton Bay) for Heavy Rainfall and Flooding – city of Moreton Bay January 2024

Date of Activation	Event
12 February 2024	AGDRP extended for the South East Queensland Severe Storms and Flooding – December 2023 to January 2024 event to include additional suburbs of Holmview, Mermaid Waters, Molendinar and Yarrabilba.
25 January 2024	AGDRP extended for the South East Queensland Severe Storms and Flooding – December 2023 to January 2024 event to include additional suburbs of Ashmore, Beaudesert, Burleigh Heads, Burleigh Waters, Carrara, Currumbin Eaters, Eagleby, Elanora, Gilston, Glenlogan, Hope Island, Kingsholme, Logan Village, Merrimac, Ormeau, Palm Beach, Parkwood, Reedy Creek, Riverbend, Robina, Southport, Tallebudgera, Tugan, Varsity Lakes, Veresdale, Willow Vale.
15 January 2024	AGDRP extended for the South East Queensland Severe Storms and Flooding – December 2023 to January 2024 event to include additional suburbs of Bonogin, Clagiraba, Lower Beechmont, Mount Nathan, Pimpama, Springbrook, Worogary, Woodhill, Beechmont and Glenagle.
8 January 2024	AGDRP activated for the 27 suburbs of Arundel, Biggera Waters, Cedar Creek (in the City of Logan), Cedar Grove, Cedar Vale, Coombabah, Coomera, Flagstone, Gaven, Guanaba, Helensvale, Hollywell, Jimboomba, Labrador, Maudsland, Mudgeeraba, Mundoolun, Nerang, Oxenford, Pacific Pines, Paradise Point, Runaway Bay, Tallai, Tamborine, Tamborine Mountain, Upper Coomera and Wongawallan for the South East Queensland Severe Storms and Flooding (December 2023 to January 2024) . DRA activated for the three LGAs of City of Gold Coast, City of Logan and Scenic Rim Region for the South East Queensland Severe Storms and Flooding (December 2023 to January 2024) .
20 December 2023	AGDRP and DRA activated for the nine LGAs of Cairns, Cassowary Coast, Cook, Douglas, Hope Vale, Mareeba, Tablelands, Wujal Wujal and Yarrabah for Tropical cyclone Jasper - December 2023 .
31 October 2023	AGDRP and DRA activated for the two LGAs of Toowoomba and Western Downs for the Western and Darling Downs Bushfires - October 2023 .
14 September 2023	Social Security Amendment (Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment Bill 2023) passed both Houses.
29 March 2023	AGDRP activated for one LGA of Victoria Daly and DRA activated for two LGAs of Victoria Daly and West Daly for Northern Territory, Northern Region Flooding – February 2023 .
17 March 2023	AGDRP activated for three LGAs of Boulia, Burke and Mount Isa and DRA activated for seven LGAs of Boulia, Burke, Carpentaria, Cloncurry, Doomadgee, Mount Isa and Mornington for

Date of Activation	Event
	Northern Queensland Monsoon and Flooding (December 2022 - March 2023).
14 January 2023	AGDRP activated for the one LGA of Derby West Kimberley for Western Australia Ex-Tropical Cyclone Ellie (December 2022 – January 2023).
10 January 2023	AGDRP extended to include additional one LGA of Central Darling for New South Wales Floods – September 2022.
9 January 2023	DRA extended to include additional one LGA of Wingecarribee for New South Wales Floods – September 2022.
8 January 2023	DRA activated for four LGAs of Broome, Derby West Kimberley, Halls Creek and Wyndham East Kimberley for Western Australia Ex-Tropical Cyclone Ellie (December 2022 – January 2023).
8 January 2023	DRA activated for one LGA of Victoria Daly for Northern Territory Ex-Tropical Cyclone Ellie (December 2022 – January 2023).
19 December 2022	AGDRP extended to include the additional six LGAs of Balranald, Bourke, Cobar, Murrumbidgee, Weddin and Wentworth for New South Wales Floods – September 2022.
19 December 2022	AGDRP extended to include the additional two LGAs of Southern Grampians and Swan Hill for Victorian Floods – October 2022.
19 December 2022	DRA extended to include the additional one LGA of Glamorgan Spring Bay for Tasmanian floods – October 2022.
30 November 2022	DRA extended to entire Unincorporated Area for South Australian Floods – November 2022.
29 November 2022	AGDRP extended to include the additional three LGAs of Bathurst, Edward River and Narrandera for New South Wales Floods – September 2022.
29 November 2022	DRA extended to include the four LGAs of Cardinia, Melton, South Gippsland and West Wimmera and AGDRP extended to include the one LGA of Mildura for Victorian Floods – October 2022.
25 November 2022	DRA activated for eight LGAs of Alexandrina, Berri Barmera, Coorong, Karoonda East Murray, Loxton Waikerie, Mid Murray, Murray Bridge and Renmark Paringa and part of one Unincorporated Area (Pastoral Unincorporated Area) for South Australian Floods – November 2022.
24 November 2022	AGDRP extended to include the additional two LGAs of Cowra and Lachlan for New South Wales Floods – September 2022.
24 November 2022	AGDRP extended to include the additional two LGAs of Maroondah and Mornington Peninsula for Victorian Floods – October 2022.

Date of Activation	Event
21 November 2022	DRA extended to include the five LGAs of Eurobodalla, Inverell, Orange, Queanbeyan-Palerang and Wentworth for New South Wales Floods – September 2022.
21 November 2022	DRA extended to include the additional four LGAs of Casey, Latrobe, Maroondah and Wellington for Victorian Floods – October 2022.
17 November 2022	AGDRP extended to include the additional four LGAs of Cabonne, Dubbo, Parkes and Walgett for New South Wales Floods – September 2022.
14 November 2022	DRA extended to include the four LGAs of Bathurst, Oberon, Shellharbour and Uralla and AGDRP extended to include the additional two LGAs of Murray River and Wagga Wagga for New South Wales Floods – September 2022.
7 November 2022	AGDRP extended to include the additional one LGA of Yarra Ranges for Victorian Floods – October 2022.
7 November 2022	DRA extended to include the additional ten LGAs of Bega Valley, Junee, Muswellbrook, Nambucca Valley, Shoalhaven, Snowy Monaro, Snowy Valleys, Temora, Walcha and Yass Valley and one Unincorporated Area (Far West Region) and AGDRP extended to include the additional five LGAs of Cootamundra-Gundagai, Forbes, Liverpool Plains, Snowy Valleys and Upper Lachlan for New South Wales Floods – September 2022.
5 November 2022	DRA extended to include the additional five LGAs of East Gippsland, Hindmarsh, Mildura, Southern Grampians and Towong for Victorian Floods – October 2022.
30 October 2022	AGDRP activated for three LGAs of Gunnedah, Moree Plains and Narrabri for New South Wales Floods – September 2022.
30 October 2022	DRA extended to include the additional 12 LGAs of Balranald, Bland, Central Darling, Coolamon, Cootamundra-Gundagai, Hawkesbury, Hilltops, Kyogle, Lismore, Lockhart, Richmond Valley and Upper Hunter for New South Wales Floods – September 2022.
28 October 2022	AGDRP extended to include the additional LGA of Moira, and DRA extended to include the additional four LGAs of Baw Baw, Mornington Peninsula, Nillumbik, Surf Coast, and one Alpine Resort of Falls Creek Resort for Victorian floods – October 2022.
23 October 2022	AGDRP extended to include the additional four LGAs of Gannawarra, Golden Plains, Northern Grampians and Wangaratta for Victorian floods – October 2022.
21 October 2022	DRA extended to include the additional 12 LGAs of Albury, Berrigan, Carrathool, Cobar, Federation, Griffith, Hay, Leeton, Murray River, Murrumbidgee, Narrandera and Wagga Wagga for New South Wales floods – September 2022.

Date of Activation	Event
20 October 2022	AGDRP extended to include the additional six LGAs of Buloke, Corangamite, Hepburn, Macedon Ranges, Melbourne and Pyrenees for Victorian floods – October 2022.
19 October 2022	AGDRP extended to include the additional nine LGAs of Benalla, Boroondara, Central Goldfields, Greater Bendigo, Loddon, Mooney Valley, Mount Alexander, Murrindindi and Yarra, and DRA extended to include the additional 23 LGAs of Ararat, Ballarat, Banyule, Boroondara, Brimbank, Colac Otway, Glenelg, Golden Plains, Greater Geelong, Hume, Indigo, Manningham, Melbourne, Moorabool, Mount Alexander, Moyne, Swan Hill, Warrnambool, Whittlesea, Wodonga, Wyndham, Yarra Ranges and Yarriambiack for Victorian floods – October 2022.
18 October 2022	AGDRP extended to include the additional three LGAs of Devonport, Latrobe and Launceston for Tasmanian floods – October 2022.
16 October 2022	DRA extended to include the additional four LGAs of Central Coast, Coonamble, Goulburn-Mulwaree and Parkes for New South Wales Floods – September 2022.
16 October 2022	AGDRP activated for the three LGAs of Central Coast, Kentish and Meander Valley, and DRA activated for the 17 LGAs of Break O’Day, Burnie, Central Coast, Central Highlands, Circular Head, Devonport, Dorset, Flinders, George Town, Kentish, Latrobe, Launceston, Meander Valley, Northern Midlands, Waratah-Wynyard, West Coast and West Tamar for Tasmanian floods – October 2022.
16 October 2022	AGDRP activated for the five LGAs of Campaspe, Greater Shepparton, Maribyrnong, Mitchell and Strathbogie, and DRA activated for the 23 LGAs of Alpine, Benalla, Buloke, Campaspe, Central Goldfields, Corangamite, Gannawarra, Greater Bendigo, Greater Shepparton, Hepburn, Horsham, Loddon, Macedon Ranges, Mansfield, Maribyrnong, Mitchell, Moira, Moonee Valley, Murrindindi, Northern Grampians, Pyrenees, Strathbogie and Wangaratta for Victorian Floods – October 2022.
13 October 2022	DRA activated for the 27 LGAs of Blayney, Bogan, Bourke, Brewarrina, Cabonne, Cowra, Dubbo, Edward River, Forbes, Gilgandra, Glen Innes Severn, Greater Hume, Gunnedah, Gwydir, Lachlan, Lithgow, Liverpool Plains, Moree Plains, Mid-Western, Narrabri, Narromine, Tamworth, Upper Lachlan, Walgett, Warren, Warrumbungle and Weddin for New South Wales Floods – September 2022.
12 October 2022	2022 Memorial Services for Bali Bombings Travel Assistance Payment claiming period closed.
5 October 2022	AGDRP and DRA extended to include the additional one LGA of Parramatta for New South Wales Floods – July 2022.
20 September 2022	2022 Memorial Services for Bali Bombings Travel Assistance Payment activated.

Date of Activation	Event
25 August 2022	MH17 Family Support Package claiming closed.
3 August 2022	AGDRP and DRA extended to include the additional five LGAs of Kempsey, Narromine, Oberon, Port Macquarie-Hastings and Strathfield for New South Wales Floods – July 2022 .
11 July 2022	AGDRP and DRA extended to include the eight additional LGAs of Cumberland, Mid-Coast, Muswellbrook, Nambucca, Newcastle, Port Stephens, Randwick and Warren for New South Wales Floods – July 2022 .
8 July 2022	AGDRP and DRA extended to include the additional six LGAs of Bayside, Dungog, Lake Macquarie, Maitland, Singleton and Upper Lachlan for New South Wales Floods – July 2022 .
6 July 2022	AGDRP and DRA activated for 23 LGAs Blacktown, Blue Mountains, Camden, Campbelltown, Canterbury Bankstown, Central Coast, Cessnock, Fairfield, Georges River, Hawkesbury, Hornsby, Kiama, Lithgow, Liverpool, Northern Beaches, Penrith, Shellharbour, Shoalhaven, Sutherland, The Hills, Wingecarribee, Wollondilly and Wollongong for New South Wales Floods – July 2022 .

	Name and Role	Group/Branch/Organisation	Phone (w)	Phone (mob)
Cleared By	Name: Jonathon Thorpe Role: Deputy CEO	Service Delivery Excellence Group		s47F(1)
Contact Officer	Name: Brenton Halliday Role: General Manager	Service Delivery Optimisation Division		s47F(1)
Consultation	Name: Garrett McDonald Role: Chief Data Officer	Data and Analytics Division		s47F(1)

Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

TOPIC: FACE TO FACE TRANSFORMATION

WITNESS: Jonathon Thorpe
Deputy CEO, Service Delivery Excellence

Strategic Narrative

- Services Australia (the Agency) is transforming our service experience through the implementation of new service experience designs and optimisation of our face-to-face service centres across Australia.
- The face-to-face transformation stream of work was initiated in October 2019. Initial focus was on human-centred research and design to transform the Agency's customer experience.
- Through research and collaboration with staff and customers, new customer experience concepts were identified and piloted in several service centres.
- As at 31 March 2024, 116 of the 318 service centres have been transformed with a contemporary design.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- 2009 – creation of the Department of Human Services and beginning of the program to consolidate service centres.
- Between 2009 and 2013 – 109 offices consolidated (Medicare and Centrelink).
- 16 November 2020 – Virtual Servicing pilot initiated to complete identity linking via video chat as an alternative to face-to-face attendance. This means that customers no longer have to present at service centres to do this task.
- 21 December 2020 – first blueprint Contemporary Service Centre opened to the public in Perth, WA.
- Based on the success of these blueprint sites, the Agency is undertaking a rollout of these new Contemporary Service Centres nationally.

- One site located in Traralgon, VIC only provides Medicare services and is co-located with the National Disability Insurance Agency.
- 25 March 2024 – the Agency successfully opened the new Butler Service Centre, to improve customer accessibility within the northern corridor of Perth.

Talking Points

- The Agency is committed to maintaining the service centre network.
- The Agency has an extensive face-to-face service delivery footprint including a network of service centres, mobile service centres, remote servicing teams, agents, and access points.
- This network provides ease of access to government services for all Australians, including those in regional, rural and remote communities.
- We are reimagining the service centre experience to better serve our customers.
- This includes new and contemporary experiences:
 - **Universal service offer:** Customers will have access to a universal service offer at any service centre including assistance to access services based on needs or specialist requirement e.g. for connecting to aged care or veterans support services;
 - **New Service Environment:** Our new service environment is welcoming and reflects the Agency identity with a fresh and vibrant look and feel. Service centres will be in locations based on community need, with innovative designs to respect customer privacy and maintain customer and staff safety. As at 31 March 2024, 116 service centres have been transformed;
 - **Customer Appointment Ecosystem:** The Customer Appointment Ecosystem will modernise our service delivery approach and make interacting with the Agency simpler for customers. This will be enabled by connecting up a whole of agency appointment platform, Video Chat capability and the Face-to-Face Customer Management System. It will offer cross-channel capability based on the needs of the customer to deliver the required outcome;
 - The Face-to-Face Customer Management System is designed to simplify the experience for customers at service centres by introducing customer self-check-in options, and transparency of customer wait times. A minimum viable product of the Face-to-Face Customer Management System is in place in six service centre locations across the country (Airport West Vic, Bankstown and Woy Woy NSW,

Beenleigh Qld, Elizabeth SA and Perth WA). The Agency is working on an industrialised solution for a further 22 service centres by June 2024 in response to the Security Risk Management Review.

- Appointment based service is available for Social Security and Welfare customers nationally.
- **Ways of Operating:** Putting the customer at the centre of everything we do, we actively listen to understand customer needs and determine the best service options so that we can connect them to the right service at the right time. Our service will continuously improve through voice of customer insights, placing the person before the process, and the interaction before the transaction. Ways of Operating was implemented in all sites by July 2022; and
- **Greater Access to Government:** We are exploring opportunities between government service delivery partners allowing more customers to access state, territory and Australian government services from the one location.
 - We have successfully completed side-by-side remote and mobile servicing trials with New South Wales, Queensland, South Australian and Tasmanian state Government services.
 - Discussions are being held with Service NSW and Service Tasmania on future service delivery opportunities.

Co-location and Partnerships

- We continue to collaborate with the Australian Taxation Office, Department of Veterans' Affairs and the National Disability Insurance Agency to refresh and deepen partnerships across the Australian Government to design, develop and coordinate the delivery of government services.
- As at 31 March 2024, we have 151 co-location arrangements with 13 Commonwealth and state Government agencies.

Face to Face demand changes

- The way customers access our services has been changing over several years as more customers choose online options, through myGov and Express Plus Mobile apps.
- Customers can complete their Centrelink and Medicare business at a time and place that suits them, using our range of digital services, including smartphone applications.
- The demand for face-to-face services reduced whilst COVID restrictions were in place, and the Agency has not seen a return to pre-COVID levels of demand in our service centre network.

Additional channel options

- For customers who do not wish to go online, phone self-service provides a way to conduct business quickly, easily, and at their convenience.
- Agents also provide a face-to-face information service that includes assisting the customer to use self-service, and upload identity documents for certification. Additionally, Access Points are self-service facilities that give free access to computers and printers, providing customers with the ability to upload documents, call on self-service phones, and access free Wi-Fi (to connect to government services) on their own device.

Reviewing service centre sites

- The Agency continuously reviews the composition of our service delivery footprint to ensure we are building a sustainable, accessible and fit-for-purpose service delivery network that meets customers' needs now and into the future.
- Before any changes are made to service delivery, the Agency considers several factors, such as changing demographics and community access to a broad range of services from easy to reach locations.
- The Agency has established guidelines for service centre placement, based on projected future customer demand, driven by demographic changes.
- The size of our sites is determined by the space required to meet projected demand, allowing for contingencies related to peak periods. Additional sizing allowances are made for specialist staff, where there is projected to be a high level of complex customer needs.
- The Agency also considers current and future requirements of co-located partners e.g. National Disability Insurance Agency, the Department of Veterans' Affairs and the National Indigenous Australians Agency.
- It is not standard practice for the Agency to disclose details about the terms of leases including details on extensions. In considering whether to release such information, the Agency needs to be mindful of the commercial sensitivity.

Sites in Focus

Airport West Service Centre (Victoria)

- 27 November 2023 – the Agency transformed the Airport West Service Centre.
- Airport West has incorporated additional safety and security recommendations from the Security Risk Management Review. These

include the design and security features of the customer lobby design that are already included in several sites, including the Customer Self Check-in system and Face to Face Customer Management System.

- The Agency investigated the market for approximately 12 years for an alternative site with no success. This included in-depth investigations since May 2023. Airport West and surrounding suburbs have very limited properties that meet the quality, size and standards required for an agency premises. No alternative suitable premises are available in this location.

Butler Service Centre (Western Australia)

- 25 March 2024 – the Agency successfully opened the new Butler Service Centre, north of the right-sized Joondalup Service Centre, to improve customer accessibility within the northern corridor of Perth.
- Data analysis developed by the Agency indicated access to services in the region was lower than comparable metropolitan regions across Australia.
- Butler Service Centre provides face to face services to customers in the City of Wanneroo, one of the fastest growing areas in Australia.
- Since opening, the new site has welcomed the National Disability Insurance Agency as a co-located partner.
- The addition of Butler Service Centre delivers on the Australian Government's commitment to maintain 318 service centres nationally.

Broadmeadows (now Coolaroo) Service Centre (Victoria)

- 4 December 2023 – the Agency relocated the Broadmeadows Service Centre to Coolaroo.
- The move improved access for northern suburbs customers whilst maintaining face-to-face services for Hume City residents.
- Relocating the service centre 5 km from Broadmeadows to Coolaroo gave the Agency the opportunity to better service the Craigieburn and Roxburgh Park area.
- The Coolaroo Service Centre includes a customer lobby, tailored to better manage large customer numbers. This was the first lobby site in Victoria.

South Melbourne Service Centre (Victoria)

- 30 October 2023 – the South Melbourne Service Centre consolidated with the Windsor Service Centre, located approximately 5 kilometres away.
- The last day of trading for South Melbourne was 27 October 2023.

- All available lease extensions at South Melbourne were exhausted with extensive searches for alternate locations in and around the area unsuccessful.
- The Agency has actively explored alternate property solutions on 18 occasions since 2020, advertised through an open tender and explored co-location with other government agencies but unfortunately no suitable sites were identified or available.
- Every effort was made to retain the service centre, however, there was no other suitable option.
- The Agency is committed to servicing the inner-city Melbourne community and will continue to look at services on offer. Specialist staff will continue supporting vulnerable community members at over 14 locations across the inner-city area.

Sorell Service Centre (Tasmania)

- The Agency plans to expand services with a new purpose-built face-to-face service centre in Sorell, Tasmania in late 2024.
- The new site will continue to co-locate with Services Tasmania in the new purpose-built office.
- Customers will be able to access the full suite of services administered by the Agency including the ability to conduct business by appointment and digital coaching.
- In December 2023 – the Agency provided the owner with a proposed building design to progress lodgement for a development application.
- The Agency entered into a Heads of Agreement for delivery of a service centre in 2024 with the owner in July 2023.
- The Agency commenced a formal approach to the market in October 2023 through an open tender process for the lease of new or existing premises. Advertising to the open market was conducted through the Australian Financial Review, Hobart Mercury and on AusTender. In March 2023, the Agency was in discussion with the preferred respondent regarding a proposed new location.
- A market sweep was conducted in May 2022 to investigate the market in the Sorell area. Attempts to source suitable alternative accommodation have been unsuccessful and the market in Sorell revealed small tenancies which cannot accommodate the minimum requirements required by the Agency.
- The current lease held by Services Tasmania in Sorell commenced in 2021.
- The Agency began co-locating with Services Tasmania on 1 June 2012.

Approaches to Market

- The Agency approaches the market through an open tender process for new or existing leased premises where there is a need to improve the efficiency of our network and ensure our property portfolio meets business requirements and the changing needs of our customers.
- All new service centres require accessibility of the accommodation to comply with the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and the Agency's Base Building Performance Specifications.
- Under the Department of Finance's Whole of Australian Government Property Service Contract arrangements, the Agency utilises Jones Lang Lasalle (JLL) to assist with the approaches to market.
- Approaches to market are required where the Agency is unable to identify a suitable alternative site after multiple market sweeps, the current landlord is unwilling to negotiate on any terms, or where we are unable to find suitable tenure options through lease negotiations.
- Examples of sites where the Agency has undertaken multiple market sweeps and has been unable to identify suitable accommodation are listed in the table below.
- Conducting an approach to market does not guarantee the Agency will find suitable accommodation.

Approaches to Market – Face to Face Transformation

Location	EOI Release Date	EOI Close Date	Status	Details
Victoria Park, WA	13 March 2024	19 June 2024	Out in market	The current service centre is oversized for the Agency's requirements.
Geraldton, WA	5 February 2024	29 April 2024	Out in market	The current service centre is oversized for the Agency's requirements and numerous building issues require remediation.
Alice Springs, NT	19 October 2023	15 December 2023	On track	The approach to market will look to right size and consolidate the two sites and seek a smaller leased area.
Noarlunga, SA	25 August 2023	13 October 2023	On track	The current service centre is oversized for the Agency's requirements.
Browns Plains, Qld	6 July 2023	24 August 2023	On track	The current service centre is oversized for the Agency's requirements and numerous building issues require remediation. The approach to market is in the second stage, waiting to receive detailed offers prior to further evaluation.
Tennant Creek, NT	8 June 2023	28 July 2023	On track	The current service centre is oversized for the Agency's requirements and numerous building issues require remediation.
Mirrabooka, WA	17 May 2023	5 July 2023	On track	The current service centre is oversized for the Agency's requirements.
Darlinghurst, NSW	21 November 2022	2 February 2023	On track	The current service centre is oversized for the Agency's requirements and numerous building issues require remediation.
Hurstville, NSW	21 November 2022	2 February 2023	On track	The owner identified the current site for development. The Agency has negotiated an extension of the lease until June 2025. There are two further 6-month options available to extend the lease until June 2026. The Agency has undertaken multiple market sweeps over the last seven years. Additionally, an approach to market

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Location	EOI Release Date	EOI Close Date	Status	Details
				<p>process was undertaken in 2021 and did not identify any suitable options. The Agency is currently in commercial negotiations with the preferred respondent.</p>
Broome, WA	18 August 2022	12 September 2022	ATM completed	<p>The Agency currently leases 970 square metres of office accommodation at 14 Napier Terrace, Broome. Commercial agreement entered for the Agency to move into a new site located at 158 Frederick Street, Broome. Co-location requirements for NDIA and NIAA have been included in the approach to market.</p>

Site Closures

- Between 1 January 2020 and 31 December 2023, the Agency has consolidated a total of 16 service centres across Australia plus one Visiting Service.
- 13 of these sites have consolidated into nearby service centres located a short distance away.
 - On 30 October 2023, the Agency consolidated the South Melbourne (Vic) Service Centre with Windsor Service Centre.
- In assessing the need for and location of face-to-face services, the Agency undertakes a detailed review that includes a range of factors, including:
 - the provision of a broad range of services from an easy-to-access location;
 - proximity to other service centres and other government sites;
 - demand for services in the community;
 - access to services through other channels;
 - state and local government growth strategies; and
 - the availability of public transport options.

Recent Site Openings

Closed site location	New Site location	State	Implementation Date
Butler	City of Wanneroo	WA	25 March 2024

Recent Site Closures

Closed site location	Consolidated Site location	State	Implementation Date
South Melbourne Service Centre	Windsor Service Centre	Vic	30 October 2023

Transition to an Agent service delivery model

Closed site location	New Agent Details	State	Implementation Date
Benalla Visiting Service	Closure of Benalla Visiting Service and transition to a full-time Agent service, located at 85 Nunn Street, Benalla Vic 3672.	Vic	1 July 2021

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Closed site location	New Agent Details	State	Implementation Date
Meekatharra Remote Service Centre	Closure of Meekatharra Remote Service Centre and transitioned to a full-time Agent service, located at 69 Main Street, Meekatharra WA 6642.	WA	1 July 2021
Papunya Remote Service Centre	Closure of Papunya Remote Service Centre and transitioned the existing Papunya Agent service, located at Lot 453, Papunya NT 0872, from a part-time service to a full-time Agent service.	NT	1 April 2021
Cherbourg Centrelink Service Centre	Closure of Cherbourg Service Centre and transitioned to a full-time Agent service, located at 13 Fisher Avenue, Cherbourg Qld 4605.	Qld	2 November 2020

Additional Agent services opened

Site Location	Agent Details	State	Implementation Date
Ettalong Agent	Commencement of a full-time Agent service, located at 44A Pacific Avenue, Ettalong NSW 2257.	NSW	21 June 2021
Bribie Agent	Commencement of a part-time Agent service, located at 9 Verdoni Street, Bellara Qld 4507.	Qld	19 April 2021

Contemporary Service Centre Transformations

As at 31 March 2024, 115 service centres have been transformed with a contemporary fit out.

Year	Right sizes completed	Refits completed
2024	2	1
2023	13	9
2022	20	46
2021	5	19
2020	0	1

Virtual Servicing (Video Chat)

- Our virtual service capability enables us to use video chat technology to connect with customers. These video chats replace conversations that would normally require a trip to a service centre.
- We currently offer a video chat appointment for people who are required to confirm their identity when claiming Youth Allowance and Austudy (students, apprentices and jobseekers) and JobSeeker Payment. This enables these customers to verify their identity via video chat as part of their new claim process, removing the need for them to attend a service centre to provide ID.
- Customers wanting to access our Financial Information Service (FIS), Aged Care Specialist Officers (ACSO) and Farm Household Allowance (FHA) also have the option to book a video chat appointment to conduct their business as part of the FIS, ACSO and FHA service offers.
- As at 31 March 2024, more than 215,000 virtual service appointments have been completed.
- Customer experience data from a video chat evaluation report completed in early 2021 showed:
 - 97 per cent of customers surveyed were satisfied with the experience and would use the service again; and
 - 92 per cent of customers surveyed found the platform easy to use and were satisfied with the audio and video quality.

Appointment Based Services

- Appointment Based Service has rolled out nationally for Services Australia customers using Centrelink services.
- Customers attending a service centre are encouraged to book appointments but will still be able to receive a walk-in service if they prefer.
- As at 31 March 2024, more than 4.8 million customers nationally have used the Appointment Based Service to interact with Services Australia.
- Voice of Customer surveys conducted by the Agency indicated customers find Appointment Based Servicing helpful, professional and easy to use.

Questions on Notice Estimates QONs

Hearing	Date	Senator - Question #	Broad topic
Additional Estimates	7 March 2024	Senator Kovacic SQ24-000149	Property Relocation / Consolidation
Supplementary Budget Estimates	25 October 2023	Senator Kovacic SQ23-000728	Service Centre Footprint
Supplementary Budget Estimates	25 October 2023	Senator Kovacic SQ23-000746	Relocations
Supplementary Budget Estimates	25 October 2023	Senator Kovacic SQ23-000748	Closures
Supplementary Budget Estimates	25 October 2023	Senator Kovacic SQ23-000762	Approaches to market
Supplementary Budget Estimates	25 October 2023	Senator Kovacic SQ23-000788	South Melbourne Outreach Services
Supplementary Budget Estimates	25 October 2023	Senator Kovacic SQ23-000815	Property – side by side services
Supplementary Budget Estimates	25 October 2023	Senator Kovacic SQ23-000824	Property – co-location
Supplementary Budget Estimates	25 October 2023	Senator Kovacic SQ23-000827	Property – transformations achieved
Supplementary Budget Estimates	25 October 2023	Senator Kovacic SQ23-000829	Property – un-transformed

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Hearing	Date	Senator - Question #	Broad topic
Supplementary Budget Estimates	25 October 2023	Senator Kovacic SQ23-000857	Property – shared service arrangements
Supplementary Budget Estimates	25 October 2023	Senator Kovacic SQ23-000858	Property – local government
Supplementary Budget Estimates	25 October 2023	Senator Kovacic SQ23-000869	Property – signage
Supplementary Budget Estimates	25 October 2023	Senator Kovacic SQ23-000879	Service Centre numbers
Supplementary Budget Estimates	25 October 2023	Senator Kovacic SQ23-000988	Lease expiry events

Other QONs

Committee Inquiry	Senator/MP - Question #	Broad topic
Public Works Committee	Mr Rick Wilson MP IQ22-000011	Hobart Precinct – Current Site fit out
Public Works Committee	Mr Tony Zappia MP IQ22-000012	Hobart Precinct – Lease extension and refurbishment
Public Works Committee	Mr Tony Pasin MP IQ22-000013	Hobart Precinct – Decisions feedback letter
Public Works Committee	Mr Tony Pasin MP IQ22-000014	Hobart Precinct – Tender timing
Public Works Committee	Mr Tony Zappia MP IQ22-000017	Brisbane Precinct – Remaining costs of current sites

Attachments

Attachment A – Fast Facts at 31 March 2024.

Attachment B – Relevant Media Coverage.

Attachment C – Freedom of Information.

	Name and Role	Group/Branch/Organisation	Phone (w)	Phone (mob)
Cleared By	Name: Jonathon Thorpe Role: Deputy CEO	Service Delivery Excellence		s47F(1)
Contact Officer	Name: Leigh Russell Role: A/g National Manager	Face to Face Property Transformation Branch		s47F(1)
Consultation	Name: Neal Gaston Role: A/g National Manager	Face to Face Service Transformation		s47F(1)

Fast facts – F2F Transformation

Footprint

- Services Australia (the Agency) has 318 service centres across Australia.
- Of these, one site located in Traralgon, Vic only provides Medicare services and is co-located with the National Disability Insurance Agency.

F2F Transformation Progress

- As at 31 March 2024, **116** Contemporary Service Centres have now been transformed (**1** in 2020, **24** in 2021, **66** in 2022, **22** in 2023 and **3** in 2024).
- The Face-to-Face Transformation stream of work was initiated in October 2019.
- On 21 December 2020, our first blueprint Contemporary Service Centre opened to the public in Perth, WA.
 - On 1 February 2021, we opened our second blueprint Contemporary Service Centre at Woy Woy, NSW.
 - On 15 March 2021 we opened a third blueprint Contemporary Service Centre in Bowral, NSW.
- Completion of the 49th, 50th and 51st sites occurred on Sunday 20 June 2022, which were Casino, Bundaberg and Woden.
- Raymond Terrace was the 100th site completed.
- The program is on track to deliver its roadmap in line with the agency's available capital funding.

Virtual Servicing

- On 16 November 2020, a Virtual Servicing pilot started to complete identity linking via video chat as an alternative to face-to-face attendance.
- As at 31 March 2024, more than 215,000 virtual service appointments have been completed.

Appointment Based Servicing

- As at 31 March 2024, more than 4.8 million customers nationally have used the Appointment Based Service to interact with the Agency.

Service Centre consolidations and closures

- The South Melbourne Service Centre closed on 27 October 2023 and consolidated with the Windsor Service Centre.
 - The Windsor Service Centre is located approximately five kilometres from the current South Melbourne Service Centre.
- Between 1 January 2020 and 31 December 2023, the Agency consolidated 16 service centres across Australia plus one Visiting Service.
 - 13 of these sites consolidated into nearby service centres located a short distance away.
 - Three sites transitioned to an Agent service delivery model (Meekatharra, WA, Cherbourg, Qld and Papunya, NT).
 - The Visiting Service in Benalla, Vic transitioned to an Agent service from 1 July 2021.
- From 1 July 2021 to 31 December 2023 the Agency consolidated 2 service centres (Braddon, ACT and South Melbourne, Vic).
 - Between 2009 and 2013 the Department of Human Services consolidated 109 offices (Medicare and Centrelink).

Timeline of recent or significant events

Please note the dates listed below indicate when the Front of House 'Go Live' occurred at each location.

Date	Location	Action
25 March 2024	Butler	Brand new service centre opened in Butler WA
18 March 2024	Noosa	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
19 February 2024	Windsor	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
4 December 2023	Coolaroo	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
27 November 2023	Airport West	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
20 November 2023	Midland	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
30 October 2023	Chatswood	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
27 October 2023	South Melbourne	Service centre closed and consolidated with the Windsor Service Centre
16 October 2023	Bendigo	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.

Date	Location	Action
16 October 2023	Fitzroy Crossing	Bespoke service centre reopened following flooding in January 2023.
9 October 2023	Mildura	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
18 September 2023	Gladstone	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
28 August 2023	Ayr	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
21 August 2023	Wynnum	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
31 July 2023	The Entrance	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
24 July 2023	Port Lincoln	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
19 June 2023	Joondalup	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
13 June 2023	Raymond Terrace	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
5 June 2023	Nerang	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
29 May 2023	Hervey Bay	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
22 May 2023	Marion	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
2 May 2023	Deception Bay	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
24 April 2023	Oakleigh	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
13 March 2023	Tamworth	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
6 March 2023	Fountain Gate	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
27 February 2023	Robina	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
3 January 2023	Fitzroy Crossing	Service centre closed due to significant damage caused by WA flooding.
23 January 2023	Bunbury	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
12 December 2022	Yass	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
5 December 2022	Brunswick Heads	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.

Date	Location	Action
5 December 2022	Mossman	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
28 November 2022	Liverpool	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
28 November 2022	Gawler	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
21 November 2022	Maroochydore	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
21 November 2022	Cooma	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
21 November 2022	Boronia	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
21 November 2022	Lilydale	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
14 November 2022	Corrimal	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
14 November 2022	Brookvale	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
14 November 2022	Victor Harbour	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
14 November 2022	Ringwood	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
7 November 2022	Rosny Park	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
7 November 2022	Busselton	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
31 October 2022	Fitzroy Crossing	Service centre commenced operating as the first bespoke Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service centre.
24 October 2022	Berri	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
17 October 2022	Mudgee	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
26 September 2022	Frankston	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
19 September 2022	Kingston	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
12 September 2022	Bankstown	Customer Lobby blueprint trial opened at new service centre.
5 September 2022	Mount Barker	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.

Date	Location	Action
29 August 2022	Rosebud	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
1 August 2022	Colac	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
18 July 2022	Glenorchy	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
18 July 2022	Eastgardens	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
18 July 2022	Cleveland	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
11 July 2022	Port Adelaide	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
11 July 2022	Beenleigh	Customer Lobby blueprint trial opened at new service centre.
11 July 2022	Murwillumbah	Service centre reopened as a contemporary site following NSW flooding.
4 July 2022	Seymour	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
4 July 2022	Rouse Hill	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
27 June 2022	Lismore	Service centre reopened as a contemporary site following NSW flooding.
27 June 2022	Ingham	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
20 June 2022	Woden	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
20 June 2022	Casino	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
20 June 2022	Bundaberg	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
20 June 2022	Lilydale Marketplace	Service centre commenced operating at a temporary Services Australia pop-up site.
13 June 2022	Warwick	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
13 June 2022	Charleville	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
13 June 2022	Armadale	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
30 May 2022	Kingaroy	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
30 May 2022	Nelson Bay	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.

Date	Location	Action
30 May 2022	Whyalla	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
30 May 2022	Gosford	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
23 May 2022	Moreland	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
23 May 2022	Normanton	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
16 May 2022	Esperance	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
16 May 2022	Dubbo	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
16 May 2022	Innisfail	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
16 May 2022	Bondi Junction	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
16 May 2022	Murray Bridge	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
9 May 2022	Wangaratta	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
9 May 2022	Devonport	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
9 May 2022	Goulburn	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
9 May 2022	Yeppoon	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
9 May 2022	Success	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
2 May 2022	Walgett	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
26 April 2022	Inala	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
19 April 2022	Nundah	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
11 April 2022	Pakenham	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
4 April 2022	Echuca	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
4 April 2022	Launceston	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
21 March 2022	Burnie	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.

Date	Location	Action
14 March 2022	Mount Druitt	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
28 February 2022		Lismore and Murwillumbah Service Centre's closed due to significant damage caused by NSW flooding.
14 February 2022	Shepparton	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
24 January 2022	Werribee	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
13 December 2021	Ballarat	Service centre opened as a contemporary Services Australia site in new right sized premises.
13 December 2021	Gunnedah	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
6 December 2021	Braddon	Service centre consolidated into Gungahlin Service Centre.
6 December 2021	Bairnsdale	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
29 November 2021	Hobart	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
22 November 2021	Cairns	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
22 November 2021	Gungahlin	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
15 November 2021	Mackay	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
15 November 2021	Ararat	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
15 November 2021	Ceduna	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
15 November 2021	Nambucca Head	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
1 November 2021	Belconnen	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
8 November 2021	Batemans Bay	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
1 November 2021	Longreach	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
18 October 2021	Charters Towers	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
21 September 2021		ID verification via video chat added to JobSeeker online claims.

Date	Location	Action
20 September 2021	Palmerston	Service centre opened as a contemporary Services Australia site in new right sized premises.
7 September 2021		ID verification via video chat added to Youth Allowance JobSeeker online claims.
16 August 2021	Elizabeth	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
2 August 2021	Caboolture	Service centre opened as a contemporary Services Australia site in new right sized premises.
26 July 2021	Huonville	Service centre (which provides Centrelink services from a co-location partnership with Services Tasmania) transformed with new contemporary design elements, included updated branding.
5 July 2021	Yarra	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
1 July 2021	Benalla	Agent Service opened.
1 July 2021	Meekatharra	Agent Service opened.
21 June 2021	Ettalong	Agent Service opened.
15 June 2021	Narooma	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
15 June 2021	Papunya	Service centre transitioned to an Agent Service and merged existing Agent to new Agent Service site.
15 June 2021	Wyong	Service centre opened as a contemporary Services Australia site in new right sized premises.
24 May 2021	Bridgewater	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
19 April 2021	Bribie Island	Agent Service opened 19 April 2021.
12 April 2021	Aplin Street, Mulgrave Road and Grafton Street Service Centres	Consolidated into the new Cairns Service Centre, located in the Cairns precinct.
30 March 2021	Bowral	Service centre commenced operating as a contemporary Services Australia site.
22 March 2021	Elizabeth	Service centre relocates to Elizabeth City Shopping Centre

Date	Location	Action
15 February 2021	Ettalong and Woy Woy Service Centres	Ettalong consolidated with Woy Woy and commenced operating as a blueprint contemporary Services Australia site.
12 February 2021	Ettalong	Ettalong Service Centre closed.
1 February 2021	Yarra	Service centre relocates approximately 650 m from former location
21 December 2020	New Perth City	Service centre opened as a blueprint contemporary Services Australia site.
4 December 2020	Perth myGov shopfront	Closed
1 April 2020	Benalla	Visiting Service was suspended due to COVID19.

Attachment B**Relevant media coverage**

Date	Source	Item
24 April 2024	Services Australia Media Release	Media release - Mt Gambier service centre on the move - Services Australia
22 April 2024	ABC Radio Melbourne	Interview with NDIS Minister Bill Shorten on whether security guards in shopping centres needed to be better armed and trained. That was after the events at Bondi Junction on the weekend. Shorten has weighed in and said there should be more patrols at centres and tougher penalties for knife crime. He notes there were assaults in Centrelink and being the one in charge, he's been looking at this question of security guards in Centrelink. He says they've increased the security for their staff and increased penalties for assaulting Centrelink workers because a lot of Centrelink are in shopping centres. On the NDIS, Shorten says he wants to reassure people with disability that their reforms aren't aimed about people not getting support. It's a matter of making sure they get the right support, as well as tackling all the other issues in the scheme.
19 April 2024	Perth now	'New Centrelink facility opened in Butler creating better accessibility in north for government services' https://www.perthnow.com.au/news/wa/new-centrelink-facility-opened-in-butler-creating-better-accessibility-in-north-for-government-services-c-14207414
18 April 2024	Perth Now Stirling	'Butler Ready to deliver' A new Centrelink facility has opened in Butler. Services Australia general manager Hank Jongen said the Butler Boulevard facility had made it easier for customers in the northern corridor to access Government services such as Medicare and Centrelink. "Located in one of the fastest growing regions in Australia . . . now residents will no longer need to travel to Joondalup to access services," he said. "The National Disability Insurance Agency is also available at the centre." Digital coaching is available for Centrelink customers looking for help accessing their myGov and online accounts. Pearce MHR Tracey Roberts said she had advocated for the crucial Government services, saving residents an hour round trip.

Attachment B

Date	Source	Item
16 April 2024	North Central Review (Kilmore)	'Services Australia access struggles' https://ncreview.com.au/2024/04/16/accessibility-struggles-highlighted-to-service-australia/
16 April 2024	2ST Breakfast Radio	Nowra Services Australia HQ has been relocated from Laurence Street to Berry Street. The Nowra Service Centre is open from Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. Nowra Services Australia on the move
15 April 2024	Services Australia Media Release	Media release - Services Australia on the move in Nowra - Services Australia
12 April 2024	Lithgow Mercury	'Services Australia privacy concerns' The Saint: Services Australia Lithgow's privacy concerns Lithgow Mercury Lithgow, NSW
20 February 2024	Channel 7 Sunrise	Police are treating a fire next to a Centrelink building in Elizabeth. A recently sold building next door to the Centrelink branch was damaged. Investigations continue into the cause of the fire.
27 January 2024	Ballarat Courier and Ararat Advisor	'Duty of care 'failed', says resident over CBD rough sleepers' https://www.thecourier.com.au/story/8497668/concerns-over-homeless-situation-at-old-centrelink-building/
14 December 2023	ABC News	<u>Government plaque naming wrong traditional owners 'quite upsetting', Barngarla people say.</u>
13 December 2023	ABC Eyre Peninsula and West Coast	Morning radio news segment about apology for Services Australia about incorrect acknowledgement of country. Breakfast at 06:54 a.m. - Isentia (mediaportal.com)
3 November 2023	Have a Go News	<u>Video chat available with aged care specialist officers.</u>
17 October 2023	Ministerial Release	Centrelink and Medicare services coming soon to Butler Centrelink and Medicare services coming soon to Butler Department of Social Services Ministers (dss.gov.au)
16 October 2022	The Mandarin	'Digital first' has made the social services frontline a lot tougher and rougher: so where to now?
14 October 2023	ABC Sydney Also on Triple J	The Community and Public Sector Union has welcomed recommendations to improve security at Centrelink offices by changing layouts of offices and hiring an extra 278 security guards for high risk offices. Stream

Attachment B

Date	Source	Item
14 October 2023	The Canberra Times	Services Australia's \$40m security lift.
14 October 2023	Sky News Also stories on Seven	Hundreds more security guards will be employed to protect Commonwealth Public Servants following a five month urgent review into staff safety, following the stabbing of a Services Australia staffer in Melbourne. Stream
13 October 2023	ABC radio Australia Also broadcast on TripleJ and 3AW radio	Two trained guards will be stationed at Centrelink offices deemed high risk and the Federal Government is investing \$40m in security upgrades and de-escalation training after a staff member was stabbed earlier this year. Stream
13 October 2023	The Canberra Times	Security to be stepped up after public servant stabbing
9 October 2023	Press release	Local MP Brian Mitchell published a media release about the new Sorell Service Centre on his website.
8 October 2023	The Mercury	Centrelink service hub slated for Sorell. links.streem.com.au/the-mercury-20231007-8JnlmRcP6xTdHnhlhO
14 September 2023	Seniors Discount Club	Major blow to local community as Centrelink office set to close in October. https://seniorsdiscountclub.com.au/threads/major-blow-to-local-community-as-centrelink-office-set-to-close-in-october.32502
13 September 2023	Mirage News	Labor, Services Australia Slammed for Centrelink Closure. https://www.miragenews.com/labor-services-australia-slammed-for-centrelink-1083346
13 September 2023	Media Release	Media release from Senator Rice on the closure of the South Melbourne Service Centre. https://greens.org.au/news/media-release/labor-services-australia-prove-disdain-poor-people-centrelink-office-closure.

Attachment B

Date	Source	Item
6 September 2023	Star Weekly	'Centrelink relocation 'kick in the guts''. Article about the upcoming relocation of the Broadmeadows Service Centre. https://sunburymacedonranges.starweekly.com.au/news/centrelink-relocation-kick-in-the-guts/
4 July 2023	Daily Mail	Article following Airport West stabbing. Centrelink bans customer: Failures that led to worker at Airport West, Melbourne almost dying Daily Mail Online

Attachment C

Freedom of Information (FOI)

Request Date	Who	Relating to	Documents released
14 December 2023	s47F(1)	The final reports / recommendations, relating to MyGov, provided by the University of Technology Sydney's Human Technology Institute to Services Australia from 1 January 2023 to date.	One document was released on 23 February 2024.
1 December 2023	s47F(1)	Ministerial Submissions concerning the Sorell Service Centre.	One document released on 1 December 2023.
17 November 2023	s47F(1)	Documents relating to Services Australia's assessment in determining the community need for and location of face to face services in Benalla VIC 3672.	Seven documents released on 1 December 2023.
14 September 2023	s47F(1)	Documents sent between Services Australia and the Office of Minister Shorten concerning the Minister for Government Service's visits to the Robina Services Australia service centre on 11 July 2023 and the Marion Services Australia service centre on 29 June 2023.	Two documents released on 20 October 2023.
1 August 2023	s47F(1)	Ministerial Submissions concerning the Sorell Service Centre.	One document released on 9 August 2023
1 August 2023	s47F(1)	Ministerial Submissions concerning the Sorell Service Centre.	One document released on 9 August 2023

Attachment C

Request Date	Who	Relating to	Documents released
1 August 2023	s47F(1)	Documents relating to Services Australia's assessment in determining the community need for and location of face to face services in Benalla Vic 3672.	Seven documents released on 9 August 2023
1 August 2023	s47F(1)	Documents relating to Services Australia's assessment in determining the community need for and location of face to face services in Benalla Vic 3672.	Seven documents released on 9 August 2023

Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

TOPIC: CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS

WITNESS: Jonathon Thorpe
Deputy CEO, Service Delivery Excellence

Strategic Narrative

- Services Australia (the Agency) is committed to delivering high-quality services to the Australian people. We value customer feedback as it helps us improve our business processes and deliver better services.
- Customers are able to provide the Agency with feedback via a range of options, including calling our complaints and feedback line, by mail, online or as part of any interaction with a service officer at a service centre or on the phone.
- The Agency aims to finalise complaints within 10 working days. More complex complaints may take longer.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

FYTD Comparison

Complaints	This FYTD 2023-24 (Jul – Mar)	Last FYTD 2022-23 (Jul – Mar)	% Change (FYTD)
Centrelink	207,320	132,014	+57.0%
Medicare	10,948	6,286	+74.2%
Child Support	14,388	11,943	+20.5%
TOTAL	232,656	150,243	+54.9%

Previous Years Comparison

Complaints	2022-23	2021-22	% Change (last two FY)
Centrelink	177,467	173,847	+2.1%
Medicare	8,648	15,809	-45.3%
Child Support	15,515	13,917	+11.5%
TOTAL	201,630	203,573	-1.0%

Talking Points

- The Agency is already seeing positive results from the increased resourcing and Service Delivery efforts over the last six months:
 - Complaints relating to Centrelink claim delays in March 2024 were the lowest they have been since August 2023 (a decrease of 15.8 per cent from February 2024).
 - Centrelink telephony related complaints in March 2024 were the lowest they have been in the 2023-24 financial year (a decrease of 23.1 per cent from February 2024).
- Delays in telephony and claim processing continue to be the biggest drivers of customer complaints for Centrelink and Medicare. This financial year to date (to 31 March 2024):
 - 24.6 per cent of all Centrelink complaints are from customers who said they waited too long for their claim to be processed.
 - 12.1 per cent of all Centrelink complaints are from customers who said they were unable to get through, or waited too long to speak to us via the phone.
 - 20.9 per cent of all Medicare complaints are from customers who said they waited too long for their claim to be processed.
 - 10.1 per cent of all Medicare complaints are from customers who said they were unable to get through, or waited too long to speak to us via the phone.
- Complaints in relation to Collection (31.9 per cent), Quality of Service (31.7 per cent) and Assessment (23.1 per cent) are the biggest drivers of complaints for Child Support:
 - Collection complaints include complaints relating to lack of collection, account balances and Employer Withholding.
 - Quality of Service complaints include complaints relating to processing delays, lack of courtesy and advice.
 - Assessment complaints include complaints relating to the income and care used in an assessment and a Change of Assessment.
- This financial year to date (to 31 March 2024), Agency complaints received account for 0.06 per cent of total customer interactions.
- In addition to recent service delivery bulk recruitment, the Agency continues to implement other strategies to address service demand and reduce complaints. This includes:
 - Expanding the use of Interactive Voice Response (IVR) capabilities across more services. This includes allowing customers to register their voiceprint through the Express Plus mobile app for a more personalised service, without the need to speak to a staff member.

- Continuing to expand the functionality of the myGov app to make it easier for customers to access services and information on their mobile devices.
- Ensuring the Digital Assistant is available to help people navigate the Agency's online services and find information.
- Providing one-on-one support over the phone or in-person to increase confidence in using online services, enabling customers to interact with the Agency at a time suitable to them.
- Prioritising work that maximises customer experience and assists in managing demand.
- Redirecting Agency staff to meet peak workloads and call demands.

BACKGROUND - *IF ASKED*

How we receive customer feedback:

- Customers can lodge feedback through:
 - calling the dedicated complaints and feedback line;
 - speaking with a staff member;
 - online via dedicated web forms;
 - media e.g. Ask Hank;
 - mail/fax; and
 - external channels (e.g., contacting a MP/Senator, Commonwealth Ombudsman).

What customer feedback data is captured:

- The Agency captures and categorises complaints to:
 - respond to the complainant; and
 - analyse the drivers of complaints and identify improvement opportunities.
- In addition to capturing the broader payment or service being complained about, the Agency categorises complaint reasons based on a 'service' and 'issue' structure managed by a classification schema:
 - The 'service' is the service offer or channel the customer was using e.g. A Phone Service, A Claim or Application, A Staff Member (Reason level 1).
 - The 'issue' is the customer experience that drove the complaint e.g. I waited too long, disagree with a decision, attitude or behaviour (Reason level 2).
 - This method allows the Agency to effectively respond to the complaint driver.

How we manage customer feedback:

- The Agency has two levels of complaint management:
 - Level 1 – Complaints managed at first point of contact by Service Delivery staff e.g. complaint recorded and resolved during customer contact, or an online complaint being allocated as a work item.
 - Level 2 – A complaint that cannot be resolved as a Level 1 complaint or meets one of the eight prescribed complaint escalation reasons.
 - These are managed by the Escalated or External Complaints teams in the Multicultural and Tailored Services Branch.
 - Complaints received via MP/Senators, or the Commonwealth Ombudsman are managed as Level 2 complaints.

What we do with Customer Feedback:

- The Agency uses complaints, compliments, and suggestions to improve service delivery, target training, and make enhancements to procedural protocols and communications.
- We are committed to reducing complaint volumes and use data analytics to identify issues and provide insights to support business improvement.
- We regularly monitor complaint and feedback trends and report on these to service and process teams to provide insight into service issues and areas for improvement.

Attachments

- Attachment A – Customer Complaints Statistical Information.

	Name and Role	Group/Branch/Organisation	Phone (mob)
Cleared By	Name: Brenton Halliday Role: General Manager	Service Delivery Optimisation Division	s47F(1)
Contact Officer	Name: Kylie Finnigan Role: National Manager	Digital Messaging, Analytics & Quality Branch/Service Delivery Optimisation Division	s47F(1)

CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Centrelink claim and decision timeliness complaints in 2023-24

Complaint Reason	2022-23	2021-22	FY % Change	FYTD 2023-24 (Jul - Mar)	FYTD 2022-23 (Jul - Mar)	FYTD % Change
A Claim, Application or Assessment Process I waited too long	22,825	20,486	+11.4%	50,991	14,962	+240.8%
A Decision, Outcome or Payment I waited too long	9,847	10,404	-5.4%	11,680	7,263	+60.8%

Centrelink telephony complaints and top 3 complaint reasons in 2023-24

Complaint Reason	2022-23	2021-22	FY % Change	FYTD 2023-24 (Jul - Mar)	FYTD 2022-23 (Jul - Mar)	FYTD % Change
A Phone Service All Centrelink telephony complaints	21,441	14,125	+51.8%	30,408	16,265	+87.0%
A Phone Service Line was busy or engaged	6,223	2,752	+126.1%	11,139	5,018	+122.0%
A Phone Service The call ended unexpectedly	6,273	4,787	+31.0%	7,625	4,781	+59.5%
A Phone Service I waited too long	4,101	2,603	+57.5%	6,356	2,674	+137.7%

Top 3 reasons for Centrelink digital complaints in 2023-24

Complaint Reason	2022-23	2021-22	FY % Change	FYTD 2023-24 (Jul - Mar)	FYTD 2022-23 (Jul - Mar)	FYTD % Change
Unable to Update Details	4,402	3,492	+26.1%	3,552	3,279	+8.3%
Could not Complete a Transaction	2,919	2,576	+8.1%	1,822	2,270	-19.7%
Could not Access	2,551	2,700	-1.0%	1,658	1,988	-16.6%

Top 3 reasons for Centrelink debt complaints in 2023-24

Payment/Service	2022-23	2021-22	FY % Change	FYTD 2023-24 (Jul - Mar)	FYTD 2022-23 (Jul - Mar)	FYTD % Change
A Debt, Deduction or Collection All complaints	12,120	9,527	+27.2%	10,633	9,727	+9.3%
A Debt, Deduction or Collection Amount	5,981	4,745	+26.0%	5,280	4,793	+10.2%
A Debt, Deduction or Collection Repayment options	1,371	968	+41.6%	1,320	1,061	+24.4%
A Debt, Deduction or Collection Notification	340	408	-16.7%	783	1,071	-26.9%

*Publically available in historical Annual Reports published

Medicare claim and decision timeliness complaints in 2023-24

Complaint Reason	2022-23	2021-22	FY % Change	FYTD 2023-24 (Jul - Mar)	FYTD 2022-23 (Jul - Mar)	FYTD % Change
A Claim, Application or Assessment Process I waited too long	1,138	1,474	-22.8%	2,286	647	+253.3%
A Decision, Outcome or Payment I waited too long	262	444	-41.0%	383	173	+121.4%

Medicare telephony complaints and top 3 complaint reasons in 2023-24

Complaint Reason	2022-23	2021-22	FY % Change	FYTD 2023-24 (Jul - Mar)	FYTD 2022-23 (Jul - Mar)	FYTD % Change
A Phone Service All Medicare telephony complaints	450	1,374	-67.2%	1,356	350	+287.4%
A Phone Service The call ended unexpectedly	113	439	-74.3%	421	77	+446.8%
A Phone Service I waited too long	155	378	-59.0%	411	125	+228.8%
A Phone Service Line was busy or engaged	11	118	-90.7%	276	7	+3842.9%

Top 3 reasons for Medicare digital complaints in 2023-24

Complaint Reason	2022-23	2021-22	FY % Change	FYTD 2023-24 (Jul - Mar)	FYTD 2022-23 (Jul - Mar)	FYTD % Change
Could not Access	254	950	-73.3%	204	198	+3.0%
Unable to Update Details	210	894	-76.5%	144	140	+2.9%
Information incorrect, not available or unclear	184	456	-59.6%	143	160	-10.6%

Top 5 reasons for Child Support complaints in 2023-24

Complaint Reason	2022-23	2021-22	FY % Change	FYTD 2023-24 (Jul - Mar)	FYTD 2022-23 (Jul - Mar)	FYTD % Change
Collection: Lack of Collection	1,652	1,118	+47.8%	1,619	1,206	+34.2%
Quality of Service: Processing Delay	1,408	1,239	+13.6%	1,325	597	+121.9%
Assessment: Income Used	796	441	+80.5%	1,311	1,095	+19.7%
Collection: Account Balance	1,284	1,132	+13.4%	934	873	+7.0%
Quality of Service: Lack of Courtesy	1,147	1,035	+10.8%	926	997	+7.1%

The Agency aims to resolve complaints within 10 working days

Programme	% of customer complaints finalised within 10 working days				
	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 FYTD (Jul - Mar)
Centrelink	51%*	80%*	47%*	58%*	51%
Medicare	91%*	93%*	83%*	81%*	42%
Child Support	93%*	92%*	91%*	90%*	88%

*Publically available in historical Annual Reports published

Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

TOPIC: ELECTORATE DATA

WITNESS: David Hazlehurst, Chief Executive Officer

Strategic Narrative

- Services Australia (the Agency) has extensive data holdings and uses this data to support the Agency to make data driven decisions to improve services for our customers and promote better advice to government.
- The Agency is committed to ensuring that the use and sharing of data is ethical and is aligned to the purpose for which it was collected.

Talking Points

- The Agency's operational and management reporting is driven by a range of factors and considerations that are central to the operations of the Agency. These factors and considerations include:
 - community needs;
 - claim/non-claim inflows;
 - claim types; and
 - staff supply and effort.
- These factors have no relationship to Commonwealth Electoral Boundaries (CEB) as this is not a geography type of relevance for the Agency's standard operational reporting and data collection.
- The Agency may produce non-standard reporting by relevant geography type.
- Typically, this is by Local Government Area to align with National Emergency Management Agency activation geographies.
- The Agency does not routinely produce data reports by CEB.
- Data by CEB has only been produced by exception when the Agency was supporting emergency responses such as during recent natural disasters and the pandemic response.

Timeline of recent or significant events

Date	Action
08 April 2024	Senator Maria Kovacic wrote to the CEO indicating her dissatisfaction that CEB data was not tabled at the Senate Estimates hearing on 14 February 2024, and furthermore she had not received a response to her letter dated 21 February 2024 requesting an explanation be provided to the Committee if CEB data was not going to be provided.
21 February 2024	Senator Maria Kovacic wrote again to the CEO requesting the CEB data be provided before the QoNs were due.
14 February 2024	All data available that was requested by Senator Maria Kovacic in her letter of 19 January 2024 was tabled at the Senate Estimates hearing.
19 January 2024	Senator Maria Kovacic wrote to Services Australia requesting a range of data, including data that was split by CEB.
25 October 2023	Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds CSC requested electoral data at the Supplementary Budget Estimates.

Background

- At Supplementary Budget Estimates in October 2023, the Agency took a Question on Notice (QoN) from Senator Reynolds on what data the Agency can provide by CEB and LGA, noting she was aware the Agency had provided CEB data previously.
- On 19 January 2024, ahead of the 14 February 2024 Senate Estimates hearing, the Agency received a letter from Senator Kovacic requesting a range of data that she would like to be tabled at the hearing.
- On 14 February 2024, the Agency tabled 304 pages of data, that included all data within our ability to provide. CEB data was not provided as this was not readily available as a result of CEBs having no relevance to the Agency's servicing arrangements.
- On 21 February 2024, Senator Kovacic again wrote to the Agency, requesting the CEB data be provided as soon as reasonable before the questions on notice were due on 4 April 2024. Additionally, she requested an explanation as to why the CEB data would not be provided if this date was not met.
- The original response to Senator Kovacic's letter dated 19 January 2024 diverted approximately seven resources for over three weeks.

Questions on Notice

Estimates QONs

Hearing	Date	Senator – Question #	Broad topic
Supplementary Budget Estimates	25 October 2023	Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds CSC SQ23-000830	Electorate level data

	Name and Role	Group/Branch/Organisation	Phone (w)	Phone (mob)
Cleared By	Name: Susie Smith Role: Deputy CEO	Strategy and Performance	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Contact Officer	Name: Garrett McDonald Role: Chief Data Officer	Strategy and Performance/ Data and Analytics Division	s47F(1)	s47F(1)

Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

TOPIC: **INDEPENDENT SERVICES AUSTRALIA – NDIA
PROCUREMENT AND CONTRACTING REVIEW**

WITNESS: Susie Smith
Deputy CEO, Strategy and Performance

Strategic Narrative

- The Independent Review of Services Australia (the Agency) and NDIA Procurement and Contracting (the Review) commenced on 1 December 2022 and was finalised on 6 March 2023.
- The Review assessed whether internal agency procurement processes related to matters raised in the media regarding Synergy 360 and associated entities were consistent with the Commonwealth Procurement Rules (CPRs) and Australian Public Service (APS) good practice, where applicable.
- The Agency is responding to the Review’s recommendations with a focus on uplifting internal procurement practices and capability and supporting improvements across the APS.
- [s37\(1\)\(a\)](#), [s37\(2\)\(b\)](#)
- Due to the nature of the investigations, no additional details can be provided at this stage.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES *Detail may inform the Key Facts and Figures Brief

- The Review considered 95 procurements from 13 entities – 84 from Services Australia and 11 from the NDIA.
- Of the 95 procurements reviewed, 67 (71 per cent), with an approximate value of \$267 million, were found to be broadly consistent with the CPRs and good practice.
- 28 (29 per cent) procurements, with an approximate value of \$351 million, were found to be inconsistent with the CPRs and did not demonstrate good practice.

Talking Points

- The Review was established jointly by the CEOs of Services Australia and the NDIA in December 2022, following media reporting about procurements associated with Synergy 360.
- The Review found that 71 per cent of procurements reviewed were consistent with the CPRs and broadly demonstrated good practice.
- It also found that the processes undertaken for the procurements in scope were broadly consistent with comparable procurements undertaken within the same reference period.
- This indicated that there is work to do to improve procurement practices across the Agency.
- The Agency is committed to ensuring its procurements meet the requirements of the Commonwealth Procurement Rules and are consistent with good practice.
- The Agency is implementing the recommendations from the Review.
- The Review did not consider matters relating to conduct of Ministers and Ministerial staff, or the Lobbying Code of Conduct.
- The Agency has developed a recommendation implementation plan with a focus on uplifting procurement processes and capability across the Agency and conducting further investigations where required.
- The Agency has engaged an independent external investigator to examine specific matters raised through the Review.
- The Agency is not able to comment on these investigations at this time.

Timeline of recent or significant events

Date	Action
13 September 2023	Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit (JCPAA) released Report 500: Inquiry into procurement at Services Australia and the National Disability Insurance Agency – Interim Report.
8 September 2023	Representatives from Services Australia attend a JCPAA public hearing of the Inquiry into procurement at Services Australia and the National Disability Insurance Agency.
12 May 2023	JCPAA establishes the Inquiry into procurement at Services Australia and the National Disability Insurance Agency. This was split from the Commonwealth Procurement: Inquiry into Auditor-General Reports 6, 15, 30, 42 (2021–22) and 5 (2022–23), to stand as its own inquiry with new terms of reference.
14 April 2023	JCPAA public hearing into Commonwealth Procurement: Inquiry into Auditor-General Reports 6, 15, 30, 42 (2021–22) and 5 (2022–23).
24 March 2023	Reports published on Services Australia website.
14 March 2023	CEO provides reports to Minister Shorten.
24 November 2022	Media reports related to contracts associated with Synergy 360. Minister Shorten asks the CEOs of Services Australia and the NDIA to investigate matters raised in the media. Services Australia commences identifying any procurements it has with entities specifically referred to in the media or acquired by an entity named in the media.

Background

Watt Review

- The Review assessed whether internal agency procurement processes related to matters raised in the media regarding Synergy 360 and associated entities were consistent with the CPRs and APS good practice, where applicable.
- Dr Ian Watt AC was appointed as the Independent Reviewer and was supported by a Taskforce comprising a team from Services Australia and the NDIA, with representatives from the Department of Finance.

Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit

- On 13 September 2023, the JCPAA tabled its *Report 500: Inquiry into procurement at Services Australia and the NDIA – Interim Report*, as part of its inquiry into procurement at Services Australia and the National Disability Insurance Agency.

- The interim report focused on individuals related to Synergy 360. It recommended that the National Anti-Corruption Commission examine material gathered through the JCPAA inquiry, to determine whether or not to investigate the matters raised.
- No recommendations were made for the Agency in the interim report.
- The Agency appeared at the following JCPAA inquiry hearings:

Date	Source
14 April 2023	Commonwealth Procurement: Inquiry into Auditor-General Reports 6, 15, 30, 42 (2021–22) and 5 (2022–23)
8 September 2023	Inquiry into procurement at Services Australia and the National Disability Insurance Agency

Media coverage

Date	Source	Item
13 September 2023	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>	Stuart Robert to be referred to National Anti-Corruption Commission
8 August 2023	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>	Stuart Robert met Infosys 11 times before \$191m deal
24 July 2023	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>	Stuart Robert backer John Margerison has left the country and ‘severed all ties with Australia’
28 June 2023	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>	Stuart Robert allegedly was set to receive funds after Synergy 360 contract
14 April 2023	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>	Stuart Robert stood to gain financially from friends’ company, a parliamentary inquiry has heard
30 March 2023	<i>The Age</i>	Stuart Robert lobbying, conflict claims demand further inquiry
27 March 2023	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>	Services Australia official oversaw decision to award contract to friend’s company, Synergy 360
26 March 2023	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>	Contracts linked to consultant, MP warrant investigation, review finds
1 December 2022	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>	Leaked files reveal meetings with minister over contracts
24 November 2022	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>	Senior Coalition MP Stuart Robert gave secret advice to lobbyists

Freedom of Information (FOI)

Request Date	Who	Relating to	Documents released
29 March 2023	s47F(1) (Sydney Morning Herald and The Age)	Information about projects within Services Australia that used services from Milo Consulting during 2019. Specifically, CN3614894 and CN3635727.	Applicant notified of the decision on 12 June 2023 refusing access in part to three documents and refusing access in full to two documents.
17 April 2023	s47F(1) (Right to Know)	All documents, emails, briefs, text and/or instant messages (including but not limited to Whatsapp and signal) between the CEO or the CEO's office of Services Australia and Minister Bill Shorten and/or his office regarding Stuart Robert and/or Synergy 360 between 24-25 November 2022 inclusive and 30 November-2 December 2022 inclusive.	Applicant notified of the decision on 16 June 2023 refusing access in part to three documents and refusing access in full to one document.
9 June 2023	s47F(1)	Documents, including but not limited to, written ministerial and departmental briefings, emails (only final documents and only final email chains), texts, encrypted app messages and chats (WhatsApp, Signal, Line etc) provided to Services Australia staff working in the Ministers Office and the CEO. Concerning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> s47F(1) Synergy 360 Milo Consulting s47F(1) The 'Lobbying Code of Conduct' or the 'Lobbyist Register' Dr Ian Watt. Between 24 October 2022 and 9 Jun 2023.	Applicant notified of the decision on 30 August 2023 refusing the request on the basis the request captures a significant number of documents.
3 September 2023	s47F(1)	All emails, texts and written briefs either sent by, copied to or received from the Secretary, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet or his staff by the CEO, Services Australia or her staff between 7 Aug 2022 to 6 Aug 2023 concerning s47F(1), Milo Consulting (trading as Synergy 360) and s47F(1)	Applicant notified of decision on 3 November 2023 to release three documents in part.

SERVICES AUSTRALIA

SB24-000145

Request Date	Who	Relating to	Documents released
3 September 2023	s47F(1)	All emails, texts and written briefs either sent by, copied to or received by Lisa O'Donnell from the CEO or staff in the CEO Office, or the Minister's Office or staff in the Minister's Office between 24 Oct 2022 to 03 Aug 2023 concerning the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • s47F(1) • Milo Consulting (trading as Synergy360) • s47F(1) 	Applicant notified of decision on 20 October 2023 to release one document in part.
3 September 2023	s47F(1)	Any response sent to s47F(1) in answer to the questions contained in his email to the media team at 10:41am on 23 Mar 2023. Any and all emails, texts or calls received by the Media Team from s47F(1) or s47F(1) concerning Milo Consulting, Synergy 360 or s47F(1) and any responses from the Media Team with regard to those communications between 24 Oct 22 and 3 Aug 23.	Applicant notified of decision on 2 November 2023 to release two documents in part.
3 September 2023	s47F(1)	Any email, text, briefing note or message chain arising from, and any and all responses sent by Rebecca Skinner or her staff in response to the email sent by (S22) the Senior Advisor in the Office of Bill Shorten MP to: Skinner, Rebecca Cc: DLO - (ServAU)s22 on Thursday, 24 November 2022 at 10:57 AM the subject of which was: Procurements associated with a number of companies and individuals named in recent media reports [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive].	Applicant notified of the decision on 27 October 2023 refusing access.
5 September 2023	s47F(1)	Any and all documentation or correspondence that the Taskforce or Dr Watt sent to Synergy 360 or s47F(1) to qualify the veracity of the media reports concerning them. Any and all documentation or correspondence that the Taskforce or Dr Watt have sent to Synergy 360 or s47F(1) to satisfy their duty to afford them a degree of procedural fairness. Any and all legal advice the Taskforce or Dr Watt may have received in the absence	Applicant notified of the decision on 27 October 2023 refusing access to documents.

SERVICES AUSTRALIA

SB24-000145

Request Date	Who	Relating to	Documents released
		of a clear, contrary legislative intention, that administrative decision-makers must accord procedural fairness to those affected by their decisions.	
5 September 2023	s47F(1)	Information with regard s37(1)(a), s37(2)(b) to undertake investigations in respect of Milo Consulting (operating as Synergy 360), s47F(1) or any other individual or entity associated with them.	Applicant notified of the decision on 6 November 2023 providing access to 1 publicly available document.
19 September 2023	s47F(1)	With regard to the JCPAA Report 500: Inquiry into procurement at Services Australia and the NDIA – Interim Report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any and all information, including texts, emails and briefings provided to the CEO Services Australia or staff in her office with regard to this report. Any and all communications sent to CEO Services Australia or staff in her office by Julian Hill or other JCPAA members or officials with regard to this report. Any and all communications sent by the CEO Services Australia or staff in her office to Julian Hill or other JCPAA members or officials with regard to this report. 	Applicant notified of the decision on 16 October 2023 refusing access to documents.
20 March 2024	s47F(1)	Emails and written ministerial and departmental briefings, provided to or received from the following individuals: Minister Bill Shorten or Minister Shorten's Chief of Staff to which he is communicating with: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The Secretary of Services Australia Legal department with regard to commonwealth leases The department's nominated persons for Ministerial liaison communication In which any of the following words are mentioned: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "s47F(1)" "s47F(1)" and "s47F(1)" "United Marketing" "Tuggerah" and "lease" or "leasing" "Australian Property Reserve" 	Applicant notified of the decision on 30 April 2024 refusing access to documents.

Request Date	Who	Relating to	Documents released
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “JCPAA” which also includes the word “s47F(1)” <p>Within the date range from 1 October 2022 till 31 December 2023.</p> <p>Searches between the Agency and Julian Hill MP Emails and written ministerial and departmental briefings, provided to or received from Mr Julian Hill MP to which he is communicating with:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The Secretary of Services Australia Legal department with regard to commonwealth leases The department’s nominated persons for audit committee communications <p>In which any of the following words are mentioned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “s47F(1)” “s47F(1)” and in documents related to s47F(1) also includes “s47F(1)” “United Marketing” “Tuggerah” and “lease” or “leasing” “Australian Property Reserve” “JCPAA” which also includes the word “s47F(1)” 	

	Name and Role	Group/Branch/Organisation	Phone (w)	Phone (mob)
Cleared By	Name: Susie Smith Role: Deputy CEO Strategy and Performance	Strategy and Performance	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Contact Officer	Name: Pauline O’Neill Role: A/g General Manager	Enterprise Strategy and Governance Division		s47F(1)

Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

TOPIC: PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT (MAJOR PROGRAMS & PROJECTS)

WITNESS: Susie Smith
Deputy CEO, Strategy and Performance

Program and Project lists

Q: *What terminology does the Agency use to describe internal projects the agency is working on?*

A: The Agency uses the terms *major programs* and *major projects*.

Identification of Major Programs and Projects:

Q: *How are the Agency's Major Programs and Projects identified?*

A: The Agency's portfolio of major programs and projects is dependent on outcomes of the federal budget process year on year. These could be single or multi-year programs.

Q: *What happens when Major Programs and Projects are identified?*

A: Major Programs and projects identified in budget announcements have a Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) assigned and are registered.

Q: *Who is the SRO?*

A: The SRO is a lead SES officer (Band 1, 2 or 3) who is accountable for all aspects of program/project performance, including governance, budget and delivery.

Q: *Has the Agency's Portfolio, Program and Project Framework been tabled and why was it updated?*

A: Yes it has. The Framework has been updated to reflect changes to the Agency's portfolio management governance arrangements and improvements in our practices. In particular, this consolidates and contemporises the key elements into a single high-level principle-based framework. This work has been informed by our independent assurance process.

Program/ Project reporting:***Q: How are the status of programs and projects tracked?***

A: As part of the Agency's portfolio assurance practices, the Enterprise Portfolio Management Office (EPMO) works with SROs to track and monitor the health of a program/project and reports program and project status information.

Q: How is the information reported?

A: The status of a program or project is reported against a traffic light system of Red, Amber and Green.

Q: What do the colours represent?

A: The status colour is established taking into account key milestones, budget, financial benefits, business outcomes and risk. The resulting colour assists in determining whether remedial activities are required.

Q: Why does program or project re-baselining occur?

A: Re-baselining a program or project may occur as a result of scope, schedule, budget or legislation changes.

Q: How do you report program/project increment progression?

A: The Agency does not report by program/project increment progression. The status of programs and projects is reported against a traffic light system.

Q: Were any programs subject to a gateway review in the 2022-23 Financial Year?

A: The programs that were subject to a gateway review in the 2022-23 Financial Year are as follows:

- Welfare Payments Infrastructure Transformation Program – Amber/Red
- Single Touch Payroll Program (phase 2) – Green
- Health Delivery Modernisation Program – Amber
- myGov Enhancements Program – Green/Amber
- GovERP Program – Amber/Red.

Current Major Programs:

Q: How many major programs have been funded by Government, and what is the current status of the programs?

A: As at 31 March 2024 there are currently two major programs with Federal Budget funding. Health Delivery Modernisation Program (Phase 3) was tracking Red and GovERP Program was tracking Green.

The current list of the major programs and related status from December 2023 to March 2024 is at [Attachment A](#).

Q: Were any major programs completed in the 2022-23 FY?

A: Four programs were closed, comprising of:

- Health Delivery Modernisation (Phase 2)
- Residential Age Care Funding Reform
- New Employment Services Model (NESM) Program
- Welfare Payments Infrastructure Transformation (Tranche 4).

Q: Have any major programs been completed in the 2023-24 FY?

A: From 1 July 2023 to 31 March 2024, two programs have closed, comprising of:

- myGov Enhancements Program
- Veteran Centric Reform Program

Current Major Projects

Q: How many major projects have been funded by Government?

A: As at 31 March 2024, there are currently 58 major projects with Federal Budget funding.

- 44 projects were tracking Green
- 6 projects were tracking Amber
- 8 projects were tracking Red.

For comparison, at 31 December 2023, there was 61 major projects with Federal Budget funding.

- 47 projects were tracking Green
- 8 projects were tracking Amber
- 6 Projects were tracking Red.

The current list of the major projects and related status from December 2023 to March 2024 is at [Attachment B](#).

Major projects with Red status as at 31 March 2024	Responsible Deputy / Group
Social Security Agreements – Republics of Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina*	Kirsty Faichney Program Design
General Practice in Aged Care Incentive*	Kirsty Faichney Program Design
Supporting Bulk Billing in General Practice & Medicare Item Maintenance (NIM) System Re-Platforming*	Kirsty Faichney Program Design
Child Support: Accepting accredited DNA Evidence*	Kirsty Faichney Program Design
Improve child support rules for young people aged 18	Kirsty Faichney Program Design
Equitable and Improved Refundable Accommodation Deposit (RAD)/Refundable Accommodation Contribution (RAC) Information*	Kirsty Faichney Program Design
Farm Household Allowance realignment	Kirsty Faichney Program Design
Digital Identity Interim Oversight Authority*	Charles McHardie Technology and Digital Programs

**Bold denotes projects that have reported Red for a number of consecutive months during the period December 2023 to March 2024.*

If asked

- Program/project status questions can be directed to the relevant SROs.
- Financial questions relating to the budget of a program/project can be referred to the Chief Financial Officer (CFO).
- The monthly status updates are provided to the Executive, they are not provided to the Minister or his office.

Background

Q: How many Questions on Notice relating to program health, program status reporting and status change of programs has Services Australia responded to?

A: From 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2024, there have been:

- 20 related Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
- 4 related Parliamentary Questions on Notice
- 2 FOI requests.

Questions on Notice**Estimates QONs**

Hearing	Date	Senator - Question #	Broad topic
Additional Estimates	14 February 2024	Senator Maria Kovacic SQ24-000061	Portfolio Programme and Project Framework
Additional Estimates	14 February 2024	Senator Maria Kovacic SQ24-000150	Program Management Framework
Additional Estimates	14 February 2024	Senator Maria Kovacic SQ24-000152	Project Health
Supplementary Budget Estimates	25 October 2023	Senator Maria Kovacic SQ23-000708	Active Registered Projects
Supplementary Budget Estimates	25 October 2023	Senator Maria Kovacic SQ23-000709	Health of Projects Document
Supplementary Budget Estimates	25 October 2023	Senator Maria Kovacic SQ23-000726	Gateway reviews
Supplementary Budget Estimates	25 October 2023	Senator Maria Kovacic SQ23-000729	Active registered projects
Supplementary Budget Estimates	25 October 2023	Senator Maria Kovacic SQ23-000730	Active registered projects – health
Supplementary Budget Estimates	25 October 2023	Senator Maria Kovacic SQ23-000731	Active registered projects – forecast
Supplementary Budget Estimates	25 October 2023	Senator Maria Kovacic SQ23-000733	Active registered projects – scope

SERVICES AUSTRALIA

SB24-000141

Hearing	Date	Senator - Question #	Broad topic
Supplementary Budget Estimates	25 October 2023	Senator Maria Kovacic SQ23-000734	Project upgrades, uplift
Supplementary Budget Estimates	25 October 2023	Senator Maria Kovacic SQ23-000841	Project Health
Budget Estimates	31 May 2023	Senator Wendy Askew SQ23-000384	Transformation projects
Budget Estimates	31 May 2023	Senator Wendy Askew SQ23-000400	Service uplift – data
Budget Estimates	31 May 2023	Senator Wendy Askew SQ23-000402	Service uplift
Budget Estimates	31 May 2023	Senator Wendy Askew SQ23-000438	Projects re-baselined
Budget Estimates	31 May 2023	Senator Wendy Askew SQ23-000446	Programme Increments
Budget Estimates	31 May 2023	Senator Slade Brockman SQ23-000480	Major projects and Programs list
Additional Estimates	15 February 2023	Senator Jacinta Nampijinpa Price SQ23-000261	Project – program increments
Additional Estimates	15 February 2023	Senator Jacinta Nampijinpa Price SQ23-000264	Project status reports

Other QONs

Committee Inquiry	Senator/MP - Question #	Broad topic
House of Representatives	The Hon Paul Fletcher MP QiW 257 PQ23-000113	Corporately Registered Programs
House of Representatives	The Hon Paul Fletcher MP QiW 282 PQ23-000123	Transformation and Integration
House of Representatives	The Hon Paul Fletcher MP QiW 554 PQ24-000016	Status and Expenditure of Major Projects
House of Representatives	The Hon Paul Fletcher MP QiW 555 PQ24-000017	Status of Major Programs

Freedom of Information (FOI)









Request Date	Who	Relating to	Documents released
August 2023 (LEX75579)	s47F(1)	All Major Projects and Programs lists and related health reports	Nil. Too voluminous to process.
October 2023 (LEX76610)	s47F(1)	The final iteration of each Senate Estimates briefing packs prepared for the 25 October 2023 Community Affairs Hearing	SB23-000417 Portfolio Management (Major Programs)

Attachments

- Attachment A - Major programs and related status as at 31 March 2024
- Attachment B - Major projects and related status as at 31 March 2024

	Name and Role	Group/Branch/Organisation	Phone (w)	Phone (mob)
Cleared By	Name: Susie Smith Role: Deputy CEO	Strategy and Performance	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Contact Officer	Name: Kylie Whiu Role: General Manager	Enterprise Portfolio Management Office	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Consultation	Name: Angela Diamond Role: Chief Financial Officer	Chief Financial Officer	s47F(1)	s47F(1)

Attachment A

Major Programs	Status March 2024 – December 2023				Responsible Deputy / Group
	March 2024	February 2024	January 2024	December 2023	
GovERP Program					Charles McHardie Technology and Digital Programs
Health Delivery Modernisation Program (Phase 3)					Kirsty Faichney Program Design

Red


Amber


Green


* The status of a program is reported against a traffic light system of Red, Amber and Green. The status colour is established taking into account key milestones, budget, financial benefits, business outcomes and risk. The resulting colour assists in determining whether remedial activities are required.

Attachment B

Major Projects	Status March 2024 – December 2023				Responsible Deputy / Group
	March 2024	February 2024	January 2024	December 2023	
Farm Household Allowance Changes 2019/2020	▲	▲	●	●	Kirsty Faichney Program Design
MyMedicare	●	●	●	●	
Ceasing Pay Doctor via claimant cheques and other changes	●	▲	●	▲	
Support at Home and Single Assessment Workforce	●	●	●	●	
PIP Indigenous Health Incentive (IHI) Reform	●	●	●	▲	
Social Security Agreements — Republics of Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina	◆	◆	◆	◆	
Enhanced Paid Parental Leave	●	▲	●	●	
Cashless Welfare Reform - Abolish Cashless Debit Card and Reform Income Management	●	●	●	●	
Activity Test changes for Indigenous children	●	●	●	●	
24x7 Registered Nurse Supplement	●	●	●	●	
Enhancing the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility Scheme	▲	▲	▲	▲	
Pacific Engagement Visa (PEV)	●	●	▲	▲	
Future Aged Care ICT Platform - Government Provider Management System (GPMS) Interface Modernisation	▲	▲	◆	◆	
WIP-DS - Additional Incentive Payments	●	●	●	●	
Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) XML Replacement	●	●	●	●	
Digital Data Request	▲	▲	▲	●	
Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Data Lake Sub-Tenancy	●	●	●	●	
New Impairment Tables for Disability Support Pension	●	●	●	●	
Delivering the Startup Year Election Commitment	●	●	▲	●	

Attachment B

Major Projects	Status March 2024 – December 2023				Responsible Deputy / Group
	March 2024	February 2024	January 2024	December 2023	
Commissioner of Taxation vs Douglas, proactive remediation program (Child Support)	●	●	●	●	Kirsty Faichney Program Design
Addition of Shingrix to the AIR as a standard vaccine	●	●	●	●	
Energy Bill Relief Fund	●	●	●	●	
Pharmacy - Changes to the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) to introduce new reporting fields	●	●	●	●	
WIP-PS Increased payments to support multidisciplinary care	●	●	●	●	
Places to People: Embedding Choice in Residential Aged Care	▲	▲	●	●	
Chronic Wound Consumables Scheme Product Ordering Portal	●	●	●	●	
General Practice in Aged Care Incentive	◆	◆	◆	◆	
Assistance for IVF - Assisted Reproductive Technology Storage Funding Payment System	●	▲	●	●	
Supporting Bulk Billing in General Practice & Medicare Item Maintenance (NIM) System Re-Platforming	◆	◆	◆	◆	
Child Support: Accepting accredited DNA Evidence	◆	◆	●	●	
Improved Access to Allied Health Professionals as Part of Multidisciplinary Teams in Regional, Rural and Remote Australia (WIP - Practice Stream)	●	●	●	-	
Decommission Restrict Access to the Relocation Scholarship	●	●	●	▲	
Decommission Align PES and EdEP to study loads	▲	●	●	●	
Boosting Employment Support - Budget 2023-24 - Extend Time to Work Employment Service (TWES) program for one year (to 30 June 2024)	●	●	●	●	
Improve child support rules for young people aged 18	◆	●	●	●	
COVID-19 Aged Care Outbreak Management Support (ACOMS) Supplement	●	●	●	●	

Attachment B

Major Projects	Status March 2024 – December 2023				Responsible Deputy / Group
	March 2024	February 2024	January 2024	December 2023	
Farm Household Allowance realignment	◆	●	●	-	
Decommission - Pension Supplement	●	●	▲	●	Kirsty Faichney Program Design
Decommission - Enhanced Residency Requirements for pensioners	●	▲	▲	●	
Decommission - Apply a Consistent Four-year newly Arrived Resident's Waiting Period Across Payments	●	▲	▲	●	
ParentsNext Interim Approach & Co-Design	●	●	●	●	
Limit back dated claims	●	●	●	●	
CCS and ParentsNext Replacement Service	●	●	-	-	
Equitable and Improved Refundable Accommodation Deposit (RAD)/Refundable Accommodation Contribution (RAC) Information	◆	◆	-	-	
Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) enhancements - 1 March 2024	●	●	▲	◆	
Extend the Temporary Work Bonus Measure	●	●	●	●	
Youpla Resolution Payment	●	●	●	-	
Extend Employment Nil Rate Period	●	●	●	-	
Better Targeting Employment Services	●	●	▲	-	
New Pre-Employment Service for Parents	●	●	●	●	
COVID-19 Vaccine Claims Scheme	●	●	●	-	
Digital Identity Enhancing the Ecosystem	●	▲	▲	●	Charles McHardie Technology and Digital Programs
Implementing Phishing Resistant Credentials in myGov	●	●	●	●	
Digital Identity Interim Oversight Authority	◆	◆	◆	◆	
Drug Test Trial Decommission	●	●	●	●	
Debt Management Capability Enhancements to Treat Cases where Payments are to be Returned	●	●	●	●	Chris Birrer Payments and Integrity

Attachment B

Major Projects	Status March 2024 – December 2023				Responsible Deputy / Group
	March 2024	February 2024	January 2024	December 2023	
Medicare Fraud System Future State Analysis	●	●	▲	▲	
Uplifting evaluation capability among policy officers	●	●	●	●	Susie Smith Strategy and Performance

Red
◆

Amber
▲

Green
●

* The status of a program is reported against a traffic light system of Red, Amber and Green. The status colour is established taking into account key milestones, budget, financial benefits, business outcomes and risk. The resulting colour assists in determining whether remedial activities are required.

Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

TOPIC: CYBER SAFETY AND SECURITY

WITNESS: Charles McHardie
Chief Information and Digital Officer
Technology and Digital Programs

Strategic Narrative

- Services Australia (the Agency) is engaged across government and the private sector to ensure that our cyber security posture is effective in protecting customer data and highly complex payment systems.
- The Agency holds personal information for the majority of Australians and takes the protection and management of customer information and the security of our systems seriously.
- The Agency's Cyber Security Operations Centre (CSOC) has observed a global increase in the cyber threat landscape that poses potential security risks. The Agency continually reviews risks and identifies and applies additional protective measures where appropriate.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- The Agency maintains security to protect the large volumes of data it holds, including customer information and payment details.
- The Agency's CSOC operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, providing monitoring, response and vulnerability management capabilities.
- As at 31 March 2024, the Cyber Security Division has 220 personnel, comprised as follows:
 - 192 APS;
 - 21 Contractors; and
 - Seven Service Providers.

Talking Points

Cyber Capability

- The Agency delivers cyber security capability and protection for its systems and data, and for the systems and services of its Shared Services Partners, including:
 - the Department of Social Services;
 - the Department of Veterans' Affairs;
 - the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA); and
 - NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission.
- Capability and protection is provided through cyber security monitoring, security threat intelligence, detection, and security incident response capabilities.
- The Agency prioritises Australian Signals Directorate (ASD), Australian Cyber Security Centre (ACSC) and Cyber Security Response Coordination Unit (CSRCU) guidelines.
- The potential impact of a cyber security incident on Agency systems is significant, potentially impacting continuity of government service delivery. The Agency continues to review the cyber security threats to Agency systems, identifying and applying additional protection measures as appropriate.
- The Agency is aware of instances where third party compromise events have unintentionally or inappropriately led to the disclosure of customer data.
- When disclosures of customer data are detected, the Agency collaborates with the impacted third party to mitigate and manage risk.
- The Agency does not publicly comment on the specifics of investigations.

Evolving Cyber Security Threat Landscape

- Australia could be the target of criminal actors and persistent cyber espionage from a range of state actors.
- The Agency's information holdings may be of interest to organised crime and malicious cyber threat actors, who are constantly evolving and becoming increasingly sophisticated in their approach.
- To combat the increasing number and sophistication of cyber threats, the Agency focuses on:
 - managing cyber vulnerabilities and risks;
 - implementing effective protective security controls; and
 - improving operational resilience through effective threat detection and robust response capabilities.

- The ACSC has warned Australian organisations to remain vigilant to potentially malicious cyber incidents associated with the geopolitical tensions around the Russian-Ukraine, Palestine-Israel and Iran-Israel conflicts.
- In response, the CSOC has enhanced monitoring and logging, enabling increased visibility of the Agency's network.
- The Agency shares intelligence about the threat landscape with the ASD, ACSC and the CSRCU, and during significant cyber events shares capability and resources.
- The Agency has collaborated with Telstra and the ACSC to implement a malicious text message blocking service for Agency customers, which automatically identifies and rejects phishing text messages at the network-level that appear to be sent from myGov, Medicare and Centrelink.

Cyber Uplift and Safety Program

- Cyber safety is recognised as an enterprise-wide strategic priority for the Agency. A multi-year program commenced from 1 July 2023 to uplift and continue hardening of cyber security in the Agency's networks and systems.
- These activities include aligning enterprise and cyber risk frameworks, product and system owner accountability, software delivery, secure code implementation and importantly, staff and shared services education, and engagement activities.

Education and Awareness

- The Agency continues to grow a cyber-aware workforce through ongoing training and development programs.
- From 1 January 2024 to 31 March 2024, 13 virtual and face-to-face education sessions were delivered to 680 APS and Executive Level staff across the Agency.
- Agency staff are informed about cyber threats through a range of channels and awareness, raising activities including:
 - simulated phishing exercises to improve staff awareness and responsiveness;
 - mandatory eLearning for all staff and contractors; and
 - cyber related communications using internal staff channels and dedicated intranet resources.
- Phishing awareness campaigns and training activities are also rolled out to Shared Services Partners.

Background

- The Agency's ICT systems and associated cyber security arrangements are highly complex. Sharing specific details of these arrangements publicly must be carefully considered to ensure that the Agency's systems are not exposed.
- The Agency takes a broad approach to managing the security of its systems, focusing on managing cyber vulnerabilities and risks, implementing effective protective security controls, and improving operational resilience through effective threat detection and robust response capabilities.
- Monitoring supporting systems during the Agency's response to the COVID-19 pandemic assisted in ensuring availability of the Government's Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment and Disaster Recovery Payments.

COVID-19

- Monitoring supporting systems during the Agency's response to the COVID-19 pandemic assisted in ensuring availability of the Government's Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment and Disaster Recovery Payments.
- The COVID-19 economic stimulus packages placed the Agency's networks under substantial pressure. Public demand for the services offered by the Agency increased and much of this demand was received via the Agency's digital channels.
- As part of the Agency's ICT capacity uplift in response to COVID-19, the number of concurrent users that can access myGov at one time was upgraded to at least 510,000 with a load response time of under 1.5 seconds.
- The Cyber Security Division continues to protect the data used by the Australian Immunisation Register COVID-19 vaccine rollout through monitoring and mitigation activities.

Digital Identity System

- The Digital ID Bill 2024 and Digital ID (Transitional and Consequential Provisions) Bill 2024 will put in place the legislative framework to create an economy-wide Digital ID system in Australia, ensuring there are strong privacy and security safeguards for people who choose to use Digital ID with an accredited provider.
- The Bills were referred to the Senate Economics Legislation Committee for inquiry and on 28 February 2024, the Committee recommended the Bills be passed. It is expected that the Bills will progress to the House of Representatives during the next sitting period.

- The Australian Government Digital Identity System (AGDIS) is governed by an Interim Oversight Authority (IOA), which is operated by the Agency, in partnership with the Department of Finance (Finance).
- The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) will initially perform the role of Regulator, replacing the regulatory functions currently performed by Finance.
- The Agency has been named as System Administrator in the Bill and will continue to regulate the operational aspects of the AGDIS relating to security, integrity, and system performance.
- The IOA is responsible for administration and oversight of the AGDIS, including coordinating system-wide cyber security incident response and security risk management.

Multi-Factor Authentication

- The Agency successfully implemented Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) in its environment for all standard users on 28 February 2022, to comply with the uplifted ASD's ACSC Essential Eight guidelines.
- Implementing MFA enhances the Agency's information security controls and reduces the risk of unauthorised access to agency systems.
- MFA strengthens the prevention of unauthorised access to the Agency's network, providing an additional layer of security to accounts. An authentication factor is used in addition to a username and password, to verify the user's identity.

Media coverage

Date	Source	Item
21 March 2024	<i>Cyber Daily</i>	Hansford warns of changing Australian cyber threat landscape
19 March 2024	<i>Computer Weekly</i>	Australia's cyber security spending to grow 11.5% this year
27 February 2024	<i>The Mandarin</i>	Army intelligence leader to become new National Cyber Security Coordinator
25 February 2024	<i>ABC News</i>	Lieutenant General Michelle McGuinness appointed national cyber security coordinator
25 January 2024	<i>IT Brief</i>	Breaking down Australia's Cyber Security Strategy 2023-2030
23 January 2024	<i>Australian Cyber Security Magazine</i>	Medibank cyberattack prompts sanctions

Date	Source	Item
22 December 2023	Sky News	Australia's security agencies join forces to investigate and limit impact of cyber attack on St Vincent's Health
22 November 2023	itnews	New cyber policy to harden defences against our 'fastest growing threat'
22 November 2023	SBS	Strap in for cyber-secure Australian life - by 2030
22 November 2023	ABC News	Australian Cyber Security Strategy outlines how government plans to tackle cyber crime
22 February 2024	itnews	Australia sets whole-of-government zero trust target
24 October 2023	ABC	Microsoft to help Australia build 'cyber shield', Anthony Albanese announces in Washington
19 September 2023	Financial Review	Why Australia is losing the battle for cyber resilience
18 September 2023	The Guardian	HWL Ebsworth hack: 65 Australian government agencies affected by cyber-attack
10 September 2023	The Mandarin	'Systems of National Significance' numbers double under critical infrastructure cyber crackdown
25 August 2023	News.com.au	Australia ranked among the most targeted countries for ransomware attacks
21 August 2023	Financial Review	Strong practical help for firms hit by cyberattack
10 August 2023	SBS News	Australian companies hit every seven minutes by a cyber attack
7 August 2023	Government News	Recent cyber attacks highlight vulnerability of local government
25 July 2023	The Guardian	Home affairs cyber survey exposed personal data of participating firms
19 July 2023	Sky News	Australia's first cybersecurity coordinator says paying ransoms a mistake
5 July 2023	ABC News	HWL Ebsworth hack affected government departments, cyber security coordinator says

Media enquiries

Enquiry date	Source	Response provided
29 November 2023	<i>Australian Financial Review</i>	<p>Australian Legal Firm HWL Ebsworth (HWLE) Cyber Incident:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Agency is one of 65 Australian Government entities impacted by the HWLE cyber incident, as direct clients of the firm through its legal and consulting services. Home Affairs has coordinated the Australian Government response to the HWLE cyber incident. As part of this response, the Agency has engaged closely with HWLE to ensure affected vendors are appropriately identified for the purposes of notification. <p>Background:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The compromised document was connected with procurements for the Enhanced myGov Program, through the DTA Digital Marketplace. It is not a 'myGov digital marketplace'. The myGov Enhancement program ended in June 2023. More information about the HWLE cyber incident should be directed to HWLE.
27 September 2023	<i>ABC News</i>	<p>PNORS Technology Group Data Breach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Agency is committed to protecting Australians from identity crime and exploitation, and has robust processes in place to protect personal information. Data held by the Agency has not been compromised by the PNORS Technology Group data breach. The Agency has worked closely with impacted third party organisations to identify any Services Australia customers who may have been impacted, and have applied additional security measures to records where appropriate. Australians can be confident that criminals can't access records with just a Medicare card number or Centrelink customer reference number. This includes health information in the My Health Record system. If someone believes there's been unauthorised activity in their Medicare account, they can call the Services Australia Scams and Identity Theft Help Desk on 1800 941 126. More information about how we protect information in the event of cyber breaches is available on our website: servicesaustralia.gov.au/databreach

Enquiry date	Source	Response provided
24 July 2023	<i>A Current Affair</i>	<p>MyGov Account Hacks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Agency takes the security of customer information very seriously and has robust protections in place. • myGov remains secure and has not been compromised. It's an unfortunate reality that opportunistic scammers steal identity information to carry out fraudulent activities. • While we can't comment on individual cases for privacy reasons, we've reached out to these customers to provide support and will fully investigate any potential fraud. • The Agency does not hold customers liable for any payments made as a result of fraudulent activity by a malicious third party.

Relevant Ministerial Comments

Date	Minister	Details
26 March 2024	Minister for Home Affairs and Cyber Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cyber targeting of UK democratic institutions. • Joint statement with Senator the Hon Penny Wong. • The Australian Government joins the United Kingdom and other international partners in expressing serious concerns about malicious cyber activities by China state-backed actors targeting UK democratic institutions and parliamentarians. • The persistent targeting of democratic institutions and processes has implications for democratic and open societies like Australia. This behaviour is unacceptable and must stop. • Australia calls on all states to act responsibly in cyberspace.
17 March 2024	Minister for Home Affairs and Cyber Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping Australians safe online. • Australians are being encouraged to improve their online security and make Australia a harder target through better cyber security practices with the launch of the next phase of the Act Now, Stay Secure cyber security education campaign. • With the tagline 'What are you risking online?', the campaign empowers all Australians to build their knowledge and skills to better protect themselves online. • The campaign is a key element of the <i>2023–2030 Australian Cyber Security Strategy</i>.

Date	Minister	Details
29 February 2024	Minister for Home Affairs and Cyber Security	<p>Interview with Greg Jennett, Afternoon Briefing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The good news for us is that the work the Australian government is doing to protect Australians against cyber threats helps us against all the different presentations of cyber threat – whether it's cyber-crime gangs, whether it's scams, whether it's these issues of critical infrastructure. The core message for all of us is that we've got to step up here. The director-general has been really clear – cyber security is the easiest, fastest way for adversarial foreign governments to try to target us here in Australia, and we're doing everything we can as a government to improve our efforts. The public and corporate Australia needs to come with us.
25 February 2024	Minister for Home Affairs and Cyber Security	<p>Media Release:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appointment of new National Cyber Security Coordinator. The Australian Government has announced the appointment of Lieutenant General Michelle McGuinness, CSC, as National Cyber Security Coordinator. Lieutenant General McGuinness will commence as the National Cyber Security Coordinator on Monday 26 February 2024.
23 January 2024	Minister for Home Affairs and Cyber Security	<p>Media Release:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cyber sanctions in response to Medibank Private cyber attack. Joint media release with the Hon Richard Marles MP and Senator the Hon Penny Wong. Australia has today used cyber sanctions powers on a Russian individual for his role in the breach of the Medibank Private network. This is the first use of Australia's autonomous cyber sanctions framework and is a result of Australian Government efforts over the past 18 months to investigate and respond to this cyber incident.
22 December 2023		<p>Media Release:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Securing Australia's cyber future through a new era of public-private partnership. The Australian Government has today released the 2023-2030 Australian Cyber Security Strategy: Cyber Security Legislative Reforms Consultation Paper and an overview of existing cyber obligations for business leaders.

Date	Minister	Details
22 November 2023	Minister for Home Affairs and Cyber Security	Media Release: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cyber strategy signals generational shift in response to growing threat. • The 2023–30 Australian Cyber Security Strategy, released today, puts Australia on track to being a world leader in cyber security by 2030. • We need to act now to defend Australia from cyber threats. • Our Strategy will make every Australian citizen, business, government agency and organisation a harder target. It will enable us to bounce back faster from attacks that we cannot prevent. We will put cyber criminals on notice, and we will fight back against the threat.
2 November 2023	Minister for Home Affairs and Cyber Security	Media Release: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counter ransom initiative statement. • The forthcoming 2023–30 Australian Cyber Security Strategy will look at ways that we can work with industry to break the ransomware business model. • The Strategy will also identify way that we can enhance the guidance and support provided to victims of ransomware. • These are the essential steps we need to take as we work towards becoming a world-leading cyber secure and resilient nation by 2030.
24 October 2023	Prime Minister	Media Release: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microsoft will collaborate with the Australian Signals Directorate (ASD) on the Microsoft-ASD Cyber Shield to harden Australia from cyber threats to individuals, businesses, and governments. • The Microsoft-ASD Cyber Shield will improve joint capability to identify, prevent and respond to cyber threats, which are growing in both frequency and severity. It will be one of the first steps that we are taking as part of the 2023–30 Cyber-Security Strategy, to become a world-leading cyber secure and resilient nation by 2030.

Date	Minister	Details
11 September 2023	Minister for Home Affairs and Cyber Security	Media Release: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protecting Australia's critical infrastructure assets. The Albanese Government has declared another 87 critical infrastructure assets to be Systems of National Significance, bringing the total number of Systems of National Significance to 168 across the energy, communications, transport, financial services and markets, and data storage or processing sectors. Being declared a System of National Significance means the Australian Government can apply a robust set of enhanced cyber security obligations on the owners and operators.
8 September 2023	Minister for Home Affairs and Cyber Security	National Cyber Security Exercise Press Conference: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Hon Clare O'Neil MP with Telstra CEO Vicki Brady and Air Marshal Darren Goldie. What this last year has shown us is that when we arrived in Government just over a year ago Australians were unnecessarily vulnerable, and we were fundamentally unprepared for the cyber world that we were living in. That has changed, over the past year our Government has been working assiduously to make sure that we are doing everything we can to protect Australians from this problem, to make sure that we build layers of protection around citizens and small business, and make sure that fundamentally we're a safer country.

Questions on Notice

Estimates QONs

Hearing	Date	Senator – Question #	Broad topic
Supplementary Budget Estimates	15 December 2023	Senator Maria Kovacic SQ23-000964	Services Australia Identity Exchange – cyber security and risks
Budget Estimates	31 May 2023	Senator Wendy Askew SQ23-000406	Cyber Hubs Program
Supplementary Budget Estimates	15 February 2023	Senator Jacinta Price SQ23-000262	Cyber operational issues

Other QONs

Committee Inquiry	Senator/MP – Question #	Broad topic
Parliamentary	James Paterson PQ23-000034	Invitation to TikTok Australia's Transparency and Accountability Centre
Parliamentary	James Paterson PQ23-000001	TikTok on Work Issue Devices

	Name and Role	Group/Branch/Organisation	Phone (w)	Phone (mob)
Cleared By	Name: Charles McHardie Role: Chief Information and Digital Officer	Technology and Digital Programs	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Contact Officer	Name: Janice Law Role: Chief Information Security Officer	Cyber Security Division	s47F(1)	s47F(1)

Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

TOPIC: ICT SYSTEMS PERFORMANCE

WITNESS: Charles McHardie
Chief Information and Digital Officer, Technology and Digital Programs

Strategic Narrative

- Services Australia (the Agency) delivers a wide range of services and payments to the Australian public that are all underpinned by ICT infrastructure. It is imperative these systems are accessible, secure and reliable at all times.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- From 1 January 2024 to 31 March 2024:
 - 2,942 ICT changes were implemented;
 - one Significant Incident occurred for 91 minutes (a customer self service capability system or application was unavailable or severely degraded); and
 - one Major Incident occurred for 51 minutes (a system was unavailable and there was no other option available for customers to access our services).

Talking Points

ICT Systems Performance

- The target for Strategic Performance Measure 6 (SPM6) – Availability of Digital Channels – is ≥ 99 per cent for the Financial Year 2023-24. The Agency achieved a result of 99.9 per cent in Quarter 3 2023-24 and a Financial Year to Date result of 99.9 per cent.
- This performance measure supports the strategic themes of customer-centric service delivery and modernisation.

Background

- A 'Major Incident' is applicable if:
 - there is no alternative service (customer or staff facing) available, impacting the Agency and/or an organisation to whom the Agency provides key services to meet service level commitments to customers; and
 - there is a major impact to a critical function. For example, both customer payments and staff facing systems are not processed on time or unavailable.
- A 'Significant Incident' is applicable if:
 - a customer self-service capability system or application is unavailable or severely degraded; and
 - there is a significant impact to a critical function. For example, Express Plus Centrelink being unavailable. Customers could still use myGov, call or visit a Service Centre.

	Name and Role	Group/Branch/Organisation	Phone (w)	Phone (mob)
Cleared By	Name: Charles McHardie Role: Chief Information and Digital Officer	Technology and Digital Programs Group	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Contact Officer	Name: Devika Weeraratne Role: General Manager	Infrastructure and Operations Division	s47F(1)	s47F(1)

Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

TOPIC: PEGA SYSTEMS AND SUPPORTED PROJECTS

WITNESS: Charles McHardie
Chief Information and Digital Officer
Technology and Digital Programs

Strategic Narrative

- The deployment of Pega Systems across Services Australia (the Agency) has progressed to enable the following activities:
 - the Residential Aged Care Funding Reform (RACFR) Payment Assessment Calculation Engine (PACE) Project (implementation completed); and
 - Medicare Compensation Recovery System.
- The RACFR PACE Project, a core component of the Agency's transformation agenda, was implemented through the reuse of the Welfare Payment Infrastructure Transformation (WPIT) capabilities.
- PACE was delivered in two tranches. The first being the replacement of the Special Payments for Aged Residential Care (SPARC) in Objectstar, with PACE. This was implemented in August 2022 and was based on the Aged Care Funding Instrument (ACFI) model.
- The second tranche, implemented in October 2022, saw changes to introduce the Australian National-Aged Care Classification (AN-ACC) funding model.
- PACE had a period of extensive hypercare where performance and calculation accuracy were monitored closely. Upgrades to PACE following hypercare have resulted in monthly calculations for Aged Care Providers being performed in a timely manner, with excellent calculation accuracy.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES**Residential Aged Care Funding Reform (RACFR) Payment Assessment Calculation Engine (PACE)**

- The Agency undertook an Aged Care Proof of Concept from May-June 2020 at a cost of \$1,040,000.00 (GST exclusive).
- As part of the Program, a trial was then undertaken from June-August 2020 at a cost of \$1,459,996.00 (GST exclusive).
- The Program commenced development of the PACE rules engine in 2020-2021, with completion in December 2022. The total ICT spend to build the PACE rules engine during this period was \$31,245,123.00 (GST exclusive).

Medicare Compensation Recovery System (MCRS)

- The Medicare Compensation Recovery System (MCRS) was delivered live in the 2022-23 financial year (June 2023) as part of the Health Delivery Modernisation Program, using Pega and replacing a legacy system using ageing technology.
- The Project closed on 30 June 2023. The system is live, and a small ICT team continues to work on defects as they are identified and develop enhancements that are prioritised by business and service delivery teams.
- The MCRS system is also currently undertaking a technical upgrade to ensure Services Australia stays current with the latest version of Pega, with the system migrated to Pega version 8.8 on 13 April 2024.

Talking Points**Residential Aged Care Funding Reform (RACFR) Payment Assessment Calculation Engine (PACE)**

- The Agency delivered the first phase of the RACFR Programme with the successful release of the new Aged Care Payment System (ACPS) on 20 August 2022.
- The new ACPS, that replaced an aging legacy system, simplifies, and automates how Residential Aged Care Providers interact with the Agency.
- The second component of RACFR was the delivery of the new Australian National-Aged Care Classification (AN-ACC) funding model on 1 October 2022.
- AN-ACC, which replaced the Aged Care Funding Instrument, utilises the new ACPS functionality.
- The PACE component is the rules engine for the new residential ACPS.

- The PACE business rules engine builds on and extends the Pega Systems-based solution that was part of the ECE Project within the WPIT Programme.
- The Agency partnered with Infosys to build and test the rules-based PACE component.
- The RACFR Programme (including the PACE build) was completed at the end of December 2022.

Medicare Compensation Recovery System (MCRS)

- As part of the Health Delivery Modernisation (HDM) Program, the Agency provided a commitment to government to decommission the legacy Staffware component in the current Compensation Case Management System (CCMS). Fulfilling this commitment required the Agency to replace most of the components in the existing system.
- The Agency has been delivering components of the system since 23 July 2022 to reduce operational risk to Service Delivery.
- MCRS went live on 5 June 2023, with post implementation support continuing for remediation of system defects as they are identified as part of extended post release hypercare support.
- Additional enhancement requests to streamline and/or improve the staff and customer experience are being prioritised by Service Delivery and Business teams, for ICT progression in the 2023-24 Financial Year.

Background

- Current Pega Systems government customers are:
 - Services Australia;
 - Department of Defence;
 - Department of Home Affairs;
 - IP Australia;
 - Australian Bureau of Statistics;
 - Transport for NSW;
 - NSW Justice.
 - NSW Legal Aid;
 - NSW Planning and Environment;
 - NSW Telco Authority;
 - Office of the Children's Guardian;
 - Queensland Department of Education;
 - Victorian Department of Justice and Regulation;
 - Public Transport Victoria;

- Melbourne Water; and
- Energy Safe Victoria.

Entitlement Calculation Engine

Program Increment 1 (PI-1)

- In July 2021, the Agency and Infosys entered PI-1 negotiations and executed the new PI-1 Work Order on 16 November 2021.
- As the WPIT Program moved through PI-0, and with an increased maturity of understanding, the Agency implemented a new ECE Project operating model to deliver PI-1 and subsequent PIs. The Agency also assumed the role of Prime Systems Integrator, with responsibility for end-to-end delivery.
- On 18 December 2021, then Prime Minister, the Hon Scott Morrison MP, supported re-baselining delivery of the entire solution to June 2023, to enable the ECE Project to deliver on commitments to Government. This included rephasing of funds into the 2022-23 Financial Year.
- The objective of the ECE Project remained unchanged, with the same performance expectations as that of the legacy system and minimal impact to customers.
- Following the successful delivery of the foundation capability in November 2022, the ECE Project was reset in December 2022 with a revised focus on monitoring and evaluation of the performance of the foundation components.
- In line with WPIT Gateway Review recommendations, the ECE Project underwent a Solution Design review to ensure the solution was suitable to deliver business outcomes.
- The review found the solution not to be scalable with slow performance and some inaccuracy in dealing with complex calculations.
- On 30 June 2023, the project ceased, and a decision was made to impair elements of the platform. This decision was announced in July 2023.

Media coverage

Date	Source	Item
14 December 2023	<i>Information Age</i>	Govt paid multinational millions for welfare calculator. After it had identified a better Australian solution.
9 December 2023	<i>The Guardian</i>	Australian government spent \$52m more on welfare calculator after finding a more effective alternative.
11 September 2023	<i>ITnews</i>	Centrelink's canned \$191m engine took minutes to do what existing system did in seconds.
11 August 2023	<i>ITnews</i>	Centrelink's scrapped \$191, ECE had processed just 784 claims
25 July 2023	<i>ITnews</i>	Gov writes off Centrelink calculation engine project after \$191m spent
15 February 2023	<i>ITnews</i>	Centrelink's Pega-based payments engine is live.
16 December 2022	<i>ARN net</i>	Infosys gets greenlight to deliver Centrelink payments engine.
25 July 2022	<i>ITnews</i>	WPIT overhaul ends after 7 years, but critical Centrelink system delayed.
13 January 2022	<i>ITnews</i>	Infosys gets another \$71m for the Centrelink calculation engine work.
26 October 2021	<i>ITnews</i>	Infosys proves new Centrelink entitlements calculation engine works.
22 July 2021	<i>ITnews</i>	Services Australia to grow in-house IT workforce, shrink contractor reliance.
21 July 2021	<i>ITnews</i>	Services Australia shifts most Centrelink payments to SAP S/4 HANA.
4 June 2021	<i>ITnews</i>	Services Australia, Infosys renegotiate Centrelink payments engine build.
4 March 2021	<i>ITnews</i>	DTA reveals Canberra's 84 costliest in-flight IT projects.
24 February 2021	<i>ITnews</i>	Infosys scores another \$40m for Centrelink payments engine build.
3 November 2020	<i>ITnews</i>	First payments now flowing through Centrelink's SAP payments platform.
7 October 2020	<i>ITnews</i>	Centrelink IT overhaul scores \$540m for final tranche.
11 August 2020	<i>ITnews</i>	Centrelink's new payments engine enters build phase.

Date	Source	Item
7 July 2020	<i>ITnews</i>	Medicare to reuse Centrelink's new payments calculator.
6 December 2019	<i>ITnews</i>	Inside Infosys' complex Centrelink payments calculator overhaul
29 November 2019	<i>ITnews</i>	Infosys wins massive Centrelink payments engine deal

	Name and Role	Group/Branch/Organisation	Phone (w)	Phone (mob)
Cleared By	Name: Charles McHardie Role: Chief Information and Digital Officer	Technology and Digital Programs	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Contact Officer	Name: Cristie Romero-Ferre Role: A/g Chief Software Engineer and General Manager	myGov and Core Systems Division		s47F(1)
Consultation	Name: Bob Lyons Role: General Manager	Staff Processing and Enterprise Systems Division	s47F(1)	s47F(1)

Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

TOPIC: MYGOV

WITNESS: Charles McHardie
Chief Information and Digital Officer
Technology and Digital Programs

Strategic Narrative

- In the 2022-23 Federal Budget, a \$134.5 million investment to sustain myGov was announced, covering the 2023-24 Financial Year.
- This investment will enable ongoing operation and iterative improvements to myGov, while Services Australia (the Agency) is developing and prioritising a package of modular, low risk, low cost and high return on investment initiatives that make myGov the trusted, go to place for people.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- The Agency received \$134.5 million in the 2022-23 Budget to sustain myGov over the 2023-24 Financial Year.
- In the 2023-24 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook, the Agency received an additional \$2 million to enable the digital commonwealth statutory declarations platform in myGov, and an additional \$5.6 million to implement enhanced myGov protections for myGov users against cybercrime.

myGov

- As at 31 March 2024, myGov had over 26.5 million active user accounts.
- Since release on 9 February 2024 to 31 March 2024, 4,912 Commonwealth statutory declarations have been completed in myGov.
- myGov remains Australia's largest authenticated digital platform, with an average of 880,000 sign-ins each day for the period 1 July 2023 to 31 March 2024.
- There are currently 16 member services that an individual can link to their myGov account.
- Since transition to the upgraded myGov website on 5 September 2022, there have been more than 440.8 million sign-ins. This figure includes:

- 361.1 million to myGov web and direct sign-ins to member services; and
- 79.7 million logins via the myGov app.
- The top three services linked to myGov are:
 - Medicare – 19.5 million myGov accounts linked;
 - Australian Taxation Office – 17.3 million myGov accounts linked; and
 - Centrelink – 16.2 million myGov accounts linked.

myGov app

- Since public release on 2 December 2022 to 31 March 2024:
 - over 4.5 million users have downloaded and registered the myGov app from commercial app stores;
 - over 33 per cent of all myGov logins are via the myGov app;
 - the myGov inbox has been accessed over 52 million times via the myGov app;
 - the myGov app digital wallet, which allows customers to store their Medicare card, Centrelink concession and health care cards and the international COVID-19 Vaccination Certificate (ICVC), accrued more than 6 million views; and
 - 570,000 users have added the Medicare Card to their myGov app wallet following release of this functionality on 25 March 2023.

Talking Points

Enhanced myGov Platform

- The investment to enhance myGov improved the experience of customers dealing with government by offering a single front door to a number of digital government content (information) and supporting digital services.
- Further, the investment provided partner agencies with a number of whole-of-government capabilities to drive consistent experiences for customers.
- On 5 September 2022, the Agency released the upgraded myGov website, operating on a modern digital experience platform. The updates provide people using myGov with a modern layout and make it easier for people to find information about government payments and services.
- myGov has integrated content for government services. This content does not replace Agency-specific websites or content, rather it helps collate information in a way that helps customers discover services relevant to them.

- myGov supports people to search, browse or use the digital assistant to find information based on events in life. People can use statements such as 'I have lost my job' to find relevant content.
- Once a customer decides what services they need, secure links take them from the information page to start a claim process, without the need for a customer to go to another website.
- The Agency places a high value on the protection of customer information. The Agency continues to make enhancements to myGov to keep pace with emerging threats, improve customer resilience to scam and malicious activity, and improve the ability for customers to securely manage their account.
- The Agency is continuing to deliver features that improve the underpinning platform, ensure the myGov portal and app keep pace with customer expectations, improve account security, and reduce fraud and cyber risk for customers.
- The Agency is also continuing to expand the content discoverable through myGov. For example, people are now also able to find information about getting help following diagnosis of a medical condition or disability, and government loans to help with education such as HECS-HELP.
- In parallel with operating and iterating myGov, the Agency is also identifying and prioritising modular, low risk, low cost and high return on investment initiatives that make myGov the trusted, go to place for people.

Digitising Commonwealth Statutory Declarations

- A new capability was released on 9 February 2024 that enables a customer with a suitable strength Digital ID to generate a witnessed statutory declaration in myGov.
- This work is being led by the Attorney-General's Department and the Department of Finance (Finance).
- Any questions about modernising document execution may be referred to Finance.

Introduction of passkeys

- The Agency has sophisticated cyber security and fraud capabilities that continuously develop and implement strategies to identify and monitor threats against myGov, combat myGov scams and support customers who may be impacted.
- These activities also identify security enhancements to strengthen the myGov platform to prevent or manage evolving threats.

- The Agency retains all responsibility for the development and maintenance of the authenticated services for myGov, including myGov account management and functions on the dashboard.
- Announced in the Mid-Year Economic Fiscal Outlook by Government, the Agency has started developing enhancements to myGov account and credential management, including the introduction of passkeys technology.
- Passkeys was introduced initially in April 2024 as a Private Beta, with participants consisting of project and Agency staff. The full customer release of passkeys is scheduled for June 2024.
- From June 2024, myGov users will also have access to enhanced account settings that provide them with the option to disable the use of myGov credentials to sign in if they have a passkey or Digital ID (myGovID) connected to their account.

myGov Cyber threats including scams

- The Agency shares intelligence about cyber threats with key government partners and industry to reduce scams in Australia.
- The Agency regularly applies independent assurance functions to ensure the ongoing protection of data in the platform, alongside contractual protections in place with Adobe as part of its Digital Experience Platform hosting arrangements.
- This includes oversight from Adobe and AWS that the implementation of the platform is in accordance with their leading practices, and that all mitigations have been implemented to protect data in accordance with the contract.
- The Agency is committed to helping our customers protect themselves from scams by raising awareness and providing education via our website, media campaigns and engagements with various customer cohorts.
- This includes supporting customers to report scams that impersonate Agency brands. Support is provided to customers who have fallen victim to scams or identity compromise through the Scams and Identity Theft Helpdesk.
- The Agency shares information through social media channels to inform people about how they can protect their myGov account.

myGov Accessibility

- The Agency is committed to making myGov an accessible and inclusive website anyone can use, regardless of their device or ability. This includes being able to:
 - support colour contrasts;
 - support zoom magnification;

- navigate most of the website using only your keyboard or speech recognition software; and
- listen to most of the website using a screen reader.
- The Agency has an ongoing commitment to improve myGov and continues to make updates to myGov to meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 level AA.
- myGov was assessed as exceeding the Australian Government requirement of 2.0 AA and continues to improve conformance to the Digital Transformation Agency's recommended standard of 2.1 AA through continual enhancement.
- The myGov app was assessed by independent provider AccessHQ to conform with WCAG 2.1 level AA prior to the public release.

myGov app

- In December 2022, the Agency introduced the myGov app, which includes a digital wallet.
- With most Australians owning a smart phone and almost 70 per cent of people accessing the myGov platform from their mobile device, the myGov app was designed to address the growing shift in behaviour, to help people access the services they need in a convenient way.
- The app includes a digital wallet allowing customers to access government credentials in digital form, including the Medicare Card and Centrelink concession and health care cards through their myGov account.
- The release of the myGov app followed 12 months of private beta testing by members of the public, Agency staff, and other government agencies connected to myGov.
- Security features include the use of a customer-generated PIN or biometric information, which is stored on an individual's device and is not shared with myGov or the Agency.

myGov app Wallet

- The myGov app contains a wallet where digital credentials can be stored including Medicare cards, Centrelink concession and healthcare cards and International COVID-19 Vaccination Certificates.
- The ability to store the Medicare Card as a digital credential in the myGov app wallet was released on 25 March 2023.
- To support customer and third-party adoption of digital credentials used in the myGov app wallet, communication material was developed, including fact sheets, web updates, and social media posts.

- The Agency worked with the health sector and engaged other member services to support community adoption of digital verifiable credentials.
- Digital credentials in the wallet includes key information about the customer and the credential itself, as well as a verification method, such as a Quick Reference (QR) code.
- Digital verification through a QR code confirms the document displayed is both genuine and valid.
- Each credential included in the myGov app digital wallet includes a hologram that appears on screen as a security enhancing feature to support the use of digital credentials.

The inclusion of the Department of Veterans' Affairs Card into the myGov app Wallet

- Services Australia is working with the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) to include the Veteran Card within the myGov wallet by 30 June 2024.
- This provides a convenient and secure way for Veteran Card holders to show their veteran entitlement in a range of settings.
- The initial deployment will include the Veterans White, Gold or Orange cards.

Enhanced myGov Procurement Activities

- To support, deliver and assure the major enhancements to myGov, the Agency supplemented myGov's workforce through several procurement arrangements.
- To enable delivery of a more advanced myGov offering, in 2021 the Agency selected Adobe Systems Pty Ltd to provide Digital Experience Platform (DXP) software and managed services. This Adobe software and associated managed services is critical to deliver the vision of Enhanced myGov.
- The Agency has completed renewal negotiations with Adobe Systems Pty Ltd to extend the DXP software and managed services arrangements for a further two years, until 22 January 2026.

Digital Experience Platform

- In August 2021, the Agency finalised the Request for Quote and agreed to terms with Adobe Systems Pty Ltd for Content Management, Experience Delivery and Experience Analytics software to enable the DXP.
- The technology delivered by this strategic partnership enables content publishing and customisation of the myGov website. It also enables customer journey analytics and personalisation capabilities to provide more tailored and improved services.

Scope of DXP Procurement

- The Agency approached the market for the following three capabilities to enable the delivery of the DXP:
 - Experience Delivery is software that enables the rapid development of websites. This capability includes the ability to deliver more targeted connection to information and services.
 - Content Management is software to manage websites and enables content authors to develop and publish information to a website or other digital channels.
 - Experience Analytics enables the capture of customer interactions (e.g. clicks on a webpage, phone calls) across a range of channels to understand customers' end-to-end experience and present this in easy to access reporting dashboards.

System Integrators

- To supplement the workforce, the Agency selected four myGov Systems Integrators through a request for tender via the Digital Marketplace, in line with Commonwealth Procurement Rules, open to vendors on the Digital Marketplace at the time.
- The four vendors; Accenture, ARQ Group, Deloitte and IBM were selected to provide systems integrator services to support the Agency to deliver technical enhancements to myGov.
- These arrangements allow the Agency to draw on suppliers to provide suitably qualified personnel to work under the direction of the Agency by supplementing or augmenting myGov's system and service delivery resources, or to undertake discrete packages of work, as required.
- There is no pre-committed value for any of the four Systems Integrators with Work Orders established as nil spend. Subsequent tasking Requests and Spending Proposals are required for each engagement.
- The initial term of the arrangements with the Systems Integrators was one year, each with four options to extend for a 12-month period (a maximum of four one-year extension options). The current dates of these arrangements are as follows (including exercised extensions):
 - Accenture: 4 January 2021 – 31 March 2025;
 - NCS (formerly ARQ Group): 22 December 2020 – 31 March 2025;
 - Deloitte: 22 December 2020 – 31 March 2025; and
 - IBM: 16 March 2021– 30 June 2024.

Timeline of recent or significant events

Date	Action
February 2024	The Digitising Commonwealth Statutory Declarations capability has been developed to provide Australians a way to easily and securely execute and sign Commonwealth Statutory Declarations (CSDs) when signed into myGov with their myGovID digital identity. The capability was released on 9 February 2024.
January 2024	The Agency has completed renewal negotiations with Adobe Systems Pty Ltd to extend the DXP software and managed services arrangements for a further two years until 22 January 2026.
December 2023	Unique Student Identifier service added to myGov as the 16 th service people can use to link to their myGov account. The first meeting of the Interim Independent advisory board takes place. Measures announced in MYEFO to release the Digital Statutory Declaration capability in myGov and deliver passkeys technology to myGov. Government response to the myGov User Audit is tabled.
September 2023	Legislation was introduced to parliament that will allow people to digitally execute a commonwealth statutory declaration using myGovID
May 2023	The Sustain myGov budget measure was announced as part of Budget.
March 2023	On 25 March 2023, delivery of the Medicare Card as a digital credential in the myGov app Wallet was successfully released.
January 2023	Findings from the myGov User audit were released to the public on 31 January 2023.
December 2022	The Agency successfully released the myGov app on 2 December 2022. The myGov app was made available to the public in the Apple and Google Play stores.
September 2022	The Minister for Government Services and NDIS, the Hon Bill Shorten MP, announced a user audit of myGov to be chaired by David Thodey AO supported by a panel of leaders across diverse fields of technology, ethics, public health and government.
September 2022	The enhanced myGov website went live on 5 September 2022. The updates provide myGov with a more modern layout and make it easier for people to find information about government payments and services.
February 2022	Additional features released to the myGov app Private Beta allow simplified login including the use of biometrics; a secure digital wallet capability with the ability to add the International COVID-19 Vaccination Certificate and access to the myGov Inbox.
December 2021	The ability for customers to manage their account via the myGov Beta site was introduced. This included migration of the existing 'Tell us

Date	Action
	Once' capability and the ability for a customer to access and manage account information, credentials, and passwords via the myGov Beta site. The ability for customers to link 10 of 15 member services from the enhanced myGov site was introduced. The Agency released the first iteration of the myGov app to 50 Services Australia staff for private Beta testing.
September 2021	The ability for customers to access any of their linked member services was added to the myGov Beta site.
August 2021	The Agency finalised the Request for Quote and agreed to terms with Adobe Systems Pty Ltd for Content Management, Experience Delivery and Experience Analytics software to enable the Digital Experience Platform
June 2021	The ability for individuals to access their COVID-19 Digital Certificates via myGov was introduced.
May 2021	Service operations for myGov Beta transitioned from the DTA to the Agency.
March 2021	The Immunisation History Statement was integrated within myGov.
February 2021	The linking of a Digital Identity to myGov was streamlined by removing the need for a customer to navigate to their myGov account settings.
December 2020	The ability for Customers to link their Digital Identity to their myGov account was enabled.
September 2020	The ability for customers to commence a JobSeeker claim through the myGov Beta site commenced.
July 2020	myGov Beta launched providing a search functionality for information relating to all Government services associated with returning to work.

Media coverage

Date	Source	Item
9 January 2024	<i>SMS Magazine</i>	Digital execution of declarations accepted
29 December 2023	<i>The Sector</i>	USI added to myGov to make access easier
28 December 2023	<i>PS News</i>	Government tables its response to myGov user audit
20 December 2023	<i>AFR</i>	myGov to be single entry portal after agencies told to get on board
19 December 2023	<i>The Mandarin</i>	Just four of 10 myGov user audit recommendations get the nod
18 December 2023	GovTechReviews	Insider

SERVICES AUSTRALIA

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Date	Source	Item
18 December 2023	The Sydney Morning Herald	Australia's digital economy needs strong cybersecurity to thrive
15 December 2023	The Mandarin	A plan to have a plan: Gallagher unleashes APS Data and Digital Strategy out to 2030.
12 December 2023	The Australian Financial Review	Next chief of welfare giant Services Australia is a digital expert
8 December 2023	SkyNews.com	Labor's 'voluntary' Digital ID ploy is '1984' on steroids, untrustworthy and the perfect target for hackers
1 December 2023	<i>The Mandarin</i>	Digital identity costs hit \$782 million as new laws introduced
14 November 2023	ABC Radio	Breakfast with Patricia Karvelas
8 November 2023	<i>The West Australian</i>	Ches Rafferty: Should we trust the Government's new digital ID program?
6 November 2023	<i>The Guardian</i>	'Scam-in-a-box': MyGov suspends thousands of accounts linked to dark web kits
3 November 2023	<i>The Australian</i>	ASIC steps up assault on cyber crime and online scammers
30 October 2023	ABC Brisbane	(Drive with Steve Austin)
17 October 2023	<i>Australian Financial Review</i>	NAB, CBA switch on digital identity checking service
6 October 2023	ABC Radio National	radio segment
6 October 2023	<i>Herald Sun</i>	Mildura's biggest tax fraudsters: Catherine Dyason, Beau Khan, Naomi Bullock and more, named shamed: see the roster of wannabe con artists from Mildura who tried to rip off the ATO and got caught.
6 October 2023	ABC Radio National	News Broadcast
13 September 2023	<i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i>	Statutory declarations to go online from 2024 (smh.com.au)
31 March 2023	<i>The Mandarin</i>	Lonely digital Medicare card slips into myGov wallet, seeks friends and transactions
30 March 2023	<i>The Australian</i>	Huge change to Medicare card for all Australians
7 February 2023	<i>Australian Financial Review</i>	The first steps towards integrating state and federal services around people's major life events have started, with NSW and the Commonwealth agreeing to share Medicare and digital driver's licence credentials in their respective service

SERVICES AUSTRALIA

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Date	Source	Item
31 January 2023	<i>The Canberra Times</i>	Bill Shorten announces David Thodey report into improving myGov digital platform
26 December 2022	<i>Coast News</i>	myGov app makes things simple, says Reid
15 December 2022	<i>Geelong Advertiser</i>	MyGov SMS scam worries (stroom.com.au)
15 December 2022	<i>Gold Coast Bulletin</i>	Warning on myGov Scam
8 December 2022	<i>Pulse+IT</i>	Medicare card to be added to digital wallet on myGov app
7 December 2022	<i>The West Australian</i>	Bill Shorten: New myGov app will be easier and more secure
5 December 2022	<i>Financial Review</i>	New myGov app to be platform for public and private services
7 October 2022	<i>Australian Financial Review</i>	Review into government tender policy points to larger problems
7 October 2022	<i>Innovation Australia</i>	DTA, Deloitte and Adobe, and the myGov windfall
7 October 2022	<i>The Canberra Times</i>	Was govt contacting out of control?
6 October 2022	<i>Australian Financial Review</i>	Digital agency 'humiliated' by adverse audit office review
6 October 2022	<i>The Mandarin</i>	DTA to face fresh parliamentary inquiry over horror audit
6 October 2022	<i>Smart Company</i>	Government procurement inquiry aims to stop agencies cutting corners
5 October 2022	<i>Innovation Australia</i>	Parliamentary inquiry launched into Govt procurement failings
5 October 2022	<i>GovTech Review</i>	DTA's ICT procurement scrutinised
5 October 2022	<i>The Mandarin</i>	Inquiry to unpack procurement best practice for federal agencies
3 October 2022	<i>The Canberra Times</i>	Is it time to burn the midnight oil in Tuggers for myGov audit?
30 September 2022	<i>RiotAct</i>	Some extra juicy APS news bites our hound on the ground has dug up
30 September 2022	<i>Global Government Forum</i>	Australia's Digital Transformation Agency in Trouble
29 September 2022	<i>Innovation Australia</i>	A myGov makeover? This pig will need more than lipstick
28 September 2022	<i>The Mandarin</i>	Shorten's trusted digital delivery circle revealed
28 September 2022	<i>Innovation Australia</i>	One week in: David Hazelhurst on the short, sharp myGov audit

SERVICES AUSTRALIA

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Date	Source	Item
28 September 2022	<i>RiotAct</i>	Procurement failures put Digital Transformation Agency on the chopping block
26 September 2022	<i>Information Age</i>	DTA tech procurement 'ineffective' and 'unethical'
26 September 2022	<i>Public Service News</i>	DTA short-circuits audit as "no bearing"
26 September 2022	<i>Innovation Australia</i>	DTA audit exposes procurement failings of the highest order
26 September 2022	<i>Procurement and Supply</i>	Audit office review blasts Digital Transformation Agency's procurement processes as "weak"
26 September 2022	<i>The Canberra Times</i>	Defence doesn't care if truth is out there
23 September 2022	<i>Government News</i>	Report finds DTA messed up IT procurement
23 September 2022	<i>MSN Australia</i>	'We might need to turn up the tap': how DTA cowboys trashed public service standards
23 September 2022	<i>The Mandarin</i>	DTA horror audit raises 'very concerning issues': Gallagher
23 September 2022	<i>The Canberra Times</i>	Agency under Gallagher's watch after damning audit
22 September 2022	<i>ITWire</i>	Audit office releases scathing report on DTA's ignoring of procurement rules
21 September 2022	<i>Innovation Australia</i>	DTA slammed for breaking procurement rules in \$55m ICT spend
21 September 2022	<i>Innovation Australia</i>	Govt handpicked Deloitte for myGov upgrade
21 September 2022	<i>ARN</i>	DTA blasted for 'ineffective' and 'weak' ICT procurement
21 September 2022	<i>The Mandarin</i>	DTA damned by scathing Audit report, future uncertain
21 September 2022	<i>The National Tribune</i>	Statement from CEO Chris Fechner regarding DTA procurement of ICT-related services
20 September 2022	<i>ABC Melbourne Drive</i>	Interview with David Thodey on myGov user audit
19 September 2022	<i>The Mandarin</i>	myGov probe needs more than just quick fixes
19 September 2022	<i>ABC Radio National Breakfast</i>	Interview with David Thodey on the myGov user audit.
16 September 2022	<i>The Mandarin</i>	Thodey back for myGov user audit, handpicked for APS reform work

Date	Source	Item
16 September 2022	<i>Australian Financial Review</i>	Review of myGov portal aims to sort out federal service confusion
16 September 2022	<i>The Canberra Times</i>	David Thodey to lead new myGov audit
16 September 2022	<i>ITNews</i>	'Expansive' myGov audit to begin within weeks
26 July 2022	<i>Australian Financial Review</i>	Shorten wants myGov to be a one-stop shop

Relevant Ministerial Comments

Date	Minister	Details
12 February 2024	Minister Shorten	Minister Shorten announced that people can now create a Commonwealth statutory declaration in a new end-to-end digital process in myGov
1 February 2024	Minister Shorten	Minister Shorten released a media statement about the second meeting of the Interim Independent Advisory Board
20 December 2023	Minister Shorten	Minister Shorten released a media statement about a new service joining myGov.
18 December 2023	Minister Shorten	Minister Shorten released a media statement about the first meeting of the Interim Independent Advisory Board
18 December 2023	Minister Shorten	Minister Shorten released a media statement about the Government's response to the myGov User Audit.
9 November 2023	Minister Shorten	Minister Shorten announced the new Independent Advisory Board
10 May 2023	Minister Shorten	Minister Shorten announced funding of \$134.5m in the 2023-24 Budget to sustain myGov.

Questions on Notice Estimates QONs

Hearing	Date	Senator - Question #	Broad topic
Supplementary	25 October 2023	Senator Maria Kovacic – SQ23-000716	Apps
Supplementary	25 October 2023	Senator Maria Kovacic – SQ23-000742	Enhanced myGov
Supplementary	25 October 2023	Senator Maria Kovacic – SQ23-000744	Enhanced myGov Digital Wallet
Supplementary	25 October 2023	Senator Maria Kovacic – SQ23-000747	myGov Linked Services
Supplementary	25 October 2023	Senator Maria Kovacic – SQ23-000749	myGov Inbox
Supplementary	25 October 2023	Senator Linda Reynolds – SQ23-000901	myGov Daily Logins
Supplementary	25 October 2023	Senator Linda Reynolds – SQ23-000903	myGov Postage Savings
Supplementary	25 October 2023	Senator Maria Kovacic – SQ23-000978	myGov Tell Us Once

	Name and Role	Group/Branch/Organisation	Phone (w)	Phone (mob)
Cleared By	Name: Charles McHardie Role: Chief Information and Digital Officer	Technology and Digital Programs	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Contact Officer	Name: Cristie Romero-Ferre Role: A/g General Manager and Chief Software Engineer	myGov and Core Systems Division		s47F(1)
Consultation	Name: Garrett McDonald Role: General Manager	Data Analytics	s47F(1)	s47F(1)

Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

TOPIC: GOVERP PROGRAMME

WITNESS: Charles McHardie
Chief Information and Digital Officer
Technology and Digital Programs

Strategic Narrative

- The Government Enterprise Resource Planning (GovERP) Programme was delivered by Services Australia (the Agency), in collaboration with the Department of Finance (Finance).
- The GovERP Programme (the Programme) was originally scoped to deliver a whole-of-government SAP based technology solution and operating model that was required for the essential corporate capabilities of finance, Human Resource (HR), procurement and reporting services to enable the Australian Public Service (APS) Shared Service Transformation Initiative (SSTI).
- The Agency was funded in the 2021–22 Budget to build and deliver the Programme, with Finance retaining the policy function for Shared Services.
- On 28 November 2023, the Minister for Finance, Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher, announced significant changes to the Shared Services Transformation Program and the previously approved GovERP Programme, which resulted in a fundamental change to the delivery of the ERP solution.
- It was announced that agencies will no longer be mandated to utilise GovERP, leaving agencies free to explore appropriate solutions to best meet their needs and budget, with GovERP to be repurposed for use by the Agency and any other interested agencies.
- The GovERP platform in its current form does not meet all of Services Australia’s expansive operational requirements.

- As part of the 2023–24 MYEFO process, it was agreed the Digital Transformation Agency (DTA) would undertake an independent reuse assessment of the GovERP Programme, with future requirements to be considered as part of the 2024–25 MYEFO process.
- On this basis, the Agency is refocussing efforts in the Programme towards the repurpose of GovERP for Services Australia Enterprise Resource Planning (SA ERP), to support the DTA reuse assessment and maintain the asset that has been developed by the programme.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- GovERP Programme allocation was \$273.5 million, of which \$246.1 million was provided to (the Agency) and \$19.6 million to Finance.
- The remaining \$60 million was reprofiled to the 2023–24 Financial Year.
- As at 31 March 2024, the GovERP Programme was operating with a blended workforce of six APS staff and three contractors.

Media coverage

Date	Source	Item
28 November 2023	ITNews	GovERP to be scaled back
31 July 2023	Public Policy and Business Innovation/ InnovationAus.com	Push for procurement rethink after 'criminal' GovERP outlay
9 December 2022	Public Policy and Business Innovation/ InnovationAus.com	GovERP faces summer slowdown as SAP build enters new phase

Media enquiries

Enquiry date	Source	Response provided
14 March 2023	Innovation Aus, ^{s47F(1)})	17 March 2023

Questions on Notice**Estimates QONs**

Hearing	Date	Senator - Question #	Broad topic
Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee – Additional Estimates	14 February 2024	Senator Maria Kovacic SQ24-000153	GovERP – red status
Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee – Budget Estimates	31 May 2023	Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds SQ23-000469	Re-profiled funding
Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee – Supplementary Budget Estimates	15 February 2023	Senator Jacinta Nampijinpa Price SQ23-000189	DTA – joint projects

Other QONs

Committee Inquiry	Senator/MP - Question #	Broad topic
Parliamentary	The Hon Paul Fletcher MP PQ23-000110	GovERP delays and planning

	Name and Role	Group/Branch/Organisation	Phone (w)	Phone (mob)
Cleared By	Charles McHardie Chief Information and Digital Officer	Technology and Digital Programs	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Contact Officer	Bob Lyons General Manager	Staff Processing and Enterprise Systems Division	s47F(1)	s47F(1)

Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

**TOPIC: TECHNOLOGY AND DIGITAL PROGRAMS
WORKFORCE**

WITNESS: Charles McHardie
Chief Information and Digital Officer
Technology and Digital Programs

Strategic Narrative

- The Technology and Digital Programs (TDP) Group represents the largest in-house technology workforce across whole-of-government with a total of 3,563 APS and non-APS employees. The TDP Group currently has a workforce composition of 70.4 per cent APS employees (ongoing and non-ongoing), 0.3 per cent APS secondees, and 29.3 per cent non-APS (labour hire workers/contractors).
- During 2023, adjustments were made to the workforce to align with the prioritised Services Australia (the Agency) work program.
- These adjustments ensure the TDP Group is appropriately resourced to deliver on its commitments to government as well as maintaining system stability and security.
- The Agency continues to assess and prioritise new internal investment projects that support the delivery of simple, helpful, respectful, and transparent services to citizens.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- As at 31 March 2024, the TDP Group workforce headcount (**3,563** APS and non-APS employees) is comprised of:
 - **2,469 (69.2%)** ongoing employees;
 - **41 (1.2%)** non-ongoing employees;
 - **10 (0.3%)** APS secondees; and
 - **1,043 (29.3%)** labour hire workers/contractors.

Talking Points

- In 2023, the Agency undertook a bulk Request for Quote (RFQ) exercise for ICT contractor resources. Eight RFQ's were released via the Digital Transformation Agency (DTA) Marketplace to all vendors registered with the DTA. Merit pools of ICT contractor resources were established from these RFQs that the TDP Group is leveraging as appropriate to engage contractor resources to enable delivery of the Group work plan.
- To prepare the TDP workforce for priority work across the 2024–25 financial Year, the TDP Group is preparing to leverage a combination of APS recruitment, Entry Level Program placements and contractor engagements to ensure the workforce is appropriately resourced to deliver on government commitments.
- The TDP Group has actively worked towards reducing the reliance on non-APS contractor/labour hire employees, and strengthening the skills of APS employees prior to the implementation of the Strategic Commissioning Framework. The TDP Group is continuing to review workforce compositions to set and achieve realistic targets for further reductions across the 2024–25.
- The TDP Group will continue to assess its workload to ensure resources are matched to agreed priorities. New projects that require internal investment will be assessed at an enterprise level.
- The TDP Group will continue to have a strong focus on ensuring critical systems sustainment, maintenance and stability. The TDP Group will continue to focus on projects with dedicated government funding and system stability, cyber activities and responding to regular Agency business demands.

Background

APS Workforce

- Following the reduction of the contractor workforce through 2023, the TDP Group has continued to invest in the reskilling, uplift and development of APS staff in conjunction with the creation of a group-wide succession planning framework to focus efforts on developing staff to fill critical vacancies as they arise.
 - Group-wide succession planning has, and will continue to be undertaken, reviewing plans at six-monthly intervals to identify and address critical skill shortages ahead of time.
- The TDP Group will continue to support staff with learning and development opportunities. These include facilitated technical training, a range of flexible, online, on-demand learning platforms, targeted and on-the-job learning options, which will drive the development and capability uplift of our people into the future. Providing learning opportunities is a key focus for the TDP Group, leveraging industry partnerships to offer contemporary content.

	Name and Role	Group/Branch/Organisation	Phone (w)	Phone (mob)
Cleared By	Name: Charles McHardie Role: Chief Information and Digital Officer	Technology and Digital Programs	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Contact Officer	Name: Josh Bosschieter Role: A/g General Manager	Technology Strategy, Business and Architecture Division	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Consultation	Name: s47F(1) Role: Director, People Analytics	Workforce Capability Division, Corporate Enabling Group	s47F(1)	s47F(1)

Budget Estimates 2024 - 2025

TOPIC: **WELFARE PAYMENT INFRASTRUCTURE TRANSFORMATION**

WITNESS: Charles McHardie
Chief Information and Digital Officer
Technology and Digital Programs

Strategic Narrative

- The Welfare Payment Infrastructure Transformation (WPIT) Program was a large-scale business-led transformation that changed the way government delivers welfare payments.
- WPIT deliverables have been reused across a range of other programs administered by Services Australia (the Agency) and other agencies.
- Leveraging the benefits of digital transformation, the WPIT Program centred on making welfare payments and services simpler for customers and reducing welfare programme administrative costs.
- The WPIT Program commenced in July 2015 and closed on 30 June 2022.
- On 18 December 2021, approval was received from government to extend delivery for the Single Staff Interface (SSI) and Entitlement Calculation Engine (ECE) Projects into the 2022–23 Financial Year (FY).
- The SSI Project closed on 31 December 2022, having successfully delivered the majority of the commitment to government to modernise and transition specific processing from legacy tools to a new staff processing system known as Process Direct.
- In June 2023, the Agency's Executive Committee agreed to cease the ECE Project.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- As at 30 June 2023, 24 of the 26 WPIT commitments made to government had been delivered.
- The Agency is accountable for administering approximately \$230 billion annually in payments to customers and providers, and more than 5.2 million in social security and welfare claims.
- Elements of the SSI and ECE Projects were approved to extend into FY 2022–23 to deliver three remaining commitments to government.

Budget (external figures)

- The WPIT Program was allocated an external budget of approximately \$1.52 billion (b) in total across the seven years of operation.

Benefits (external figures)

- The WPIT Program has a financial benefit target of \$1.524b over 10 years (FY 2015–16 to FY 2024–25).

Talking Points

Program key achievements

- The WPIT Program streamlined processes for customers and staff by improving digital services, increasing automation, making better use of data and developing technology that is reusable across government.
- A major success was also the use of WPIT capabilities to deliver COVID-19 Disaster Payments, Pandemic Leave Disaster Payments (PLDP) and the Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payments (AGDRP) to Australians.
- Capabilities delivered in each tranche of work were essential to the COVID-19 and disaster responses, providing a positive experience for customers. Examples include enabling online access for customers, simplifying online claims and question sets, and introducing automation capabilities and frameworks.
- The Payment Utility (PU) is a reusable and scalable payment delivery system that now delivers over 95 per cent of all Centrelink payments (by volume).
- The use of PU has been extended beyond Centrelink administered payments to Health Programme related payments (Australian Thalidomide Survivors Support Programme and Residential Aged Care payments).
- The PU was also used to demonstrate the capability for whole-of-government reuse through the delivery of one-off payments to

support the Victorian Public Housing Stimulus Payments and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Government during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The SSI Project delivered its commitment to government to transition priority new claims to a Single Staff Interface. The processing of new claims are now fully functional on a single staff interface, making it easier for staff to complete their work by removing the need to switch between multiple systems.
- The Transforming the Collection of Student Information (TCSI) Operationalisation Project on-boarded all higher education and vocational student loan providers to the TCSI system.
- The Single Touch Payroll (STP) Project successfully enabled collection of data from the Australian Taxation Office by pre-populating employer name and Australian Business Number from STP data into a customer's online reporting service.
- These capabilities are now incorporated into all new Centrelink processes.

Extension of ECE and SSI Projects into FY2022–23

- On 18 December 2021, approval from government re-baselined delivery commitments and re-phased existing funds. This extended completion of the final deliverables into FY 2022–23.
- The SSI Project closed on 31 December 2022 having delivered the majority of the final SSI commitment to government. The remaining backlog of 15 non-new claim scope items required further development and testing prior to implementation and are being delivered in line with business prioritisation decisions.
- In line with a 2022 WPIT Mid-Stage Gateway Review recommendation, an executive level review of the ECE Solution Design was undertaken in the first quarter of 2023. In June 2023, on the basis of the findings of the executive level review, the Agency decided to cease the ECE Project.

Response to WPIT Program End-Stage Gateway Review recommendations

- In September 2023, an End-Stage Gateway Review of the WPIT Program (the Review) was conducted by the Department of Finance.
- The Review concluded on 29 September 2023 with the final report providing an Amber/Red rating, indicating partial achievement of objectives with some benefits realisation aspects yet to be addressed.

Whole of Program financial benefits

- The Program has delivered business and technology capability and improvements for customers, staff and government that have generated and will continue to generate both financial and non-financial benefits for the agency well beyond the end of the Program.
- The Program has a 10 year financial benefits target (FY 2015–16 to FY 2024–25), of \$1.524b. This target consists of ICT operational cost savings and the transformation of staff processing activities.
- As at 31 March 2024, the Program is forecasting to deliver over \$1.298b of financial benefits over its 10 year period. This is made up of \$1.014b in Agency financial benefits and \$280m in whole-of-government financial benefits.

Background

Relevant media coverage

Date	Source	Item
23 April 2024	<i>The Mandarin</i>	<p>Services Australia prepares to sack politically manipulative tech vendors</p> <p>Services Australia's new chief executive, David Hazlehurst, has only been in the job for four months, but the appointment of a seasoned, tech-savvy, post-digital leader has already prompted a major public warning to the agency's sprawling IT supplier base feeding off its \$16 billion annual tech spend. After wearing the stain of successive high-cost project failures, including the crucial \$200 million Entitlements Calculation Engine component of the \$1 billion+ Welfare Payments Infrastructure Transformation (WPIT), Services Australia has now vowed to "be bold" when it comes to giving underperforming suppliers the sack.</p>

	Name and Role	Group/Branch/Organisation	Phone (w)	Phone (mob)
Cleared By	Name: Charles McHardie Role: Chief Information and Digital Officer	Technology and Digital Programs Group	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Contact Officer	Name: Josh Bosscheiter Role: General Manager	Technology Strategy, Business and Architecture	s47F(1)	s47F(1)
Consultation	Name: Bob Lyons Role: General Manager	Staff Processing and Enterprise Systems	s47F(1)	s47F(1)