

**Annual Review of Regulatory Burdens on Business: Primary Sector
Submission in response to the Productivity Commission Draft Research Report
(August 2007)**

Centrelink offers the following comments in relation to the italicised points below that come from the above report:

1. Agriculture, Section 3.11 – Drought Support (pg 71)

‘As to improving service, Centrelink has a customer service charter in place and is actively seeking to improve its service levels, particularly in those rural and regional areas.’

Centrelink has recently established a network of over 50 Rural Services Officers in rural and regional areas that assist applicants through the EC process. They also make customers aware of State and Territory assistance, other local support networks and referrals to Rural Financial Counsellors as appropriate for Interest Rate Subsidy advice and additional information.

2. Agriculture, Section 3.11 – Drought Support (pg 72)

‘.....Centrelink call centres have a target to answer 70 per cent of calls within 2.5 minutes . In 2005-06, 57 per cent of calls were answered within this period which increased to 72 per cent in the following year...’

Centrelink drought assistance and farmer telephone support is largely delivered by only two of the organisation’s 25 Call Centres – Rural Call Centres located at Port Augusta, SA and Maryborough, Qld (with Bunbury, WA answering overflow and after hours business). These particular Call Centres have historically provided a service that exceeds KPI expectations with the majority of calls answered within 60 seconds and in the peak months of June, July and August, within 120 seconds. The Rural Call Centres are traditionally staffed with people who understand issues faced by people living in rural and remote communities. Customer survey results show that they consistently achieve high results in overall customer satisfaction.



Australian Government



3. Agriculture, Section 3.11 – Drought Support (pg 72)

Draft Response 3.17 ‘To avoid duplication and reduce unnecessary burdens in the application process:

- ***Centrelink and state and territory government rural adjustment authorities should provide applications for both Exceptional Circumstances (EC) income support and EC interest rate subsidies.***
- ***Applicant information should be able to be used across different Centrelink administered programs***
- ***A single application form for EC interest rate subsidies should be adopted by state and territory governments.***

The Commission seeks views on whether drought support, by all governments, should be reviewed.

Centrelink continues to refine its forms and letters and has established a discrete Branch within the organisation to do this, aimed at improving communication with customers by improving access and reducing red tape for customers and business alike.

4. Agriculture, Section 3.15 – Temporary Labour (pg 89)

Draft Response 3.25 ‘Centrelink has taken steps to address concerns. In addition, it is exploring the use of an electronic information transfer or ‘ebusiness’ system. If introduced, it should be available to all businesses, including small businesses.’

Centrelink is currently building the capability to support future services that will better cater to the needs of employers to assist them to meet reporting requirements. This capability includes a portal mailbox that will allow employers to receive and respond to requests electronically. This will cater for a range of employers regardless of the size, capability and volume of reporting.

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