



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

ADJOURNMENT

Centrelink

SPEECH

Tuesday, 19 October 2010

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Sidebottom, Sid, MP

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Mr SIDEBOTTOM (Braddon) (9.35 pm)—Yesterday, the member for Canberra in her first speech made mention and paid tribute to public servants and the important job they do. That caused me to reflect on the important job that public servants do in my electorate. I thought I would share some thoughts on that and talk about my local Centrelink offices. Approximately 40 local employees in the two customer service centres in Burnie and Devonport provide face-to-face access for the community and customers in relation to about 140-plus different payments and services. Services are also available to the community through Centrelink's national call centres—25 of them in fact—and through its online services via the Centrelink website. These customer service centres provide services to 43,739 customers within the Burnie and Devonport regions. Five Centrelink agents and one Centrelink access point are present in rural, regional and remote locations in my electorate to enhance customer access to Centrelink services.

Local specialist services are also provided by a range of employees through visiting services, seminars and one-to-one support and advice, including via the Centrelink community engagement officer, the multicultural services officer, the Indigenous services officer, the rural services officer, a social work service and financial information services officers. As you can see, Centrelink has a full suite of services available to its local customers.

Services are delivered to mutual customers in partnership with a range of service providers within the community including, for example, educational institutions, a wide range of state government agencies, local community sector emergency relief providers, emergency shelters and other agencies providing housing support, support services for various groups including youth, people with disabilities, carers, older Australians, refugees and Indigenous Australians, local councils and Job Services Australia providers.

I have many recent examples of positive outcomes from Centrelink partnering with other service providers on the north-west coast of Tassie. They partnered with Burnie City Council to organise the Burnie Jobs Expo in August 2009 and they organised the Centrelink Skills and Jobs Expo in Devonport in July 2010. These expos were held as a consequence of the large job losses experienced

in our region. They coordinated the north-west jobs, training and education forums in Devonport and Burnie in April 2010, and responded to redundant workers in companies including Tas Paper, McCains, Tascot Templeton and Caterpillar. They are also continuing to work with Burnie Polytechnic, targeting both potential and current customers attending their 'returning to study' and 'preparing for work' courses. An introduction is provided to the group regarding Centrelink's online services, followed by one-on-one assistance to navigate the Centrelink website to explore potential entitlements and/or online servicing opportunities. This partnership allows Centrelink to engage with some of the more vulnerable customers in a relaxed environment. Other partnership activities include continuing to build relationships with Youth Justice, exploring strategies for partnering to provide positive outcomes for youth at risk in our local community, and working with the local hospitals to cater more effectively to individual customer needs, looking at what services we need to put in place for customers as they exit hospital.

These are just some of the examples of the terrific service that our local Centrelink service providers offer to their customers, and I am sure those experiences are shared by other members of this House in their own regions. It is important that we do recognise the excellent work of our public servants, not just in Centrelink but also in this building and also, as the member for Canberra rightly pointed out, in this capital city itself. I found some of the facts and figures in relation to Centrelink and the services they provide nationwide to be quite staggering. For example, there are \$84.2 billion worth of payments in the nation, 313 nationwide customer service centres, seven million customers, \$32.7 million worth of phone calls and 114 million letters. (*Time expired*)