

The Auditor-General  
Audit Report No.33 2006–07  
Performance Audit

## **Centrelink's Customer Charter— Follow-up Audit**

**Centrelink**

Australian National Audit Office

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of Australia 2007

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Canberra ACT  
18 April 2007

Dear Mr President  
Dear Mr Speaker

The Australian National Audit Office has undertaken a performance audit in Centrelink in accordance with the authority contained in the *Auditor-General Act 1997*. Pursuant to Senate Standing Order 166 relating to the presentation of documents when the Senate is not sitting, I present the report of this audit and the accompanying brochure. The report is titled *Centrelink's Customer Charter – Follow-up Audit*.

Following its presentation and receipt, the report will be placed on the Australian National Audit Office's Homepage—<http://www.anao.gov.au>.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian McPhee', is positioned above the printed name.

Ian McPhee  
Auditor-General

The Honourable the President of the Senate  
The Honourable the Speaker of the House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT

## AUDITING FOR AUSTRALIA

The Auditor-General is head of the Australian National Audit Office. The ANAO assists the Auditor-General to carry out his duties under the *Auditor-General Act 1997* to undertake performance audits and financial statement audits of Commonwealth public sector bodies and to provide independent reports and advice for the Parliament, the Government and the community. The aim is to improve Commonwealth public sector administration and accountability.

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# Abbreviations

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AAT	Administrative Appeals Tribunal
ANAO	Australian National Audit Office
ATO	Australian Taxation Office
ARO	Authorised Review Officer
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CSC	Customer Service Centre
DAFF	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
DCALB	Diverse Cultural and Linguistic Background
DEST	Department of Education, Science and Training
DEWR	Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
FaCSIA	Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
ISO	Indigenous Service Officer
JCPAA	Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit
MSO	Multicultural Service Officer
ODM	Original Decision Maker
SSAT	Social Security Appeals Tribunal
TTY	Telephone Typewriter
VCW	Value Creation Workshop

# Glossary

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Balanced Scorecard	A performance measurement system monitoring performance against key indicators across the goals set out in Centrelink's Strategic Framework.
Customer Charter	The Customer Charter is Centrelink's primary service offer to all its customers. The Charter sets out the type of service customers can expect, their basic rights and responsibilities, and how they can give Centrelink feedback.
Indigenous Australians	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.
Telephone Typewriter	Allows people who are deaf or hearing impaired to communicate by telephone.
Value Creation Workshop	VCWs are structured and facilitated focus groups that involve both the customers of the services delivered by Centrelink and the providers of these services (that is relevant Centrelink staff). The workshops are intended to allow customers to provide direct feedback to Centrelink and its staff regarding the services that they receive.





## **Summary and Recommendations**



# Summary

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## Background

1. Centrelink has recognised the importance of regularly seeking feedback from its large customer base on the quality of the services provided by the agency's extensive customer service network. A major component of Centrelink's customer feedback system is its Customer Charter. The Customer Charter is Centrelink's primary means for advising customers of their rights (including access to feedback mechanisms), their obligations, and the type of services they can expect to receive.

2. The Customer Charter also satisfies the Australian Government's requirement, as set out in the Australian Government's *Client Service Charter Principles*<sup>1</sup>, that all Commonwealth agencies, having an impact on the public, have a public charter.<sup>2</sup>

3. In 2004–05, the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) conducted a series of performance audits that examined Centrelink's major individual customer feedback systems<sup>3</sup>, including Centrelink's Customer Charter. ANAO report No.32 2004–05, *Centrelink's Customer Charter and Community Consultation Program* assessed the effectiveness of Centrelink's Customer Charter:

- as a means of setting up customer expectations with respect to service delivery and customer obligations and rights;
- in identifying feedback mechanisms available to customers; and
- in communicating effectively with customers so as to help them understand their rights and obligations and the feedback mechanisms and processes available to them.

4. In the 2004–05 audit, the ANAO concluded that while Centrelink had invested significantly in the development of its Charter, Centrelink's Customer

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<sup>1</sup> <<http://www.apsc.gov.au/charters/>> [accessed 19 November 2006].

<sup>2</sup> Further information on the *Client Service Charter Principles*, and an analysis of Centrelink's Customer Charter against these principles, is provided in Chapter 3.

<sup>3</sup> Audit Report No.31 2004–05, *Centrelink's Customer Feedback Systems – Summary Report*; Audit Report No.32 2004–05, *Centrelink's Customer Charter and Community Consultation Program*; Audit Report No.33 2004–05, *Centrelink's Customer Satisfaction Surveys*; Audit Report No.34 2004–05, *Centrelink's Complaints Handling System*; Audit Report No.35 2004–05, *Centrelink's Review and Appeals System*; and Audit Report No.36 2004–05, *Centrelink's Value Creation Program*.

Charter only partially followed the mandatory elements of the Australian Government's *Client Service Charter Principles* and either partially, or fully, met some of the recommended elements. The ANAO made one recommendation in that audit regarding Centrelink's Customer Charter namely that:

...in accordance with the guidance set out in the Australian Government's *Client Service Charter Principles*, Centrelink include in its Customer Charter measurable service standards to:

- (a) better inform customers of the level of service to expect; and
- (b) provide an improved basis for measuring, monitoring and reporting, both internally and externally, the agency's performance against its Charter.<sup>4</sup>

5. In 2005–06, Centrelink undertook a review of its Customer Charter. Centrelink undertook this review:

- in response to the ANAO's 2004–05 audit of Centrelink's Customer Charter<sup>5</sup>;
- as part of the agency's subsequent undertakings to the Parliament's Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit (JCPAA) regarding the ANAO's audit in the context of the JCPAA's inquiry into the series of audits of Centrelink's customer feedback systems<sup>6</sup>; and
- also as a result of the review of the corporate governance of Commonwealth statutory authorities and office holders, conducted by Mr John Uhrig AC (the Uhrig Review).

## Audit objective

6. The objective of this follow-up audit was to review Centrelink's progress in implementing the findings and recommendation relating to Centrelink's Customer Charter from Audit Report No.32 2004–05, *Centrelink's Customer Charter and Community Consultation Program*. This audit covers Centrelink's Customer Charter only and does not follow-up on the findings and recommendation on the Community Consultation Program aspect of the 2004–05 audit report.

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<sup>4</sup> ANAO Audit Report No.32 2004–05, *Centrelink's Customer Charter and Community Consultation Program*, Recommendation No.1, paragraph 2.115, p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> ANAO Audit Report No.32 2004–05, op. cit.

<sup>6</sup> See Chapter 5 of JCPAA Report 407, *Review of Auditor-General's Reports tabled between 18 January and 18 April 2005*, August 2006.

## Key Findings

### Centrelink's Review of the Customer Charter (Chapter 2)

7. In response to a range of factors, including the ANAO's previous audit, Centrelink undertook a review of its Customer Charter. This was the first major review since 2001, and included consultation with a number of internal and external stakeholders. The review led in November 2006 to the launch of a revised Customer Charter and a range of new products.

8. However, the ANAO found that there was some confusion amongst Centrelink staff as to the arrangements for the existing Customer Charter during the 15 months the new Customer Charter was under development. Centrelink has advised the ANAO that it will consider the ANAO's finding when communicating to staff as part of future large reviews of customer products.

### Client Service Charter Principles (Chapter 3)

9. Centrelink has closely followed the guidance set out in the *Client Service Charter Principles* in conducting its latest Customer Charter review, albeit that there are some areas which could be further improved. In addition, Centrelink has addressed many of the ANAO's findings and suggestions from the previous audit report.

10. The ANAO found that Centrelink has substantially implemented the recommendation from the previous audit report by including both timeliness and quality service standards in the revised Customer Charter. In particular, the ANAO welcomes the inclusion of a specific timeframe for the provision of Centrelink's services in many of the revised Customer Charter's quantitative service standards. For example, 'We will answer 70 per cent of your phone calls within 2½ minutes (you may have to wait longer during our busiest times)'.

11. The ANAO notes that two of the timeliness standards included in the revised Customer Charter do not include a specific time by which the relevant service is to be delivered.<sup>7</sup> This may affect the customer's ability to judge whether the particular service standard has been met or in understanding what is a reasonable timeframe for the delivery of this service. As well, if there

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<sup>7</sup> These two standards are: 'We will reduce the time that you wait in the queue when you come to a Centrelink office'; and 'If we can't answer your question immediately, we will get back to you within an agreed time'.

are no set timeliness parameters around these specific standards, using the standards to drive improvements in service delivery performance within the organisation may prove problematic.

12. The ANAO suggests that Centrelink include more specific timeframes for the timeliness standards on queue times and responding to customer questions in future iterations of the Customer Charter, and/or include such specific timeframes in public reporting of the agency's performance against these standards.<sup>8</sup>

## **Monitoring and Reporting of the Customer Charter (Chapter 4)**

13. Centrelink has proposed that the agency's performance against its Customer Charter standards will primarily be measured through the agency's programme of Customer Satisfaction Surveys, supplemented by call centre performance data, complaints handling system data and review and appeals data.

14. New questions Centrelink is adding to the Customer Satisfaction Survey may provide some indication of whether a particular standard has been met. However, the ANAO considers that, to address instances where customers' responses indicate they do not consider a standard has been met, there would be benefit in including questions that ask them the reasons why they hold this view.

15. The 2004–05 ANAO audit identified that there was low customer awareness of the Customer Charter and its content, particularly amongst vulnerable customers. This remains an issue for Centrelink. Centrelink has developed an external communication strategy with a special focus on vulnerable customers in order to address this issue. Centrelink has improved access to the Customer Charter on the agency's website and has conducted more thorough research into customer awareness of the Customer Charter and methods of communicating the Customer Charter and its content to customers.

16. The ANAO notes, however, that the long version of the Customer Charter (the only version of the Charter that sets out Centrelink's service commitments and standards) is only available on Centrelink's website. This may be a barrier to some customers accessing and understanding the commitments and standards, especially those considered at risk or vulnerable.

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<sup>8</sup> For example, Medicare Australia publicly reports on its performance against its Charter standards on the agency's website.

Accordingly, the ANAO suggested to Centrelink that, at a minimum, the agency should make explicit reference to the standards in future iterations of the Customer Charter brochure available at Customer Service Centres (CSCs). In response, Centrelink advised the ANAO that the standards will be included in future versions of the brochure.

## Overall Audit Conclusion

17. The ANAO concluded that Centrelink had substantially implemented the recommendation from the previous audit report, through the development and dissemination of its new Customer Charter. Centrelink's latest Customer Charter meets all the components of the Government's *Client Service Charter Principles*, albeit that there are some areas which could be further improved. In addition, Centrelink has addressed many of the ANAO's findings and suggestions from the previous audit report.

18. The ANAO made no further recommendations in this report.

## Agency Responses

### Centrelink

19. The CEO of Centrelink provided the following response:

Centrelink would like to thank the Australian National Audit Office for the draft Section 19 Report to the follow-up performance audit on Centrelink's Customer Charter. I have appreciated the professionalism shown by ANAO's management and staff in the conduct of this audit.

I am pleased that the Report recognises the hard work that Centrelink undertook to make sure that we responded to and addressed the recommendations from the previous audit.

### Department of Human Services

20. The Secretary of the Department of Human Services provided the following response:

While overwhelmingly positive in terms of assessing the implementation of the previous recommendation, the audit report does identify a number of areas where further improvements could be made.

I note that Centrelink has indicated that these additional issues will be taken on board as part of its commitment to continual improvement and my Department will continue to monitor progress in this regard. Following tabling of the report it is my intention to advise all the Department's portfolio agencies

of the findings of this audit to ensure that all Department of Human Services' agencies' customer service charters adequately address the issues raised.



## **Audit Findings and Conclusions**



# 1. Introduction

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*This chapter provides background information on Centrelink, Centrelink's Customer Charter and redevelopment of the Customer Charter, the previous ANAO audit and the approach to the follow-up audit.*

## Background

**1.1** As the Commonwealth's primary payment agency for social security entitlements, Centrelink was responsible for the distribution of approximately 9.9 million individual entitlements totalling \$63.5 billion, to 6.5 million customers in 2005–06.<sup>9</sup>

**1.2** Centrelink has recognised the importance of regularly seeking feedback from its large customer base on the quality of the services provided by the agency's extensive customer service network. A major component of Centrelink's customer feedback system is its Customer Charter. The Customer Charter is Centrelink's primary means for advising customers of their rights (including access to feedback mechanisms), their obligations, and the type of services they can expect to receive.

**1.3** The Customer Charter also meets the Australian Government's requirement, as set out in the Australian Government's *Client Service Charter Principles*<sup>10</sup>, that all Commonwealth agencies, having an impact on the public, have a public charter.<sup>11</sup>

**1.4** According to Centrelink, the Customer Charter is 'a public statement of our commitment to excellence in customer service and it sets out our service delivery approach and commitments'.<sup>12</sup> The Customer Charter provides an overview of Centrelink's customer service including:

- how staff promise to treat customers;
- how customers can assist staff in servicing them better;
- customer rights;

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<sup>9</sup> Centrelink, *Annual Report 2005–06*, p. 9.

<sup>10</sup> <<http://www.apsc.gov.au/charters/>> [accessed 19 November 2006].

<sup>11</sup> Further information on the *Client Service Charter Principles*, and an analysis of Centrelink's Customer Charter against these principles, is provided in Chapter 2.

<sup>12</sup> Centrelink, *Centranet: Customer Service Strategy Division, Customer Experience Branch, Centrelink Customer Service Charter*.

- customer responsibilities; and
- how customers can give Centrelink feedback on the service they receive.

**1.5** In 2005–06, Centrelink undertook a review of its Customer Charter. Centrelink undertook this review:

- in response to the ANAO’s 2004–05 audit of Centrelink’s Customer Charter<sup>13</sup>;
- as part of the agency’s subsequent undertakings to the Parliament’s JCPAA regarding the ANAO’s audit in the context of the Committee’s inquiry into the series of audits of Centrelink’s customer feedback systems<sup>14</sup>; and
- also as a result of the review of the corporate governance of Commonwealth statutory authorities and office holders, conducted by Mr John Uhrig AC (the Uhrig Review).

**1.6** These and other factors driving the subsequent redevelopment of the Centrelink Customer Charter are addressed in more detail in Chapter 2.

## Previous ANAO audit

**1.7** In 2004–05, the ANAO conducted a series of performance audits that examined Centrelink’s major individual customer feedback systems, including Centrelink’s Customer Charter. The reports in the series covered Centrelink’s: Customer Charter and community consultation program; customer satisfaction surveys; complaints handling system; review and appeals system; and Value Creation program.<sup>15</sup> An additional summary report also included an overall audit opinion on Centrelink’s overarching customer feedback system.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> ANAO Audit Report No.32 2004–05, op. cit.

<sup>14</sup> See Chapter 5 of JCPAA Report 407, *Review of Auditor-General’s Reports tabled between 18 January and 18 April 2005*, August 2006.

<sup>15</sup> ANAO Audit Report No.32, 2004–05, *Centrelink’s Customer Charter and Community Consultation Program*; ANAO Audit Report No.33 2004–05, *Centrelink’s Customer Satisfaction Surveys*; ANAO Audit Report No.34 2004–05, *Centrelink’s Complaints Handling System*; ANAO Audit Report No.35 2004–05, *Centrelink’s Review and Appeals System*; and ANAO Audit Report No.36 2004–05, *Centrelink’s Value Creation Program*.

<sup>16</sup> ANAO Audit Report No.31 2004–05, *Centrelink’s Customer Feedback Systems – Summary Report*.

**1.8** The primary objective of the ANAO's audit of Centrelink's Customer Charter, tabled in March 2005, was to examine the effectiveness of Centrelink's Customer Charter:

- as a means of setting up customer expectations with respect to service delivery and customer obligations and rights;
- in identifying feedback mechanisms available to customers; and
- in communicating effectively with customers so as to help them understand their rights and obligations and the feedback mechanisms and processes available to them.

**1.9** The 2004–05 audit found that while Centrelink had invested significantly in the development of its Charter, Centrelink's Customer Charter only partially followed the mandatory elements of the Australian Government's *Client Service Charter Principles* and either partially, or fully, met some of the recommended elements .

**1.10** In particular, the Charter had no explicit measurable standards which, according to the Charter Principles, are the main purpose of a charter. Since Centrelink's Charter had no explicit standards, important aspects of the Charter were not specifically reported upon in the agency's Balanced Scorecard; and there was very little monitoring of its impact and/or effectiveness.

**1.11** The 2004–05 audit also found that the commitments in the Charter were not explicitly linked to customer feedback or satisfaction initiatives. There was also minimal reporting on the Charter in the agency's Annual Report. The ANAO further noted that, given the minimal collection, analysis and reporting of performance data on the Charter, it was difficult to identify how the Charter was used to help drive service improvement.

**1.12** The audit made one recommendation regarding Centrelink's Customer Charter:

The ANAO recommends that, in accordance with the guidance set out in the Australian Government's *Client Service Charter Principles*, Centrelink include in its Customer Charter measurable service standards to:

- (a) better inform customers of the level of service to expect; and

(b) provide an improved basis for measuring, monitoring and reporting, both internally and externally, the agency's performance against its Charter.<sup>17</sup>

**1.13** Centrelink agreed with the recommendation.

## Follow-up Audit Approach

### Audit objective

**1.14** The objective of this follow-up audit was to review Centrelink's progress in implementing the findings and recommendation relating to Centrelink's Customer Charter from Audit Report No.32 2004–2005, *Centrelink's Customer Charter and Community Consultation Program*. This audit covers Centrelink's Customer Charter only and does not follow-up on the findings and recommendation on the Community Consultation Program aspect of the 2004–05 audit report.

### Audit methodology

**1.15** The initial step in the audit involved seeking advice from Centrelink regarding the extent to which the agency had implemented the suggestions and relevant recommendation from the previous ANAO audit. The agency was also asked to provide relevant supporting evidence. The information provided was then tested by the audit team during fieldwork. The audit methodology also included:

- analysing Centrelink's key documents relating to the redevelopment of the Customer Charter undertaken following the 2005–06 review;
- interviewing relevant Centrelink staff members and stakeholders using a standard questionnaire for consistency;
- analysing the dissemination of the Customer Charter in the Centrelink network, and the impact this has on customer and stakeholder awareness of the Customer Charter; and
- conduct of general research into Centrelink's Customer Charter.

**1.16** As noted in paragraph 1.6, the Centrelink Customer Charter has been redeveloped. The ANAO originally intended the methodology for this audit to include analysis of the impact of the revised Centrelink Customer Charter on Centrelink's performance as a service delivery agency. However, the ANAO's

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<sup>17</sup> ANAO Audit Report No.32 2004–05, op. cit., p. 20.

plans were based on the original expected release date for the revised Charter of June 2006.

**1.17** In the event, the revised Charter was not launched until 13 November 2006. Fieldwork for this audit was conducted between July and October 2006. In this circumstance, the scope of the audit was modified to take into account the unavailability of data relating to the impact of the revised Centrelink Customer Charter on Centrelink's performance as a service delivery agency; the dissemination of the revised Customer Charter in the Centrelink network, and any impact this may have on customer and stakeholder awareness of the Customer Charter.

**1.18** The audit was conducted in accordance with ANAO Auditing Standards at a cost to the ANAO of \$234 000.

## Structure of the report

**1.19** In following-up on the previous audit, the ANAO examined the background to, and conduct of, Centrelink's review of its Customer Charter and its subsequent redevelopment. The ANAO also assessed the redeveloped Customer Charter against the Australian Government's *Client Service Charter Principles* (the Charter Principles).

**1.20** Chapter 2 examines the review (and subsequent redevelopment) of the Customer Charter. Chapter 3 provides an examination of how well the revised Customer Charter meets the requirements of the first three principles of the Australian Government's Client Service Charter Principles, compared with the findings of the previous audit in respect of the previous Customer Charter. Chapter 4 assesses the revised Customer Charter against the Charter Principles for monitoring and reporting, including Centrelink's planned monitoring and reporting for the revised Customer Charter, and Centrelink's communication strategies. The chapter also examines monitoring of customer awareness of Centrelink's Customer Charter and the agency's commitments to customers set out in the revised charter.

## 2. Centrelink's Review of the Customer Charter

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*This chapter provides an overview of review process conducted by Centrelink of its Customer Charter following the 2004–05 ANAO audit.*

### Introduction

**2.1** There were a number of converging factors that resulted in Centrelink undertaking a review of its Customer Charter in 2005–06. Primarily these were:

- the ANAO's Audit Report No.32 2004–2005, *Centrelink's Customer Charter and Community Consultation Program*;
- Centrelink's subsequent undertakings to the Parliament's (JCPAA) in the context of the JCPAA's inquiry into the ANAO's series of audits of Centrelink's customer feedback systems<sup>18</sup>; and
- the 2005–06 Statement of Expectations provided to the Chief Executive of Centrelink (CEO) from the Minister of Human Services, and the 2005–06 Statement of Intent from Centrelink's CEO to the Minister.<sup>19</sup>

### JCPAA inquiry into ANAO's 2004–05 Centrelink Customer Feedback Systems series of audits

**2.2** The previous audit of Centrelink's Customer Charter found that while Centrelink had invested significantly in the development of the original Customer Charter, there were elements of the Charter Principles which were not met (in particular the lack of specific measurable standards) and there was minimal collection, analysis and reporting of performance data on the Customer Charter.

**2.3** At the JCPAA's 19 August 2005 hearing into the ANAO's Centrelink Customer Feedback Systems series of audits, Centrelink indicated that the agency was finalising a major review of the Centrelink Customer Service Charter, and expected the review to be completed by February 2006.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> See Chapter 5 of JCPAA Report 407, *Review of Auditor-General's Reports tabled between 18 January and 18 April 2005*, August 2006.

<sup>19</sup> See paragraphs 2.4 to 2.11 for further information.

<sup>20</sup> Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit, *Review of Auditor-General's reports tabled between 18 January and 18 April 2005*, 19 August 2005, p. 140.



Centrelink provided a submission to the JCPAA on 26 May 2006 containing further detail on the review:

The new Service Charter is expected to be launched in June 2006. The new Service Charter will include measurable standards that customers have identified as important to them and will provide a basis for measuring, monitoring and reporting Centrelink's performance against the Charter.<sup>21</sup>

## Statement of Expectations

**2.4** In November 2002, Mr John Uhrig AC was appointed by the Australian Government to conduct a review of the corporate governance of Commonwealth statutory authorities and office holders. The objective of the review was to identify issues surrounding existing governance arrangements and to provide options for Government to improve the performance and get the best from statutory authorities and office holders, and their accountability frameworks.<sup>22</sup>

**2.5** One of the recommendations of the review was that:

The Government should clarify expectations of statutory authorities by Ministers issuing Statements of Expectations to statutory authorities; by statutory authorities responding with Statements of Intent for approval by Ministers; and by Ministers making public Statements of Expectations and Intent.<sup>23</sup>

**2.6** In response to the Uhrig Review, the Government indicated that: 'The Government will clarify its expectations of statutory authorities by issuing public Statements of Expectations and authorities will respond with Statements of Intent'.<sup>24</sup>

**2.7** The resulting 2005–06 Statement of Expectations to Centrelink's CEO from the then Minister for Human Services, the Hon. Joe Hockey MP, and the 2005–06 Statement of Intent from Centrelink's CEO, were taken into consideration during Centrelink's review of its Customer Charter.

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<sup>21</sup> Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit, Centrelink, Submission No. 5 to the JCPAA, *Review of Auditor General's Reports (Audit Reports tabled between 18 January and 18 April 2005)*, 26 May 2006, p. 2.

<sup>22</sup> Department of Finance and Administration, *Review of the Corporate Governance of Statutory Authorities and Office Holders*, <<http://www.finance.gov.au/governancestructures>> [accessed 6 June 2006].

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Minister for Finance and Administration, Media Release 57/04: *Australian Government Response to the Uhrig Report*, <[http://www.financeminister.gov.au/media/2004/mr\\_5704.html](http://www.financeminister.gov.au/media/2004/mr_5704.html)> [accessed 27 June 2006].

**2.8** The then Minister for Human Services identified in his Statement of Expectations to Centrelink a number of areas in which Centrelink could improve its service delivery. The Minister focused particularly on the number of times customers need to visit Centrelink CSCs, the time customers need to wait for services either in the offices or on the phone, and the complexity and repetition across forms.<sup>25</sup>

**2.9** In addition, the Minister specified that his requirement that Centrelink develop performance indicators and appropriate targets, including those for service challenges, in consultation with the Secretary of the Department of Human Services.<sup>26</sup>

**2.10** The CEO of Centrelink responded to the then Minister's Statement of Expectations with a Statement of Intent agreeing to address the service challenges, stating: 'I am redeveloping the Customer Charter, and it will support Centrelink customers and staff as they work to resolve matters of concern quickly and seamlessly'.<sup>27</sup>

**2.11** Two particular service standards have been specifically included in the revised Customer Charter as a result of the Minister's 2005–06 Statement of Expectations to Centrelink's CEO, namely:

- 'We will answer 70 per cent of your phone calls within two and a half minutes (you may have to wait longer during our busiest times)'; and
- 'We will reduce the time that you wait in the queue when you come to a Centrelink office'.<sup>28</sup>

**2.12** A more detailed explanation of the Uhrig Review and the then Minister's 2005–06 Statement of Expectations is included in Appendix 2.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> The Hon. Joe Hockey MP, Minister for Human Services, *Statement of Expectations to CEO, Centrelink*, 27 October 2005, pp. 2-3.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> CEO, Centrelink; *Centrelink Statement of Intent*, 16 December 2005.

<sup>28</sup> Centrelink, *What you can expect from Centrelink: Centrelink's Customer Service Charter*, p. 6.

<sup>29</sup> The then Minister issued his Statement of Expectations for 2006–07 in October 2006. The CEO's Statement of Intent had not yet been published when the Prime Minister announced a new ministry in January 2007 and appointed Senator the Hon Ian Campbell as the Minister for Human Services. Subsequently, Senator the Hon Christopher Ellison was appointed as Minister for Human Services. Discussions are still occurring with the new Minister in relation to his views regarding the Statement of Expectations, but it is expected that the current Statement of Expectations will remain in place for the remainder of 2006–07.

## Other factors

**2.13** There have also been a number of other factors which impacted on the review of Centrelink's Customer Charter, including:

- changes to the Administrative Arrangements Orders affecting Centrelink, including the creation of the Department of Human Services<sup>30</sup>,
- new governance arrangements within Centrelink flowing from the Government's response to the Uhrig Review<sup>31</sup>;
- changes to the organisational structure in Centrelink including the creation of new business lines<sup>32</sup>; and
- changes in Centrelink's service delivery mechanisms including an increasing emphasis on online service delivery for customers.<sup>33</sup>

## Review of the Customer Charter

**2.14** According to Centrelink, the review of its Customer Charter conducted during 2005 and 2006 was the first major review of the Charter since 2001.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> On 22 October 2004, the Prime Minister announced machinery of government changes affecting, among other things, the administration of policy relating to income support payments and related programs. As a result of the changes announced by the Prime Minister, Centrelink is now part of the Department of Human Services portfolio.

<sup>31</sup> Centrelink's Board of Management was dissolved in September 2005 and the CEO of Centrelink became the agency's CEO for all purposes including of the Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997. Previously, this responsibility rested with the Chair of the Centrelink Board of Management. At the time of fieldwork, Centrelink's Board of Management had been replaced with eight Centrelink strategic committees including the Centrelink Executive and seven committees which reported to it. An Audit and Risk Committee also reported to the CEO directly. Each Chair is accountable for the decisions of the committee over which they preside. The committees include: Welfare to Work, People and Planning, Investment and Major Programs, Information Technology, Service Delivery Performance, Finance and Customer Service Strategy. On 9 March 2007, the CEO announced that new sub-committee arrangements would be implemented in March 2007 as a result of an independent review undertaken last year. The new sub-committees are: Strategy, Planning and Resources Committee; People Committee; I&T Committee; and Performance Committee. Also, the existing Audit and Risk Committee will be renamed the Audit Committee, with risk management to be a focus of the regular business of all sub-committees.

<sup>32</sup> In early 2005, Centrelink undertook a review of its internal operations, including an examination of arrangements in the service delivery network. As a result, a business line model was implemented defining customer groups as Working Age Participation; Families, and Child Care; and Seniors, Carers and Rural. Staffing and customer service delivery is arranged along these business lines and a fourth business line, Business Integrity. [Centrelink, *Annual Report 2005–06*, p. 81].

<sup>33</sup> Centrelink, *2005/06 Customer Service Charter Review*, Appendix A, p. 1.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, p. 4.

**2.15** The objective of the review was to:

redesign both content and communication (external and internal) of the Service Charter to maximise its effectiveness in being useful to customers and in driving customer service improvements within Centrelink.<sup>35</sup>

**2.16** In addition to achieving the production of a new Customer Charter that included measurable service standards,<sup>36</sup> the review also sought to determine recommendations and actions around:

- the mechanism and frequency for ongoing monitoring and reporting of performance against the standards and commitments made in the Service Charter;
- methods of effectively improving customers' and community organisations' awareness, understanding of the purpose and content of the Service Charter, and their ability to use it, including ways of measuring this; and
- methods for using the Service Charter to drive customer service improvement more strongly within Centrelink, and ways of measuring how well Centrelink do this at both the strategic and local levels within the organisation.<sup>37</sup>

**2.17** Centrelink consulted a number of internal and external stakeholders as part of the review process. The consultation process is discussed further in paragraphs 3.75-3.83. The common concerns raised by participants during the consultations included:

- the quality of service, including staff engagement with the customer's circumstances;
- the quality of ease of access to services, including queue and call waiting times;
- an increased awareness and understanding of review, appeal and feedback mechanisms; and
- accuracy and timeliness of service.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Email from Centrelink to the ANAO, 2 June 2006.

**2.18** As a result of the review, Centrelink has developed a revised version of the Customer Charter, including the following products:

- a Customer Charter poster to be displayed in CSCs;
- a short version of the Customer Charter, to be printed as a brochure and available from Centrelink CSCs, providing an overview of Centrelink's services, customer rights and responsibilities, and methods of contacting Centrelink; and
- a long version of the Customer Charter providing further detail on Centrelink's services including four Customer Charter Commitments and eight service standards.

**2.19** As well as the revised Customer Charter, the review also made changes to Centrelink's comment cards<sup>39</sup> to include two new products:

- 'Tell us what you think' cards that will be available in CSCs and in community and other organisations and will also be available on the Centrelink web site in a printable PDF format; and
- a printable PDF document, available on the Centrelink web site called 'Helping Centrelink improve its service—complaints, compliments and feedback' detailing what customers can do if they want to provide feedback on Centrelink's service.<sup>40</sup>

## **Transitional arrangements during the development of the new Customer Charter**

**2.20** Centrelink informed the ANAO that the following arrangements were in place during the redevelopment of the Customer Charter:

The 'old' customer service charter remained 'current' until the release of the new one. We saw no reason to create a vacuum by decommissioning the existing service charter. It remained current until the new one's release - this is the usual approach with other similar matters.<sup>41</sup>

**2.21** However, the audit team observed during fieldwork that there was some confusion amongst Centrelink staff as to the arrangements for the

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<sup>39</sup> The Centrelink customer comment card entitled *Tell us what you think* (comment card) is available to Centrelink customers in each CSC and on Centrelink's website. The comment card allows customers to provide feedback on any aspect of Centrelink service.

<sup>40</sup> Email from Centrelink to the ANAO, 18 September 2006.

<sup>41</sup> Email from Centrelink to the ANAO, 29 November 2006.

existing Customer Charter during the 15 months<sup>42</sup> the new Customer Charter was under development. Staff in one Area visited by the ANAO advised that, while the new Customer Charter was under development, they had received instruction not to have the existing Customer Charter products in their CSCs, or provide copies of the Customer Charter to customers. Staff interviewed by the ANAO in other Areas visited during fieldwork also expressed uncertainty as to whether or not the existing Customer Charter should be provided to customers or staff during the development of the new Customer Charter.<sup>43</sup>

**2.22** In October 2006, Centrelink provided guidance to staff at CSCs on the revised Customer Charter including how to display the new products in CSCs, and an instruction that the old Customer Charter and related products should be destroyed.<sup>44</sup>

**2.23** In response to issues papers from this audit, Centrelink advised the ANAO that:

While the Network was not specifically advised that the existing service charter content and products remained current until the finalisation of the review of the Charter and the release of any new products, it is standard practice in Centrelink to provide formal written advice through Communications Division when products are to be withdrawn from customer use.

In addition the online ordering system is adjusted to reflect when products are obsolete, and only the new versions are available to staff.<sup>45</sup>

**2.24** However, Centrelink has advised the ANAO that it will consider the ANAO's finding when communicating to staff as part of future large reviews of customer products.

## Conclusion

**2.25** In response to a range of factors, including the ANAO's previous audit and the JCPAA's inquiry into the Centrelink Customer Feedback Systems series of audits, Centrelink undertook a review of its Customer Charter. This

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<sup>42</sup> From the beginning of the Charter review in August 2005 to October 2006 when the new Charter and related products were distributed to the Area network. The revised Charter was then launched on 13 November 2006.

<sup>43</sup> The ANAO's fieldwork visits to 13 Centrelink Areas were conducted between 19 September and 27 October 2006.

<sup>44</sup> Centrelink People and Planning Division, *Customer Service Team Leaders (CSTL) Bulletin: 22/2006*.

<sup>45</sup> Centrelink, *Follow-up Audit of Centrelink's Customer Service Charter*, Letter 18 January 2007.

was the first major review of the Customer Charter since 2001, and included consultation with a number of internal and external stakeholders. The review led to of a revised Customer Charter and a new range of related products for customers.

**2.26** However, the ANAO found that there was some confusion amongst Centrelink staff as to the arrangements for the existing Customer Charter during the 15 months the new Customer Charter was under development. Centrelink has advised the ANAO that it will consider the ANAO's finding when communicating to staff as part of future large reviews of customer products.

## 3. Client Service Charter Principles

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*This Chapter provides an analysis of the revised Customer Charter against the first three principles of the Australian Government's Client Service Charter Principles.*

### Introduction

**3.1** The Australian Government has recognised the importance to those agencies that deliver services to the public of having a Customer Charter. Accordingly, the Australian Government has issued the *Client Service Charter Principles* (the Charter Principles) that require all Commonwealth agencies, having an impact on the public, to have a public charter.<sup>46</sup> The Charter Principles also provide a range of guidance to agencies on the development of their charters. The Charter Principles state that a Service Charter is viewed as:

... a simple public document, developed in consultation with staff and customers that continually grows with an organisation. It sets out the standards of service customers can expect. A Charter is a strong performance measurement and accountability tool as it focuses on customer service outcomes.<sup>47</sup>

**3.2** In addition to the basic requirement that 'all Government bodies which provide services directly to the public are required to develop a service charter'<sup>48</sup>, the Charter Principles contain a number of mandatory and recommended components intended to assist Australian Government agencies in their development of a suitable charter.<sup>49</sup>

**3.3** The major analysis undertaken in the previous audit was an assessment of Centrelink's then Customer Charter against the Charter Principles. Table 3.1 below summarises the findings of the ANAO's previous audit and this follow-up audit in terms of Centrelink's compliance with the Charter Principles in relation to its previous Customer Charter and the revised charter launched in November 2006. Table 3.1 shows that the redeveloped charter meets all the components of the Charter Principles, albeit that there are some areas which could be further improved.

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<sup>46</sup> <<http://www.apsc.gov.au/charters/>> [accessed 19 November 2006].

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Department of Finance and Administration, *Client Service Charter Principles*, June 2000, p. 6.

<sup>49</sup> The mandatory elements of the Principles include defining and reporting on client service standards, and establishing and reporting on client feedback and complaints mechanisms.



**3.4** The sections following Table 3.1 provide further details on the guidance issued for the Charter Principles, including a comparison of findings from the previous audit with findings from the follow-up audit as a result of the recent redevelopment of Centrelink's Customer Charter. Detailed analysis of Principle 4 is included in Chapter 4.

**Table 3.1**

**Customer Charter's compliance with the *Client Service Charter Principles***

Principle	Previous Audit	Follow-up Audit
<b>Principle 1 – Key elements of a charter</b>		
Informing clients about the agency	Partially	Met
Avenues of communication	Partially	Met
Client service standards (mandatory)	Not Met	Substantially Met
Client rights and responsibilities	Substantially Met	Met
Client feedback and complaints (mandatory)	Partially	Met
<b>Principle 2 – Developing a Charter</b>		
Consultation in charter development	Met	Met
Charter format and style	Substantially Met	Met
Service Charter launch	Partially	Met
<b>Principle 3 – Maintaining and reviewing a charter</b>		
Purpose of review	Partially	Met
Frequency of review	Partially	Met
Consultation in review	Partially	Met
On-going promotion	Substantially Met	Met
<b>Principle 4 – Monitoring and reporting</b>		
Monitoring of performance against standards	Partially	Substantially Met
Reporting performance against standards (mandatory)	Partially	Substantially Met
Reporting on client complaints and feedback (mandatory)	Partially	Substantially Met

Source: *Client Service Charter Principles* and ANAO analysis.

## Principle 1: Key elements of a charter

**3.5** The section of the Charter Principles that discusses the key elements of a charter provides an overview of ‘what a service charter should contain’<sup>50</sup>, including information about the agency, avenues of communication, client service standards, clients’ rights and responsibilities, and client feedback and complaints.

### Informing clients about the agency

**3.6** The Charter Principles recommend that agencies inform clients about the agency by including the following elements in a charter:

- agency’s name and logo;
- what the agency or program covered by the Charter does;
- who the clients or potential clients are;
- Agency Head statement; and
- relationship to portfolio department or parent organisation.<sup>51</sup>

#### *Findings of the previous audit*

The ANAO found that Centrelink’s Customer Charter included its name and logo. As well, information on programme activity was included but not the specific services Centrelink provides. The Charter contained a list of freecall phone numbers. However, it was not clear whether these phone numbers gave access to services only provided by Centrelink, or whether they constituted the full list of services provided by Centrelink. The agency’s clients were not identified, neither was there any Agency Head statement. Although the Charter included a list of agencies to whom Centrelink delivered services, there was no explanation of Centrelink’s links to policy agencies responsible for programs delivered by Centrelink.<sup>52</sup>

#### *Findings of the follow-up audit*

**3.7** The ANAO found that Centrelink has addressed the issues raised in the previous audit in relation to informing clients about the agency. Centrelink’s revised Customer Charter includes the agency’s name and logo. Compared with the previous Customer Charter, more detail is provided on Centrelink’s range of services including the range of clients and potential clients. For example, under the heading ‘About Centrelink’, the revised Customer Charter states: ‘Our job is to deliver a range of services and payments to eligible

<sup>50</sup> Department of Finance and Administration, *Client Service Charter Principles*, June 2000, p. 9.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>52</sup> ANAO Audit Report No.32 2004–05, *op.cit.*, pp. 33–34.

retirees, families, carers, students, people looking for work, parents, farmers and people with disabilities’<sup>53</sup>.

**3.8** The revised Customer Charter includes an agency head statement, as well as an explanation of Centrelink’s relationship to the portfolio departments.<sup>54</sup>

## **Avenues of communication**

**3.9** The Charter Principles state ‘A service charter is to contain statements on how clients and stakeholders can communicate with the agency’.<sup>55</sup> It is mandatory to include in an agency’s charter information on how clients and stakeholders can communicate with the agency.

**3.10** The guidance provided in the Charter Principles to assist agencies in meeting this requirement states that contact issues cover:

- how to contact the agency—key contact details; postal or street address, phone, TTY (telephone typewriter), fax or toll free number, email and web site address;
- appropriate avenues to meet client needs including people with disabilities and people with English as a second language. This includes providing information in accessible formats;
- counter service facilities;
- contact details (e.g. by area, regional, rural or remote sites if appropriate);
- hours of opening;
- online services, whether via a web site, email or other electronic services.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Centrelink, *What you can expect from Centrelink: Centrelink’s Customer Service Charter*, p. 3.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>55</sup> Department of Finance and Administration, *Client Service Charter Principles*, June 2000, p. 9.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*

### *Findings of the previous ANAO audit*

In the previous audit the ANAO suggested that at a minimum, the Customer Charter should outline the customer segments for which Centrelink is responsible, broadly indicating the payments and products Centrelink provides'.<sup>57</sup> The ANAO also suggested in the previous audit report that Centrelink could improve the contact details included in the Customer Charter.<sup>58</sup>

### *Findings of the follow-up audit*

**3.11** The ANAO found that Centrelink has incorporated these suggestions into the revised Customer Charter. As indicated in paragraph 3.7, Centrelink's revised Customer Charter includes an outline of its customer segments. The revised Customer Charter also states: 'You can access our online services from any computer with internet access, Centrelink office or Centrelink agent'<sup>59</sup>.

**3.12** The revised Customer Charter also includes more information on the methods customers can use to contact Centrelink. Under the heading 'How to Contact Us' is a list of phone numbers, as well as Centrelink's website with reference on how customers can access the address of their local Centrelink offices.<sup>60</sup> This information is included in both the short version (brochure) and the long version of the revised Customer Charter. However, information on opening times is not included.

## **Client service standards (mandatory)**

**3.13** It is mandatory for agencies' service charters to include client service standards<sup>61</sup>, although there is no required minimum or maximum number of standards. However, the Charter Principles state:

The main purpose of having a charter is to define the service experience the client will have with that organisation and the responsibilities of both the agency and the client. This experience is described through the key standards of service.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> ANAO Audit Report No.32 2004–05, op. cit., p. 34.

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> Centrelink, *What you can expect from Centrelink: Centrelink's Customer Service Charter*, p. 3.

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> Standards specify the characteristics of a desired level of service.

<sup>62</sup> Department of Finance and Administration, *Client Service Charter Principles*, June 2000, p. 9.

**3.14** The checklist for developing a service charter, which is contained in the Charter Principles, asks the following questions of the service standards specified in the agency's service charter:

- Are the standards within the service charter measurable (i.e. quantitative or qualitative)?
- Are the service standards set to encourage improvement in the agency's performance?<sup>63</sup>

**3.15** The Charter Principles also state that:

When deciding which standards to publish, agencies should take account of the following:

- client and stakeholder views and expectations;
- the fifteen values as described in the *Australian Public Service Act 1999* [Part 3, Section 10]. For the first time, this Act incorporates values of service as one of the criteria for managing public service outcomes. It may be useful to reference them in an agency's charter;
- the diversity of staff and clients. This is articulated in the *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society...*;
- alignment with the agency corporate plan (especially strategic goals and business outcomes);
- their ability to measure performance against each standard and current levels of performance; and
- realistic and achievable service levels.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.*, p. 11.

### *Findings of the previous ANAO audit*

The previous report found that:

In contrast to the recommendations of the Australian Government's Client Service Charter Principles, the Charter is not underpinned by a set of specific, measurable standards linked to Charter commitments and operational performance. The commitments identified in the Charter relate only to a small number of general statements describing the way services will be provided, such as 'listening carefully', 'being friendly', 'fixing mistakes' and 'making a decision quickly'. There is, however, no benchmark definition of these statements. There are no explicit standards for the speed, accuracy or quality of service as evident in the charters of other agencies also delivering services to a broad customer base, such as the ATO and the HIC.<sup>65</sup>

#### **Recommendation 1 of the previous ANAO audit**

The ANAO recommended that, in accordance with the guidance set out in the Australian Government's Client Service Charter Principles, Centrelink include in its Customer Charter measurable service standards to:

- (a) better inform customers of the level of service to expect; and
- (b) provide an improved basis for measuring, monitoring and reporting, both internally and externally, the agency's performance against its Charter.<sup>66</sup>

**Centrelink Response: Agreed**

### *Findings of the follow-up audit*

**3.16** At the outset of this follow-up audit, Centrelink provided the following advice about the inclusion of measurable service standards in the revised Customer Charter:

Measurable standards are contained in the Customer Service Charter document, and the Minister's Statement of Expectations and CEO's Statement of Intent response informed the development of these standards.<sup>67</sup>

**3.17** The ANAO found that during the redevelopment process for the Customer Charter, Centrelink consulted a range of customers to get feedback on the initial drafts of the Customer Charter, including the proposed service standards. Customers at both the usability lab<sup>68</sup> and the Value Creation

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<sup>65</sup> ANAO Audit Report No.32 2004–05, op. cit., p. 50.

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.* p. 55.

<sup>67</sup> Centrelink, *Customer Charter – Follow-up Audit*, Letter 14 September 2006.

<sup>68</sup> The usability lab was a series of focus groups with customers in which customers were asked to read and compare one or more of the products under evaluation, and were asked a series of questions to facilitate discussion on the products.

Workshops (VCWs)<sup>69</sup> conducted as part of the consultation process viewed the inclusion of service standards in the Customer Charter as valuable.<sup>70</sup>

**3.18** In the redeveloped Customer Charter, Centrelink has included four Charter commitments, with two standards under each of the commitments; totalling eight standards. Table 3.2 illustrates the revised Customer Charter's commitments and standards. However, the standards are only included in the long version of the Customer Charter. This version of the Customer Charter is only available from Centrelink's website.

**Table 3.2**

**The Customer Charter's commitments and standards**

Commitment	Standards
<b>You can expect us to make it easy for you to use our services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will answer 70 per cent of your phone calls within 2½ minutes (you may have to wait longer during our busiest times)</li> <li>We will reduce the time that you wait in the queue when you come to a Centrelink office</li> </ul>
<b>You can expect us to treat you with respect and courtesy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If we can't answer your question immediately, we will get back to you within an agreed time</li> <li>We will always behave towards you in a way which upholds the <i>Australian Public Service Code of Conduct</i> and the principles of the <i>Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society</i></li> </ul>
<b>You can expect us to explain your options to you</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At all times we will work with you to match services and resources to your individual circumstances</li> <li>We will work with you to resolve any complaint as early as possible but we may take up to 5 working days to answer more complicated complaints</li> </ul>
<b>You can expect us to respect your rights</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will clearly explain our decisions to you and tell you about your rights and responsibilities and what you need to do</li> <li>When you ask us to review a decision we have made, we will tell you about the result in writing within 28 working days<sup>A</sup></li> </ul>

Notes: A This standard now reads 'When you ask an Authorised Review Officer to review a decision we have made, the Authorised Review Officer will tell you about the result in writing in 28 days'.

Source: Centrelink, *Service Standards and Data Source Table*.

<sup>69</sup> Value Creation Workshops are structured and facilitated focus groups that involve both the customers of the services delivered by Centrelink and the providers of these services (that is relevant Centrelink staff). The workshops are intended to allow customers to provide direct feedback to Centrelink and its staff regarding the services that they receive.

<sup>70</sup> Centrelink, *User Centred Evaluation Report: Service Charter, Review and Appeals Fact Sheet, Complaints and Feedback Factsheet and 'Let us know what you think' customer comment card*, December 5–8 2005, p. 7–8; Centrelink National Value Creation Team, *Customer Charter Value Creation Workshops: Consolidated Report*, August 2005, p. 14.

**3.19** The ANAO found that, in contrast to Centrelink's previous Customer Charter, the revised Customer Charter now includes a number of timeliness standards as well as quality standards. In addition, the revised Customer Charter also refers to the *Australian Public Service (APS) Values* and the *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society*, an issue identified in the previous audit report.<sup>71</sup>

**3.20** Timeliness standards are particularly important to Centrelink's customers. At the VCWs, customers expressed the opinion that the inclusion of some timeframe standards or benchmarks would enhance the usefulness of the Customer Charter:

One of the things customers said they disliked about the current Customer Charter was the fact that it '*Doesn't stipulate timeframes*'. While this view wasn't expressed at every workshop, at those that it was it was also an important issue from the customers' perspective. Customers expressed a desire for any new Charter to include some specific timeframes for various aspects of service.<sup>72</sup>

**3.21** In the long version of the revised Customer Charter, boxes are included under the Customer Charter commitments to provide further detail on how customers may judge the level of service provided by Centrelink. An example is included in Figure 3.1.

**Figure 3.1**

### **Example of the Customer Charter Commitments**

#### **1. You can expect us to make it easy for you to use our services.**

We will do this by:

- making it as convenient as possible for you to contact us or do business with us in person, over the phone or through agents and access points in rural and remote Australia
- making information available online that will satisfy your need for general enquiries and increasing access to Centrelink services on the internet
- providing services on the internet
- providing offices where you can feel safe and your personal privacy is assured, and
- providing interpreter or teletypewriter (TTY) services if you need them.

**3.22** The explanatory information under each of the Customer Charter commitments in the long version of the revised Customer Charter provide

<sup>71</sup> ANAO Audit Report No.32 2004–05, op. cit., p. 36.

<sup>72</sup> Centrelink National Value Creation Team, *Customer Charter Value Creation Workshops: Consolidated Report*, August 2005, p. 14.



more detail on what the commitments mean, and will assist the customers in judging whether Centrelink has met that commitment. However, the standards and this explanatory information are not available in the Customer Charter brochure available at CSCs.

**3.23** Many of the quantitative service standards included in the revised Customer Charter provide a specific timeframe on Centrelink's services. For example, 'We will answer 70 per cent of your phone calls within 2½ minutes (you may have to wait longer during our busiest times)' and 'When you ask us to review a decision we have made, we will tell you about the result in writing within 28 working days'.

#### ANAO analysis of standards

**3.24** The ANAO notes that two of the service standards, namely 'We will reduce the time that you wait in the queue when you come to a Centrelink office' and 'If we can't answer your question immediately, we will get back to you within an agreed time', do not make a public commitment on the actual time taken to complete a service.

**3.25** Given that there are no publicly stated time limits associated with these standards, customers may have difficulty in judging if these standards have been met, or in understanding what is a reasonable timeframe for the delivery of this service. As well, if there are no set timeliness parameters around these specific standards, using the standards to drive improvements in service delivery performance within the organisation may prove problematic.

**3.26** In response to the draft report from this audit, Centrelink advised the ANAO that:

That the commitment in the Service Charter commits Centrelink to improving its customer service by aiming to reduce queue waiting times. While Centrelink cannot commit to a specific target publicly, it is accountable for achieving this aim as part of its response to the Minister's Statement of Expectations, and Centrelink does have an internal target against which it monitors and reports to ensure it improves queue wait times.<sup>73</sup>

**3.27** In contrast both Medicare Australia and the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) make explicit public commitments for the queue time standard in their Service Charters.

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<sup>73</sup> Centrelink, *Performance Audit – Centrelink's Customer Charter Follow-up Audit*, Letter 29 March 2007.

**3.28** Medicare Australia provides on its website similar commitments to its customers. For example, one of the service standards in its Charter is to 'Keep our queue times in Medicare offices to a minimum'.<sup>74</sup> The measure, however, for this standard is that 'The Australian public is served in less than 10 minutes', and the latest performance for the standard is reported as the following:

98.6% of the public have waited less than 10 minutes in the queue to be served with an average waiting time of 1.55 minutes. This was measured over the period 1 July 2005 to 30 April 2006.

Where we do not meet the service standard of 10 minutes, we find out why and make improvements.<sup>75</sup>

**3.29** The ATO makes the following statement in its service standards:

If you visit our enquiry services, we'll aim to:

- attend to you within 10 minutes of your arrival in a Tax Office.

At peak times – for example, from July to October for individuals who pay income tax – we may not be able to achieve this standard. We'll aim to attend to you within 15 minutes of your arrival in a Tax Office during these months.<sup>76</sup>

**3.30** The ANAO also notes that the standard 'We will reduce the time that you wait in the queue when you come to a Centrelink office' may not fully address the Minister's Statement of Expectations that 'I expect you to improve customer service by reducing... the time customers wait for services, either in offices or on the phone.'<sup>77</sup>

**3.31** For some customers, while they may spend less time in the queue, they may have to spend additional time in the waiting area waiting for an appointment. Both aspects of time spent by customers in a Centrelink office may need to be considered to address the Minister's expectation.

**3.32** In response to issues papers from this audit, Centrelink advised the ANAO that it agrees both aspects of waiting times are relevant and that 'Centrelink has been moving to try and develop technology that can accurately measure both aspects'. The ANAO understands the measurement issues and

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<sup>74</sup> <[http://www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/about/about\\_us/service\\_charter/make\\_it\\_easy.htm#3](http://www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/about/about_us/service_charter/make_it_easy.htm#3)> [accessed 20 November 2006].

<sup>75</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> ATO, *Taxpayers' Charter Explanatory Booklet: Our Service Standards*, November 2003, p. 3.

<sup>77</sup> The Hon. Joe Hockey MP, Minister for Human Services, *Statement of Expectations to CEO, Centrelink*, 27 October 2005, pp. 2–3.

acknowledges Centrelink's intention to develop appropriate measurement tools.<sup>78</sup>

**3.33** The ANAO notes that for the standard: 'When you ask us to review a decision we have made, we will tell you about the result in writing within 28 working days', Centrelink may need to include more explanatory text in the long version of the Customer Charter indicating whether this includes the Original Decision Maker (ODM) reconsideration process<sup>79</sup> and/or the Authorised Review Officer (ARO)<sup>80</sup> process, or the ARO process only.

**3.34** Centrelink further advised the ANAO that the standard has been amended and is available on the website and in other internal documents.<sup>81</sup> The standard now reads:

When you ask an Authorised Review Officer to review a decision we have made, the Authorised Review Officer will tell you about the result in writing in 28 days.

**3.35** However, the ANAO has previously found that there is a lack of transparency to customers regarding the difference between the ODM and ARO processes.<sup>82</sup> Therefore, customers may interpret the standard to mean that the entire review process will take no more than 28 days. Centrelink's internal reports indicate that the average time taken for an ODM to complete a reconsideration in 2004–05 was 27 days and in 2005–06 it was 37 days.<sup>83</sup>

**3.36** Centrelink's performance against the quality standard expressed as 'At all times we will work with you to match services and resources to your individual circumstances' may also prove difficult for customers to judge, as it assumes a level of knowledge regarding services and resources which customers may not possess.

**3.37** The ANAO considers that Centrelink has substantially implemented the recommendation from the previous audit report by including both

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<sup>78</sup> Centrelink, *Follow-up Audit of Centrelink's Customer Service Charter*, Letter 18 January 2007.

<sup>79</sup> The first stage of the review and appeals process currently adopted by Centrelink, where the Original Decision Maker reassesses his/her decision, and decides whether to revise the decision.

<sup>80</sup> A Centrelink Officer responsible for reviewing a decision at the request of the customer.

<sup>81</sup> Email from Centrelink to the ANAO, 26 February 2007.

<sup>82</sup> ANAO Audit Report No.35 2004–05, *Centrelink's Review and Appeals System*, p. 37.

<sup>83</sup> That is, it took an average of 27 days from when the ODM recorded the reconsideration on Centrelink's APL computer database to when the ODM recorded that the reconsideration had been completed. Based on ANAO analysis of Centrelink data.

timeliness and quality service standards in the revised Customer Charter, and that the standards have made reference to the key issues as raised in the Statements of Expectation and Intent.

**3.38** In particular, the ANAO welcomes the inclusion of a specific timeframe for the provision of Centrelink's services in many of the revised Customer Charter's quantitative service standards. For example, 'We will answer 70 per cent of your phone calls within 2½ minutes (you may have to wait longer during our busiest times)'.

**3.39** However, the ANAO also considers that there is an opportunity to improve some of the standards. The ANAO suggests that Centrelink include more specific timeframes for the standards on queue times and responding to customer questions in future iterations of the Customer Charter, and/or include specific timeframes in external public reporting for these standards as Medicare Australia has done with its Charter standards on the agency's website.

**3.40** In response to issues papers from this audit, Centrelink advised the ANAO that:

Commitments were only made in the Charter to specific targets where Centrelink's funding model provided resources to achieve the targets ... Since the current Centrelink funding model does not provide funding to Centrelink to achieve a specific standard for some elements of face to face service (eg queues), Centrelink cannot at this stage commit to a specific target.<sup>84</sup>

**3.41** The ANAO also notes that the standards are not currently included in the Customer Charter brochure available at CSCs. The standards are included in the long version of the Customer Charter which is only available on the Centrelink website, which may not be accessible to all customers.

**3.42** However, Centrelink advised the ANAO that the standards will be included in future reprinting of the Customer Charter brochure.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Centrelink, *Follow-up Audit of Centrelink's Customer Service Charter*, Letter 18 January 2007.

<sup>85</sup> Centrelink, *Follow-up Audit of Centrelink's Customer Service Charter*, Letter 18 January 2007.

## Client rights and responsibilities

### 3.43 According to the Charter Principles:

A service charter should set out the rights of clients and what they can expect from an agency. Similarly, it should set out the responsibilities of clients to abide by certain codes of behaviour.<sup>86</sup>

#### *Findings of the previous ANAO audit*

The previous audit found that while Centrelink's Customer Charter substantially met the requirements of the Charter Principles, there was a focus on customer obligations as opposed to customer rights, particularly in comparison with the Australian Taxation Office's (ATO) Taxpayers' Charter:

Like Centrelink's Charter, the ATO Taxpayers' Charter explains both the rights and obligations of its customers ... However, the ATO Taxpayers' Charter places a greater emphasis on explaining taxpayers' rights as opposed to their obligations.<sup>87</sup>

#### *Findings of the follow-up audit*

**3.44** Given that Centrelink's customers still have a low awareness of their rights,<sup>88</sup> communicating customer's rights remains an important purpose of the Customer Charter.

**3.45** The ANAO has found that there have been a number of improvements to the revised Customer Charter in terms of communicating customers' rights. More details are now provided on how a customer can get a decision reviewed including the websites and contact details for both the Social Security Appeals Tribunal (SSAT) and the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT), as well as a clearer explanation of the appeals levels available to customers.<sup>89</sup> However, the ANAO notes that there is limited information on appeal rights in the version of the Customer Charter translated into other languages. This is discussed in more detail in the section on Charter format and style at paragraph 3.53.

<sup>86</sup> Department of Finance and Administration, *Client Service Charter Principles*, June 2000, p. 11.

<sup>87</sup> ANAO Audit Report 2004–05 No.32, op. cit., p. 38.

<sup>88</sup> At the consolidated VCWs conducted as part of the Charter review process, only 34 per cent of customers were aware of their rights, compared with 32 per cent who were not aware and 34 per cent who were not sure of their rights. (Centrelink National Value Creation Team, *Customer Charter Value Creation Workshops: Consolidated Report*, August 2005, p. 20).

<sup>89</sup> Centrelink, *What you can expect from Centrelink: Centrelink's Customer Service Charter*, p. 10.

## Client feedback and complaints (mandatory)

**3.46** Clients' access to feedback and complaints processes is a mandatory requirement for charters under the Charter Principles. The Charter Principles state:

Each agency must have avenues for clients to provide feedback and make complaints and have mechanisms to report on that data. A service charter must contain information on the feedback and complaints processes.<sup>90</sup>

**3.47** The checklist from the Charter Principles asks the following questions:

- Does the service charter state the agency's complaints handling procedures and encourage client feedback?
- Does the agency have accessible internal complaints handling procedures in place?
- Does the service charter provide contact details for external dispute handling mechanisms?<sup>91</sup>

### *Findings of the previous ANAO audit*

The previous audit report found that although the Customer Charter informed customers of the avenues available to lodge a complaint with Centrelink, as well as the internal and external appeal mechanisms:

there is no indication in the Charter on how feedback will be used or the implications of providing feedback in relation to disputes and appeals. The Principles recommend that agencies include in their charters information on external dispute handling mechanisms. Although the Social Security Appeals Tribunal (SSAT) is mentioned in the Charter, the contact details for the SSAT are not included and the Commonwealth Ombudsman is not mentioned at all.<sup>92</sup>

### *Findings of the follow-up audit*

**3.48** The ANAO found that Centrelink's revised long version of the Customer Charter has addressed the issues raised in the previous audit. In addition to informing clients on the avenues available to make a complaint, customers are also informed how this feedback will be used: 'We also want to hear from you if you have a complaint, as your experience can help us to improve our service to you and others'.<sup>93</sup>

**3.49** As well, the contact details, including websites, free call numbers and TTY details, for both the SSAT, and the AAT, are now included in the

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<sup>90</sup> Department of Finance and Administration, *Client Service Charter Principles*, June 2000, p. 12.

<sup>91</sup> *ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>92</sup> ANAO Audit Report 2004–05 No.32, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

<sup>93</sup> Centrelink, *What you can expect from Centrelink: Centrelink's Customer Service Charter*, p. 11.

Customer Charter.<sup>94</sup> The Commonwealth Ombudsman is also now referenced in the Customer Charter, including website, phone number and TTY details.<sup>95</sup> A statement is also included in the revised Customer Charter advising customers that the Commonwealth Ombudsman is independent of Centrelink.<sup>96</sup> However, the Ombudsman information is not included in the Customer Charter brochure available at the CSCs.

## Principle 2: Developing a charter

**3.50** The section of the Charter Principles on the development of a charter includes guidance on consultation in charter development, defining the charter format and style, and strategies for launching the charter.

### Consultation in charter development

**3.51** The Charter Principles recommend that ‘in preparing a service charter, the agency should consult with clients, staff and other key stakeholders’.<sup>97</sup>

**3.52** Centrelink consulted widely in the development of their original Customer Charter in 1997. As noted in the previous audit report: ‘In originally developing its Charter, Centrelink implemented this guidance by consulting its stakeholders’.<sup>98</sup> This included staff, customer groups such as peak community bodies and local community organisations, client departments, and other stakeholders.<sup>99</sup>

### Charter format and style

**3.53** The Charter Principles state that:

Service Charters across Commonwealth agencies should have a set of common features for ease of recognition and readability by clients. These features should be designed to assist a client’s understanding of the service charter.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> *ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>95</sup> *ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>96</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> Department of Finance and Administration, *Client Service Charter Principles*, June 2000, p. 13.

<sup>98</sup> ANAO Audit Report 2004–05 No.32, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>99</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> Department of Finance and Administration, *Client Service Charter Principles*, June 2000, p. 13.

### *Findings of the previous ANAO audit*

The previous audit found that Centrelink's Charter followed this guidance. The Charter was written in a clear, plain English style, and was accessible in suitable written formats. However, the Charter was not as clear in other formats, for example on Centrelink's external website. While the Charter had been translated into other languages, it was difficult to assess the effectiveness of this initiative, as Centrelink did not monitor the number of translated versions provided to customers.<sup>101</sup>

### *Findings of the follow-up audit*

**3.54** The ANAO found that Centrelink has made further improvements to the format of the Customer Charter, in terms of the readability and the use of plain English style, as well as the readability of the Customer Charter on Centrelink's website.

**3.55** As of 14 November 2006, the revised version of the Customer Charter was made available on Centrelink's website including a one page version of the Customer Charter translated into 31 languages. The translated version of the Customer Charter includes the Customer Charter commitments and standards, as well as information on customers' rights and responsibilities, what to do if customers think a decision is wrong, ways in which customers can provide feedback on Centrelink's services, and information on customers' privacy.<sup>102</sup>

**3.56** However, the one page translated version differs from the printed English language Customer Charter brochure available at Centrelink's CSCs. In particular, under the section entitled 'What to do if you think a decision is wrong', the only information included is as follows: 'If you think a decision we have made is wrong, please talk to us. You have the right to ask for the decision to be looked at again.'<sup>103</sup> This compares with the brochure which provides information on Authorised Review Officers, and contact details, including websites, free call numbers and TTY details, for both the SSAT, and the AAT.

**3.57** Given that those who need translations rely on the translated versions, more detail could be provided in the translated version of the Customer Charter on the avenues of appeal available to customers.

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<sup>101</sup> ANAO Audit Report 2004–05 No.32, op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>102</sup> Centrelink, *We speak your language: Centrelink's Customer Charter*, <[http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/multifilestores/mcco301c\\_0609](http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/multifilestores/mcco301c_0609)> [Accessed 14 November 2006].

<sup>103</sup> *ibid.*



**3.58** Therefore, the ANAO found that Centrelink has made improvements to the Customer Charter in terms of format, and has provided translated versions of the Customer Charter for its customers from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (DCALB). However, the translated versions of the Customer Charter contain very little detail on the review and appeals process and no contact details for external review mechanisms. As well, it is unknown if the numbers of translated versions of the Customer Charter distributed to customers will be recorded by Centrelink.

**3.59** Centrelink advised the ANAO<sup>104</sup> that:

Centrelink has mechanisms in place to monitor customer and community access to the service charter translated documents. The most basic one is counting the number of 'hits' on Centrelink's external and internal web sites for the specific products. This data however, will not provide useful information about the extent to which the Service Charter is known, understood and used by customers from non-English speaking backgrounds and by the community groups that support them. To obtain this information, Centrelink is using the existing and agreed activities in place and conducted by Multicultural Services Branch and Multicultural Services Officers (MSOs) together with customers and the community agencies and peak bodies.<sup>105</sup>

## Service charter launch

**3.60** The Charter Principles suggest that 'Agencies should consider a strategy for launching their service charter to achieve maximum exposure'.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Email from Centrelink to the ANAO, 25 January 2007.

<sup>105</sup> Centrelink further advised the ANAO on 29 March 2007 that it has an extensive range of options to provide information on appeal rights for these customers including the multicultural Call Centre and other specific translated products already available on the website explaining appeal and review rights. Customers are directed to these in the translated version. In addition Centrelink uses extensive consultation methods to ensure customers from multicultural backgrounds are aware of their rights, and these avenues are being extensively used as part of the communication strategy for raising awareness of the new Customer Charter. For example Centrelink facilitates Multicultural Advisory Committees at the State/Territory and local levels, and these committees provide local communities with a forum to openly discuss issues that affect the multicultural community, and this provides a framework for local input to be fed through to Centrelink's national level Multicultural Reference Group, and through direct advice from FECCA and other key peak groups.

<sup>106</sup> Department of Finance and Administration, *Client Service Charter Principles*, June 2000, p. 14.

### *Findings of the previous ANAO audit*

The previous audit found that there was no specific launch of the Centrelink Charter as it was released in 1997 at the same time as Centrelink was established.<sup>107</sup>

### *Findings of the follow-up audit*

**3.61** The ANAO has found that Centrelink has ensured that the revised Customer Charter has been publicly launched, and there are activities planned for the external promotion of the Customer Charter.

**3.62** The revised Customer Charter was publicly released on 13 November 2006 by the Minister for Human Services. In addition, the website has been updated with Customer Charter products including translated versions. Centrelink has also informed the ANAO that the Customer Charter products will be emailed to peak bodies, community agencies and other external stakeholders; presentations on the Customer Charter will be given to relevant public bodies and community agencies including DCALB, Indigenous and outservicing agencies; and the Customer Charter will be displayed in CSCs.<sup>108</sup>

**3.63** However, the ANAO has found that Centrelink has not had an official internal release of the Customer Charter throughout the organisation, although Centrelink sent a letter to Area Managers with the latest Customer Charter products in September 2006. Centrelink had informed the ANAO that the Customer Charter would have an internal release in the form of a cascade briefing<sup>109</sup> to staff before the public release of the Customer Charter. However, this did not occur, and the cascade briefings have still not been initiated.

**3.64** Centrelink advised the ANAO on 18 January 2007 that:

At the time of the launch, the demand on Centrelink staff due to increased customer workload, training and the implementation of new initiatives was

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<sup>107</sup> ANAO Audit Report No.32 2004–05, op.cit., p. 40.

<sup>108</sup> Centrelink, *Customer Service Charter – Communication Strategy Activities*.

<sup>109</sup> Centrelink advised the ANAO that Cascade Business Briefings are a tool of the CEO for providing a single, high-level message to every Centrelink staff member on a regular basis. The content of each briefing is set by the CEO and Centrelink's Leadership Team. The content reflects Centrelink's strategic directions, the wider environment, and the contribution to national agenda as well as specific projects or initiatives that are relevant to achieving Centrelink's strategic goals. Each Business Briefing is launched by the CEO, who briefs all SES officers and sets expectations for each briefing. The CEO's expectations include the requirement for all managers to deliver the briefing in person to the staff who report to them. All SES officers then deliver the same briefing to their respective managers, who in turn deliver this briefing to their staff. In this way the same information 'cascades' to every staff member across the organisation regardless of role, level or geographical location. Each staff member receives their briefing in person from a local manager who can explain the local implications of high-level issues and provide any feedback directly to the CEO and Centrelink Leadership Team.

high and a corporate decision was made to cancel the Cascade Briefing to ensure unnecessary additional requirements were not placed on staff at the same time. Other avenues for advice to staff were used instead.

**3.65** Furthermore, Centrelink advised the ANAO that a Cascade Briefing to staff initiated on 29 January 2007 included information on the Charter.

**3.66** Centrelink's research into cascade briefings indicate that they are an effective way of communicating information to staff,<sup>110</sup> a view echoed by Customer Service Delivery staff during the ANAO's visits to Areas during fieldwork for the audit. As well, an official internal release of the Customer Charter prior to a public release would have increased the likelihood that Centrelink Area and CSC staff would be familiar with the new Customer Charter and be able to communicate the Customer Charter to customers straight away.

**3.67** In summary, the ANAO found that Centrelink publicly launched the Customer Charter officially, which will help to expose the Customer Charter to a wider range of customers. However, an internal launch prior to the public release may have assisted in familiarising Centrelink's staff with the revised Customer Charter, and therefore assisted staff in communicating the Customer Charter and its commitments to customers.

### Principle 3: Maintaining and reviewing a charter

**3.68** The Charter Principles include information on how to maintain and review a charter, including the purpose and frequency of review, consultation with relevant stakeholders in the review process, and ongoing promotion of the charter.

#### Purpose of review

**3.69** The Charter Principles state that 'agencies must regularly review their charter to ensure its ongoing relevance and effectiveness'<sup>111</sup>. The Charter Principles state that the questions to be addressed in reviewing a charter are:

- whether the charter continues to reflect the agency's approach to client service and any significant new initiatives in that area;
- whether the service commitments and standards are still aligned to the needs and priorities of the agency's clients and key stakeholders;

<sup>110</sup> Centrelink, *Cascade Briefing Slide from the Cultural Change Survey*.

<sup>111</sup> Department of Finance and Administration, *Client Service Charter Principles*, June 2000, p. 16.

- whether the charter continues to meet the client service principles;
- whether the current content is accurate (e.g. agency information on function and contact details);
- whether the format design and availability meet client needs;
- whether there is reliable and effective data collection on client feedback, service standards and complaints;
- whether changes should be made to the complaint handling processes. Apart from direct agency/client processes, consider the impact of third party review for unresolved complaints [examples are provided in the Principles].<sup>112</sup>

### *Findings of the previous ANAO audit*

The previous audit found that Centrelink was unable to provide any information to the ANAO outlining what questions were addressed in Centrelink's reviews of its Charter. Therefore it is unknown if the key questions, as listed in the Principles, were actually considered.<sup>113</sup>

### *Findings of the follow-up audit*

**3.70** The ANAO found that Centrelink has addressed the questions from the Charter Principles in the 2005–06 review of the Customer Charter. Centrelink advised the ANAO that the *Client Service Charter Principles* were used as a basis for the review of the Customer Charter. Centrelink sought feedback from staff, customers, community agencies, and Government agencies about the service commitments and standards, as well as the format of the Customer Charter.

**3.71** The ANAO has also found that, as part of the redevelopment of the Customer Charter, Centrelink has addressed certain aspects of their complaints handling system through redeveloping the 'Tell us what you think' card,<sup>114</sup> and referencing the Customer Charter in the new card. Centrelink also re-examined the data available to the organisation to measure the Customer Charter commitments and standards.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> ANAO Audit Report 2004–05 No.32, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

<sup>114</sup> Centrelink, *Tell us what you think comment card*.

<sup>115</sup> Centrelink, *2005/06 Customer Service Charter Review v. 1.9: Charter Review Methodology*, 24 July 2005, p. 1.

## Frequency of review

**3.72** The Charter Principles state that ‘Agencies should review their charter on a regular basis’.<sup>116</sup> The Charter Principles suggest that an agency:

- regularly review its charter internally (an appropriate period might be every 12–18 months);
- may also consider having the charter reviewed by an external body (an appropriate external review period might be every three years).<sup>117</sup>

### *Findings of the previous ANAO audit*

The previous audit found that in regards to the frequency of Centrelink’s reviews of its Customer Charter:

Centrelink’s Charter was internally reviewed more or less annually up to 2002, although the scope and thoroughness of the reviews have varied. Internal reviews in the past few years have not been as comprehensive nor as detailed as those carried out in the early years of Centrelink’s operation. There has been no internal review since April 2002. As well, Centrelink has not provided information on any planned future reviews. Centrelink has not had any independent review undertaken of its Charter.<sup>118</sup>

### *Findings of the follow-up audit*

**3.73** The follow-up audit has found that Centrelink’s latest review of its Customer Charter has been quite comprehensive as discussed above in paragraphs 3.69-3.71, and in paragraphs 3.75-3.80 below.

**3.74** In terms of future planned reviews, Centrelink has advised the ANAO that it is planning to conduct a review 12 months after the release of the revised Customer Charter.<sup>119</sup> Centrelink has also committed to having the Customer Charter reviewed by an external body, stating that: ‘Periodic external and independent reviewing will be included as part of the ongoing process’.<sup>120</sup> However, the details of these reviews have not as yet been determined.

<sup>116</sup> Department of Finance and Administration, *Client Service Charter Principles*, June 2000, p. 16.

<sup>117</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> ANAO Audit Report No.32 2004–05, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

<sup>119</sup> Email from Centrelink to the ANAO, 29 November 2006.

<sup>120</sup> Centrelink, *Customer Charter – Follow-up Audit*, Letter 14 September 2006.

## Consultation in review

3.75 The Charter Principles recommend: 'To be open and accountable, agencies should consult with appropriate clients and stakeholders during the review process'.<sup>121</sup>

### *Findings of the previous ANAO audit*

The previous audit found that Stakeholder groups appear to have been reasonably well represented in Centrelink's internal reviews of its Charter, although the breadth of consultation has been substantially more limited in those reviews undertaken after the first review conducted in 1998.<sup>122</sup>

### *Findings of the follow-up audit*

3.76 The ANAO found that the consultation of stakeholders in Centrelink's latest review of the Customer Charter has been quite comprehensive. Centrelink consulted a number of internal and external stakeholders as part of the redevelopment process, including:

- Centrelink's CEO and Senior Executive Leadership Group;
- Centrelink's Board of Management;<sup>123</sup>
- the Department of Human Services and the Minister for Human Services;
- The Commonwealth Ombudsman;
- The Australian Public Service Commission regarding the use of the Client Service Charter Principles;
- Centrelink's purchasing departments including the Departments of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR); Family and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaSCIA); Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF); Education, Science and Training (DEST);
- Centrelink customers;
- community organisations;

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<sup>121</sup> Department of Finance and Administration, *Client Service Charter Principles*, June 2000, p. 17.

<sup>122</sup> ANAO Audit Report No.32 2004–05, op. cit., p. 42.

<sup>123</sup> The Centrelink Board of Management was abolished upon commencement of amendments to the *Commonwealth Service Delivery Agency Act 1997* on 1 October 2005. A range of internal governance committees have since replaced the Board including a Strategy, Planning and Resources Committee and the Performance Committee.

- Centrelink staff; and
- other agencies, to learn from their experience.<sup>124</sup>

**3.77** Centrelink advised the ANAO that:

Centrelink sought input from community agencies and peak bodies (amongst others) in the development of the Service Charter and in the testing of Service Charter products. The consultation with community agencies that occurred included two waves.<sup>125</sup>

**3.78** The first wave sought initial input to the development of the content of the Service Charter. This included surveying 19 peak body community organisations about type and level of commitments that they considered Centrelink needed to make to its customers and other matters relevant to the development of a robust Service Charter. Multicultural Service Officers (MSOs), Indigenous Customer Service Advisors and others were also asked to contact local community agencies who provided support to each of these customer groups and complete a survey relating to important commitments and other Service Charter content.

**3.79** The second wave of community consultations concerned itself with obtaining commentary and feedback on a draft Service Charter, and included emails to the same 19 peak bodies requesting input and evaluation from them and their members, with further phone and email discussions with 6 of those peak bodies on return of their feedback. There were also specific discussions with the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman.

**3.80** There was also presentation of the new Service Charter to the Participation Reference Group to gather feedback and commentary on the draft products.

**3.81** The 106 responses that were received from the consultation process comprised 100 surveys completed by local community agencies sent in by Area staff, and commentary from 6 of the peak bodies who were responding on behalf of the members they represent.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Centrelink, *2005/06 Customer Service Charter Review v 1.9*, op. cit, p. 6.

<sup>125</sup> Email from Centrelink to the ANAO, 25 January 2007.

<sup>126</sup> *ibid.*

### *Findings of the previous ANAO audit*

The previous audit also found that:

It is not clear how information gathered from Centrelink's own feedback systems ( including its complaints and appeals systems) or from external sources, such as the ombudsman, has been used in reviewing the Charter.<sup>127</sup>

### *Findings of the follow-up audit*

**3.82** Centrelink advised the ANAO at the outset of this audit that:

The review also included an analysis of the information that Centrelink already had from customers and the community to inform the content of the Charter and the commitments that would be made.<sup>128</sup>

**3.83** This other information included that obtained from discussions Centrelink had with:

more than 20 community organisations in our work on outservicing in October - November 2004. While this work was not specifically related to the development of the service charter, it reflected the views of community organisations in Areas West Australia, North Central Victoria, Hunter and East Coast of what they valued about outservicing - Centrelink's delivery of services to those customers who were in circumstances of most disadvantage or at risk of disadvantage.<sup>129</sup>

## **Ongoing promotion**

**3.84** The Charter Principles state that: 'Once the review has been completed and the service charter revised and updated, appropriate methods of promoting the updated charter to clients, stakeholders and staff should be considered'.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> ANAO Audit Report No.32 2004–05, op. cit., p. 42.

<sup>128</sup> Centrelink, *Customer Charter – Follow-up Audit*, Letter 14 September 2006.

<sup>129</sup> Email from Centrelink to the ANAO, 28 November 2006.

<sup>130</sup> Department of Finance and Administration, *Client Service Charter Principles*, June 2000, p. 17.



### *Findings of the previous ANAO audit*

The previous audit found that Centrelink provided wide exposure of the Charter in its offices, websites and publications. However, the promotion appeared to be in the form of written material only. This may prove a barrier to understanding for customers who are illiterate or semi-literate.<sup>131</sup>

### *Findings of the follow-up audit*

**3.85** The ANAO found that Centrelink has developed both an internal and external communication strategy to inform the ongoing promotion of the Customer Charter for staff, customers and stakeholders.

**3.86** The audit team was informed by Centrelink staff during fieldwork visits to Areas that the ongoing promotion of the Customer Charter was very important to ensure that the Customer Charter remained relevant.

**3.87** For the ongoing promotion of the Centrelink Customer Charter amongst staff, Centrelink has committed to:

- update leadership programs, induction and other training packages to include content on the Customer Charter;
- include Customer Charter articles in their internal publication 'People Magazine';
- engage Area Service Delivery Business Managers in the ongoing promotion of the Customer Charter;
- promote the service charter at various Area and nation-wide meetings;
- promote the Service Charter with MSOs and Indigenous Service Officers (ISOs); and
- include service charter messaging in future new initiatives.<sup>132</sup>

**3.88** For the ongoing promotion of the Customer Charter amongst DCALB and Indigenous customers and stakeholders, Centrelink had committed to use the Indigenous Ambassador Program to promote the Customer Charter, conduct presentations with community agencies including those specialising in Indigenous and DCALB customers, promote the Customer Charter through

<sup>131</sup> ANAO Audit Report No.32 2004–05, op. cit., p. 42.

<sup>132</sup> Centrelink, *Customer Service Charter – Communication Strategy Activities*.

Multicultural community radio broadcasts and SBS radio activity, and include Service Charter information in various external customer publications.<sup>133</sup>

## Monitoring and Reporting

**3.89** This section of the Charter Principles informs agencies on what to monitor and how to report on a charter, including monitoring and reporting performance against standards, as well as reporting on clients' complaints and feedback. The ANAO found in the follow-up audit, that Centrelink has largely met the requirements of the Charter Principles in regard to monitoring and reporting. The detailed analysis against this section of the Charter Principles is contained in the next chapter.

## Conclusion

**3.90** Centrelink has closely followed the guidance from the *Client Service Charter Principles* in its latest Customer Charter review, albeit that there are some areas which could be further improved. In addition, Centrelink has addressed many of the ANAO's findings and suggestions from the previous audit report. In developing the revised Customer Charter, Centrelink has also had regard to the then Minister for Human Services 2005–06 Statement of Expectations (and the CEO's response in his Statement of Intent), in particular the inclusion of two standards in the revised Customer Charter around queue times and call centre wait times.

**3.91** Centrelink consulted a wide range of stakeholders during the review of the Charter, and also addressed aspects of the complaints handling system through redeveloping the customer feedback comment card.

**3.92** There have been improvements to the provision of key agency information in the Charter, as well as the format of the Charter and its readability. More information is also provided in the Charter on the specific services offered by Centrelink, as well as a wider range of methods to contact Centrelink.

**3.93** The revised Customer Charter also contains improved information included on customers' rights and responsibilities. More details are provided on how to get a decision reviewed, as well as avenues of complaint available to customers. Contact details for the SSAT, AAT and Commonwealth Ombudsman are provided. Customers are also informed in the revised Charter

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<sup>133</sup> *ibid.*

that their complaints data will be used to improve Centrelink's service delivery.

**3.94** While improvements have been made to the communication of customer rights in both the Customer Charter brochure available at CSCs, and the long version of the Charter on Centrelink's website; the translated version of the Charter on Centrelink's website contains significantly less detail in its description of a customer's avenues of appeal. Given that those who need translations rely on the translated versions, Centrelink could consider providing more detail on the review and appeal mechanisms in future iterations of the translated Charter.

**3.95** In contrast to Centrelink's previous Charter, the revised Charter now includes service standards including both timeliness and quality standards. However two of the timeliness standards do not include a specific time on the service to be delivered and one quality indicator assumes a level of knowledge customers may not possess. This may affect the customer's ability to judge whether the particular service standard has been met.

**3.96** Centrelink has recently released the Charter publicly. The official launch should assist in increasing customer awareness of the Charter, however staff may have benefited from a prior internal launch to ensure their familiarity with the Charter and its content in order to be able to communicate this to customers straight away.

**3.97** Centrelink has also developed ongoing promotion for the Charter. Centrelink has developed external and internal communication strategies that include a number of planned activities for staff, customers, and community groups.

# 4. Monitoring and Reporting of the Customer Charter

*This chapter assesses the Customer Charter against the Charter Principles for monitoring and reporting, including Centrelink’s planned monitoring and reporting for the revised Customer Charter, and Centrelink’s communication strategies. The chapter also examines monitoring of customer awareness of Centrelink’s Customer Charter and its commitments.*

## Principle 4: Monitoring and reporting

**4.1** This section assesses the Customer Charter against Principle 4 of the Charter Principles, including Centrelink’s monitoring of its performance against the Customer Charter and its reporting methods. Table 4.1 shows compliance of Centrelink’s previous and revised Customer Charter against the components of Principle 4.

**Table 4.1**  
**The Customer Charter’s Compliance with Principle 4 of the *Client Service Charter Principles***

Principle	Previous Audit	Follow-up Audit
<b>Principle 4 – Monitoring and reporting</b>		
Monitoring of performance against standards	Partially	Substantially Met
Reporting performance against standards (mandatory)	Partially	Substantially Met
Reporting on client complaints and feedback (mandatory)	Partially	Substantially Met

Source: *Client Service Charter Principles* and ANAO analysis.

## Monitoring of performance against standards

**4.2** The Charter Principles state an agency should publicly account for its operation by publishing its client service charter and information on its compliance with the charter and the agency’s service performance.<sup>134</sup>

<sup>134</sup> Department of Finance and Administration, *Client Service Charter Principles*, June 2000, p. 18.

### *Findings of the previous ANAO audit*

The previous audit found that the Customer Charter did not contain specific service standards. Accordingly, there were no levels of performance specified in its Charter against which Centrelink was able to measure its performance. Questions in the Satisfaction Surveys and other feedback collected by Centrelink<sup>135</sup> provided information that allowed inference about whether Charter commitments were being met but did not constitute explicit monitoring of the agency's performance against its Charter.<sup>136</sup>

### *Findings of the follow-up audit*

**4.3** In the follow-up audit, Centrelink has advised the ANAO that:

Centrelink will measure itself against the standards against each of the commitments and will publish those results quarterly on the Centrelink website, as well as reporting on the Charter performance as part of the Annual Report.<sup>137</sup>

**4.4** Centrelink's customers have indicated that while they saw the inclusion of service standards in the Customer Charter as valuable, the accurate monitoring and reporting of these standards was seen as very important. At a usability lab on the draft revised Customer Charter, customers had a:

Varied reaction to the key performance measures within the Centrelink Customer Charter, with the consensus being that it was good that they were contained within the brochure, though customers may tend to disbelieve the performance figures quoted as soon as they are not met ... This may remain an issue, unless Centrelink is able to include figures which prove a certain level of achievement.<sup>138</sup>

**4.5** Furthermore:

While including [minimum standards] was considered valuable it was stressed that they need to be accurate – if not it was felt that this would impact on the credibility of the whole document. If they are not a 'promise' then this needs to be made very clear.<sup>139</sup>

<sup>135</sup> For example, complaints and compliments and the level of appeals.

<sup>136</sup> ANAO Audit Report No.32 2004–05, op. cit., p. 44.

<sup>137</sup> Centrelink, *Customer Charter – Follow-up Audit*, Letter 14 September 2006

<sup>138</sup> Centrelink, *User Centred Evaluation Report: Service Charter, Review and Appeals Fact Sheet, Complaints and Feedback Factsheet and 'Let us know what you think' customer comment card*, December 5-8 2005, pp. 7–8.

<sup>139</sup> *ibid.*

**4.6** The previous audit report found that the monitoring of the commitments from Centrelink's Customer Charter was confined to a few questions in the Customer Satisfaction Surveys and Centrelink's VCWs.<sup>140</sup> The follow-up audit report notes that Centrelink will also use call centre performance data, complaints handling data, and review and appeals data to assess some of the service standards.

**4.7** The proposed measurement and reporting of the Centrelink Service Charter standards are detailed below in Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2**

**Proposed measurement and reporting of the Centrelink Customer Charter Standards**

Standard	Data Source	Report
1. We will answer 70% of your phone calls within two and a half minutes (you may have to wait longer during our busiest times).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Call Centre performance data (Average Telephone Wait Time)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Balanced Scorecard</li> <li>Call Centre performance report</li> <li>Annual Report</li> <li>Quarterly Centrelink website</li> </ul>
2. We will reduce the time that you wait in the queue when you come in to a Centrelink office.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer Service Centre (CSC) survey (customer perception of wait time)</li> <li>National Survey (customer rating of 'not waiting too long' for service)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer survey reports to Service Delivery Performance Committee (SDPC) and Areas</li> <li>Annual Report</li> <li>Quarterly Centrelink website</li> </ul>
3. If we can't answer your question immediately, we will get back to you within an agreed time.	<b>No current data source:</b> New Customer Survey question/s to be developed. <sup>A</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer survey reports to SDPC and Areas</li> <li>Annual Report (survey result appendix)</li> <li>Quarterly Centrelink website</li> </ul>
4. We will always behave towards you in a way which upholds the Australian Public Service Code of Conduct and the principles of the Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Customer Survey (responses to statements about staff)</li> <li>CSC survey (service attributes)</li> <li>Call Centre survey (service quality; purpose of visit - have a mistake fixed)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Balanced Scorecard (Payment correctness; customer satisfaction with Centrelink services)</li> <li>Operational Scorecard (CCRF indicators service quality; customer satisfaction)</li> <li>Annual Report (customer satisfaction commentary; survey result appendix)</li> <li>Quarterly Centrelink website</li> </ul>

<sup>140</sup> ANAO Audit Report No.32 2004–05, op. cit., pp. 51-52.

Standard	Data Source	Report
5. At all times we will work with you to match Centrelink services and resources to your individual circumstances.	<b>No current data source:</b> New Customer Survey question/s to be developed. <sup>A</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer survey reports to SDPC and Areas</li> <li>Annual Report (survey result appendix)</li> <li>Quarterly Centrelink website</li> </ul>
6. We will work with you to resolve any complaint as early as possible but we may take up to 5 working days to answer more complicated complaints.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer Relations Unit (complaints data)</li> <li>National Survey (feedback and complaint handling)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Balanced Scorecard - complaint resolution (tier 1, 2, 3 timeliness).</li> <li>Monthly performance report to SDPC and Areas</li> <li>Customer survey reports</li> <li>Annual Report</li> <li>Quarterly Centrelink website</li> </ul>
7. We will clearly explain our decisions to you and tell you about your rights and responsibilities and what you need to do.	National Customer Survey (awareness of rights; staff explanation of rights and obligations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer survey reports to SDPC and Areas</li> <li>Annual Report (survey result appendix)</li> <li>Quarterly Centrelink website</li> </ul>
8. When you ask us to review a decision we have made, we will tell you about the result in writing within 28 working days. <sup>B</sup>	Review and Appeals (Legal Services)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Balanced Scorecard - review timeliness (policy department measure)</li> <li>Annual Report</li> <li>Quarterly Centrelink website</li> </ul>

Notes: A Centrelink advised the ANAO on 29 March 2007 that customer satisfaction survey questions have now been developed.

B This standard now reads 'When you ask an Authorised Review Officer to review a decision we have made, the Authorised Review Officer will tell you about the result in writing in 28 days'.

Source: Centrelink, *Centrelink's Customer Service Charter*, Attachment A.

### Survey data

**4.8** The previous audit report stated the following on the measurement of the service standards in Centrelink's satisfaction surveys: 'there is very little depth of analysis of the Customer Charter commitments in the surveys or follow-up questions on reasons for customer dissatisfaction'.<sup>141</sup>

**4.9** Centrelink has proposed a number of new questions be added to its surveys of both staff and customers in order to assess their awareness of the

<sup>141</sup> *ibid.*, p. 52.

Customer Charter and its commitments. For customers the following questions will be added to the Call Centre and the CSC Customer Satisfaction Surveys.<sup>142</sup>

### Figure 4.1

#### New Customer Satisfaction Survey questions

Q42. Organisations often have a 'charter' that describe the level of service they will deliver for customers. This can include how you should be treated and how your issues should be dealt with. Are you aware that Centrelink has service commitments for how it should deal with customers? [Y/N]

Q43. How important is it to you that Centrelink has made these service commitments to its customers? [Scale: Very Important to Very Unimportant]

Q44a. Based on your experiences dealing with Centrelink, would you agree or disagree with the following statements: Centrelink always gets back to me within an agreed time if they can't answer my questions immediately. [Scale: Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree]

Q44b. Centrelink staff work with me to match Centrelink services and resources to my individual circumstances. [Scale: Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree]

Q44c. Centrelink staff always clearly explain their decisions to me. [Scale: Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree]

Q44d. Centrelink staff always tell me about my rights and responsibilities so that I know what I need to do. [Scale: Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree]

Source: Centrelink, Customer Service Centre (CSC) Customer Satisfaction Survey 2006 Questionnaire, pp. 10-12.

**4.10** The new questions Centrelink is adding to the Customer Satisfaction Survey may provide some indication of whether a particular standard has been met. However, the ANAO considers that, to address instances where customers' responses indicate they do not consider a standard has been met, there would be benefit in including questions that ask them the reasons why they hold this view.

**4.11** In addition, using the Customer Satisfaction Surveys as the primary method of monitoring the service standards relies heavily on the reliability of the data from one source. This is discussed further in paragraph 4.16.

**4.12** Centrelink advised the ANAO on 29 March that it has added an extra three questions to the staff poll, namely 'I understand the purpose of Centrelink Service Charter', 'I understand how the Centrelink Customer Charter applies to my work', and 'I inform customers about the content of the Centrelink Customer Charter'. The last question is measured in two ways – the

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<sup>142</sup> A rolling annual telephone survey of Centrelink customers who have visited a Customer Service Centre.



importance placed on this advice by staff and the frequency of staff advising customers.

**4.13** Questions that assess the respondent's understanding, as in the first two staff poll questions mentioned above, may provide an inflation of positive ratings, as mentioned in the ANAO's previous report on Centrelink's Customer Satisfaction Surveys:

As currently phrased, the question is placing the emphasis on the customer's own capacity to understand what he/she has been told ... This is likely to lead to bias through an inflation of the positive ratings, since a negative response is a confession of the customer's own poor, or very poor, understanding of the information.<sup>143</sup>

**4.14** Similar findings may apply to the last two questions, namely 'I inform customers...'. A negative response may be seen as a confession from a staff member that he/she has not properly carried out his/her duties.

**4.15** Centrelink provided the following advice regarding the measurement of the standards in the Customer Charter:

The Service Charter has been embedded in the organisation's measurement, reporting and resolution framework, with links established between the Charter and Centrelink's Strategic Directions and Themes, and the Balanced Scorecard.<sup>144</sup>

**4.16** However, Table 4.2 illustrates that Centrelink will still rely heavily on the data from both the Call Centre and the CSC Customer Satisfaction Surveys in order to assess the whether the service standards have been met. The ANAO suggests that Centrelink could include a wider range of existing customer feedback data in the monitoring of the service standards. For example, Centrelink CSCs currently manually record queue times for individual Centrelink offices on Centrelink's intranet.<sup>145</sup> This data could be used to monitor the service standard on queue times in addition to the Customer Satisfaction Survey questions regarding the customers' perceptions of wait times.

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<sup>143</sup> ANAO Audit Report No.33 2004–05, op. cit., p. 82.

<sup>144</sup> Centrelink, *Customer Charter – Follow-up Audit*, Letter 14 September 2006.

<sup>145</sup> Centrelink, Customer Service Delivery Division, Managing Queues: Recording Queue Wait Times. <[http://centrenet/homepage/divcsdel/brsdc/queue/managing\\_queues.htm](http://centrenet/homepage/divcsdel/brsdc/queue/managing_queues.htm)> [Accessed 7 November 2006].

**4.17** In response to issues papers from this audit, Centrelink informed the ANAO that:

Centrelink currently does use the Customer Survey data to drive service improvement through a variety of methods, including reporting to the Executive on new and emerging trends and also through highlighting emerging issues and lower performance to the Network (by CSC, Area and Business Line level). Centrelink also uses additional data to supplement the survey questions, and to provide greater information for analysis of issues, and has other options and sources of data for following up any emerging issues and to better understand the reasons for customer dissatisfaction.<sup>146</sup>

### **Reporting performance against standards (mandatory)**

**4.18** The Charter Principles require that 'agencies are accountable for their performance against their service charter standards'<sup>147</sup>. In addition to stating that it is a requirement for agencies to publish performance against charter commitments in their annual report each year, the Charter Principles note that agencies could also consider developing a strategy to report on performance against the charter standards to clients, staff and stakeholders.<sup>148</sup>

#### *Findings of the previous ANAO audit*

The ANAO found that reporting on the Charter provided in Centrelink's annual reports met the requirements specified in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet's guidelines, *Requirements for Departmental Annual Reports* ... However, there was no reporting against specific standards as none were included in Centrelink's Charter. No Charter performance information was included in Centrelink's internal performance reporting such as the Balanced Scorecard. There was also no reporting on Charter performance directly to clients, customers and/or staff.<sup>149</sup>

#### *Findings of the follow-up audit*

**4.19** Centrelink has advised the ANAO that:

...all but two of the 8 service standards in the customer service charter are currently reported separately within the Annual Report and within the Balanced Scorecard but not as standards of the service charter.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Centrelink, *Follow-up Audit of Centrelink's Customer Service Charter*, Letter 18 January 2007.

<sup>147</sup> Department of Finance and Administration, *Client Service Charter Principles*, June 2000, p. 18.

<sup>148</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> ANAO Audit Report No.32 2004–05, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

<sup>150</sup> Centrelink, *Strategic Internal Communication Plan: Customer Charter*, 21 August 2006, p. 2.

**4.20** Centrelink has proposed two internal reporting mechanisms for the Customer Charter:

On 30 April 2006, the CEO was briefed on the proposed Service Charter reporting and monitoring regime – publishing results via the Balanced Scorecard tool and the bimonthly reference of outcomes and analysis to the Service Delivery Performance Committee.<sup>151</sup>

**4.21** Centrelink will also further develop the reporting of the standards in the Balanced Scorecard:

Data is currently collected and reported for most Service Charter standards, but reporting is dispersed under a variety of Performance Indicators in the Balanced Scorecard. Of significance, current reporting measures reflecting some aspects of the Service Charter standards can appear under either the Strategic Balanced Scorecard or the Operational Scorecard.<sup>152</sup>

The 2006/07 Strategic Balanced Scorecard is being reviewed by the People and Planning Division (PPD). We have raised the issue of Service Charter reporting, our desire being to have Service Charter outcomes clearly identified and aggregated at the strategic reporting level.<sup>153</sup>

**4.22** In terms of external reporting, Centrelink has stated:

A new opportunity has arisen recently to suggest that external performance reporting of the Service Charter Standards should be published on Centrelink's website in line with other public service organisations' practice (e.g. Medicare and ATO). The minister has recently requested Centrelink to publish its Call Centre wait times against the standards on the Net.<sup>154</sup>

**4.23** An existing example of good external reporting against Charter standards relates to Medicare Australia's Charter. On the Service Charter section of Medicare Australia's website there are a number of subheadings, including 'Our promises to you' containing the Charter and supporting information; 'How we measure our performance' and 'How you can give us feedback'.

**4.24** Under the heading 'How we measure our performance', against each of the commitments in the Charter, is a list of ways in which Medicare Australia

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<sup>151</sup> Centrelink, *Positioning the Customer Service Charter in Centrelink's Strategic Framework and Creation of Service Standards*, p. 1.

<sup>152</sup> *ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>153</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> *ibid.* p. 1.

will meet these commitments. Each item in the list hyperlinks to further information on how Medicare Australia has measured its performance against these commitments, the results of the monitoring, or further information on where and when these results will be available.

**4.25** The ANAO notes that Centrelink now plans to report information on the agency's performance against the commitments in its Charter externally on its website, in line with the practice of other public service agencies such as the ATO and Medicare Australia.

## **Reporting on client complaints and feedback (mandatory)**

**4.26** It is mandatory for agencies 'to have a strategy to manage and report on feedback and complaints'.<sup>155</sup> This includes publishing a summary, with reference to complaints data, and the department's general response to complaints, in the annual report.<sup>156</sup>

### *Findings of the previous ANAO audit*

The previous audit report found that mandatory information on customers' complaints and feedback was included in Centrelink's annual report. However, the commitments in the Charter were not explicitly linked to any customer feedback or satisfaction initiatives. Therefore, Centrelink did not use the Customer Charter to help drive improvements to customer service.<sup>157</sup>

### *Findings of the follow-up audit*

**4.27** Centrelink's review of the Customer Charter aimed to embed the Customer Charter within Centrelink's Strategic Framework:

While Charter service delivery attributes have been routinely reported over the years (primarily via the result of customer responses to customer satisfaction survey questions), the Charter itself has not been used as a primary driver for identifying opportunities for service improvement.

...

Through the impetus of the Charter service commitments, monitoring and reporting of achievements can provide a strong driver for service improvement responses can be assessed and acted upon, both at the national and local level.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Department of Finance and Administration, *Client Service Charter Principles*, June 2000, p. 18.

<sup>156</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 18–19.

<sup>157</sup> ANAO Audit Report No.32 2004–05, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

<sup>158</sup> Centrelink, *Strategic Positioning of the Charter*, pp. 2–4.

**4.28** The JCPAA also noted in its report on the ANAO's Customer Feedback Systems in Centrelink series of audits:

The ANAO concluded that, while Centrelink had a range of systems for gathering, measuring, reporting and responding to customer feedback, there was no overarching system for bringing all of this information together in a systematic way, to better inform Centrelink of opportunities for service delivery improvement.<sup>159</sup>

**4.29** Centrelink has advised the ANAO that the revised Service Charter has links with Centrelink's Strategic Directions and Themes, and the Balanced Scorecard.<sup>160</sup> However, Centrelink has identified that there are currently few linkages between the Customer Charter and its strategic documents, and that more work needs to be done to strengthen these linkages:

- While the Business Plan refers to the Service Charter, it does not elaborate on the service commitments made or the implications of those commitments for Centrelink in the planning or business context.
- The current Strategic Directions are silent on the Service Charter and, particularly, there is a lack of a clear focus on the range of commitments we make to our customers.
- The 2006/07 Strategic Priorities capture some, but not all, of the themes covered by the Service Charter commitments. Those that are captured are dispersed across different priorities and are not linked to the Service Charter per se.<sup>161</sup>

**4.30** The ANAO notes that Centrelink continues to report mandatory information on customers' complaints and feedback in its annual report.

## Conclusion

**4.31** Centrelink has proposed that the agency's performance against its Customer Charter standards will primarily be measured through the agency's programme of Customer Satisfaction Surveys, supplemented by call centre performance data, complaints handling system data and review and appeals data.

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<sup>159</sup> JCPAA, *Report 407: Review of Auditor General's Reports tabled between 18 January and 18 April 2005*, p. 91.

<sup>160</sup> Centrelink, *Customer Charter – Follow-up Audit*, Letter 14 September 2006

<sup>161</sup> Centrelink, *Positioning the Customer Service Charter in Centrelink's Strategic Framework and Creation of Service Standards*, pp. 2–3.

**4.32** New questions Centrelink is adding to the Customer Satisfaction Survey may provide some indication of whether a particular standard has been met. However, the ANAO considers that, to address instances where customers' responses indicate they do not consider a standard has been met, there would be benefit in including questions that ask them the reasons why they hold this view.

**4.33** In addition, using the Customer Satisfaction Surveys as the primary method of monitoring the service standards relies heavily on the reliability of the data from one source. The ANAO suggests that there would be benefit in Centrelink using a wider range of existing feedback data to measure the standards.

**4.34** The ANAO supports Centrelink's planned reporting of the agency's performance against the revised Customer Charter's service standards on a quarterly basis on the Centrelink website, although the ANAO notes that the quarterly reporting template is currently still under development.

## Monitoring the effectiveness of Centrelink's Customer Charter

### Awareness of the Customer Charter

#### *Findings of the previous audit*

The previous audit found that there was a low awareness of the Customer Charter, particularly for vulnerable customers.<sup>162</sup>

As well, limited resources had been made available to improve customer awareness of the Charter. In particular, the Charter was not very accessible to vulnerable groups, such as illiterate or semi-literate customers.<sup>163</sup>

#### *Findings of the follow-up audit*

**4.35** Customer's low awareness of the Customer Charter is still an issue for Centrelink. Centrelink's National Customer Satisfaction Survey reported in 2005 that only 30 per cent of customers were aware of the Customer Charter.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Vulnerable customers may include those customers who are homeless, have a drug or alcohol dependency, have low levels of literacy or numeracy, have a mental health condition, are Indigenous and/or come from a diverse cultural and linguistic background.

<sup>163</sup> ANAO Audit Report No.32 2004–05, op. cit., p. 50.

<sup>164</sup> DBM Consultants, *Centrelink National Customer Survey, Wave 14, Final Report*, December 2005, p. 10.

**4.36** Centrelink advised the ANAO that:

Since the release of the new Charter Centrelink had conducted another survey of customers in October which shows an improvement, with the latest results for customer awareness at 53.8%. Considering this is just after the launch of the new product it is expected that this will increase. In addition a revised 'placemat' for staff will be distributed soon and all staff will have displayed on their desks and facing customers – this will help to increase awareness of customers and allow staff to promote the Charter and the commitments made to customers.<sup>165</sup>

**4.37** The VCWs conducted by Centrelink as part of the Customer Charter consultation process, also illustrated that customers were still generally unaware of Centrelink's Customer Charter. Despite 91 per cent of customers indicating it was important for Centrelink to have a Customer Charter and 96 per cent indicating it was important that Centrelink customers are aware of the Customer Charter, only 36 per cent of customers said they were aware that Centrelink has a Customer Charter.

**4.38** The ANAO found that as part of the redevelopment process for the Customer Charter, Centrelink has devised both internal and external communication strategies to promote awareness of the Customer Charter and its commitments to staff, customers and other stakeholders.

**4.39** According to Centrelink:

The Communication Strategy associated with the Charter will enable Centrelink to strengthen its customer focus. The strategy particularly addresses promotion and awareness of the Service Charter amongst DCALB, Indigenous and vulnerable customers.<sup>166</sup>

**4.40** As mentioned in paragraph 3.88, Centrelink has developed a strategy for the ongoing external promotion of the Customer Charter. Centrelink has planned a number of activities with community agencies, as well as Centrelink ISOs and MSOs. The Customer Charter will also be referenced in some of Centrelink's community and customer publications.

**4.41** At the VCWs, customer feedback was sought on when customers should receive the Customer Charter, as well as ideas on how the Customer

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<sup>165</sup> Centrelink, *Follow-up Audit of Centrelink's Customer Service Charter*, Letter 18 January 2007.

<sup>166</sup> Centrelink, Submission No. 5 to the JCPAA, *Review of Auditor General's Reports (Audit Reports tabled between 18 January and 18 April 2005)*, 26 May 2006, p. 2.



Charter could be publicised and promoted to the public.<sup>167</sup> Customers at the usability lab were asked when they would like to initially receive the Customer Charter.<sup>168</sup> Customers and community groups (through the surveys) were also asked when they would like to receive the Customer Charter, how they would like to access the Customer Charter and if they had suggestions for improving customer or community awareness of the Customer Charter.<sup>169</sup>

**4.42** The ANAO has found that Centrelink has undertaken a more thorough analysis of customer awareness and understanding of the Customer Charter during the recent review. Customers were consulted during the review through a usability lab, VCWs, and through surveys.

## **Access to the Customer Charter on the website**

### *Findings of the previous ANAO audit*

The previous audit report raised the following issue regarding the access of Centrelink's Customer Charter on its website:

There are also issues regarding the way in which the Charter can be accessed by customers through other channels. For example, the Charter does not appear on the homepage of the external Centrelink website, and it then takes several mouse clicks to find where it is located. Finding the Charter on the website assumes knowledge of the existence of the Charter, and a few guesses about where it might be logically located.<sup>170</sup>

### *Findings of the follow-up audit*

**4.43** The ANAO found that Centrelink has improved the access to its Customer Charter on its website. On the home page of Centrelink's website, there are now two ways in which to access the Customer Charter. There is a link entitled 'Customer Service including charter and complaints'.<sup>171</sup> Clicking on this link will take the customer to a section on Centrelink's Customer Service, which includes a link entitled 'Centrelink Customer Charter'.<sup>172</sup>

**4.44** Alternatively, there is a direct link from Centrelink's home page entitled 'the Customer Charter'. The Customer Charter heading from both

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<sup>167</sup> Centrelink National Value Creation Team, *Customer Charter Value Creation Workshops: Consolidated Report*, August 2005, pp. 11, 24, 37.

<sup>168</sup> Centrelink, *User Centred Evaluation Report: Service Charter, Review and Appeals Fact Sheet, Complaints and Feedback Factsheet and 'Let us know what you think' customer comment card*, December 5–8 2005, p. 16.

<sup>169</sup> Centrelink, *Community/Customer/Staff Questionnaire – 2005 Review of Centrelink's Customer Charter*.

<sup>170</sup> ANAO Audit Report No.32 2004–05, op. cit., p. 49.

<sup>171</sup> <<http://www.centrelink.gov.au>> [accessed 20 November 2006].

<sup>172</sup> <[http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/about\\_us/service.htm](http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/about_us/service.htm)> [accessed 20 November 2006].



Centrelink's homepage and the Customer Service page links to a web page with the long version of the Customer Charter, including PDF and RTF copies of the long version of the Customer Charter, and a link to the translated versions of the Customer Charter.<sup>173</sup>

## Access to the Customer Charter for illiterate and semi-literate customers

### *Finding of the previous ANAO audit*

The previous audit found that:

Centrelink provides wide exposure of the Charter in its offices, websites and publications. However, the promotion appears to be in the form of written material only. This may prove a barrier to understanding for customers who are illiterate or semi-literate.<sup>174</sup>

### *Findings of the follow-up audit*

**4.45** Centrelink has recognised the issue of communicating the Customer Charter to illiterate and semi-literate customers, and more widely to Centrelink's vulnerable customers. The business objectives in the external communication strategy for the Customer Charter includes increasing awareness and understanding of the Customer Charter for vulnerable and at risk customers.<sup>175</sup>

**4.46** As part of the communication strategy, Centrelink has planned activities with community groups, in the expectation that they will in turn communicate the Customer Charter to vulnerable customers.<sup>176</sup> In addition, Centrelink will include Customer Charter material in Indigenous and multicultural publications to communicate and facilitate understanding of the Customer Charter with those groups.<sup>177</sup>

**4.47** Centrelink has also developed a video broadcast of key Customer Charter information to be played on the televisions in the CSC waiting rooms. This will assist in communicating the Customer Charter messages to customers, including customers with literacy difficulties.<sup>178</sup>

<sup>173</sup> <[http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/about\\_us/customer\\_charter.htm](http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/about_us/customer_charter.htm)> [accessed 20 November 2006].

<sup>174</sup> ANAO Audit Report No.32 2004–05, op. cit., p. 42.

<sup>175</sup> Centrelink, *Marketing Communication Strategy Framework*, 3 July 2006, p. 2.

<sup>176</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 3–4.

<sup>177</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 3–4.

<sup>178</sup> Centrelink, *'Front of House' Video: Charter*, November 2006.

## Awareness of Customer Charter Commitments

### *Findings of the previous ANAO audit*

The previous audit found that customers had a low level of awareness of the Charter commitments. This included a lack of knowledge of their rights and the appeals process, as well as of the other feedback mechanisms available.<sup>179</sup>

### *Findings of the follow-up audit*

**4.48** Customers' awareness of the Customer Charter commitments is still low. At the VCWs conducted as part of the customer consultation process for the Customer Charter review it was found that:

- 84% of customers either did not know or were unsure about Centrelink's commitments/promises regarding customer service;
- 66% of customer either did not know or were unsure about their rights as Centrelink's customers and
- 79% of customers either did not know or were unsure about Centrelink's commitments/promises regarding customers' access to services.<sup>180</sup>

**4.49** The Customer Charter, as Centrelink's primary service offer, is an important tool to make customers aware of their rights. Another ANAO audit report in the Customer Feedback series, on Centrelink's Review and Appeals System, found that customers tended to be more aware of their obligations than their rights:

Value Creation Workshops (VCW) data show that customers believed that their obligations were more clearly explained to them by Centrelink staff than were their rights. These data indicate that there is an issue with the effectiveness of Centrelink's communication to its customers regarding their rights.<sup>181</sup>

**4.50** The results from the consolidated report on the VCWs held to consult on the Customer Charter identified that this was still an issue for customers, with only 34 per cent of the customers participating in the VCWs aware of their rights.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> ANAO Audit Report No.32 2004–05, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>180</sup> Centrelink National Value Creation Team, *Customer Charter Value Creation Workshops: Consolidated Report*, August 2005, p. 9.

<sup>181</sup> ANAO Audit Report No.35 2004–05, op. cit., p. 57.

<sup>182</sup> Centrelink National Value Creation Team, *Customer Charter Value Creation Workshops: Consolidated Report*, August 2005, p. 20.

**4.51** In response to the draft report from this audit, Centrelink advised the ANAO that:

Since the release of the new Charter, Centrelink has conducted another [Customer Satisfaction] survey of customers in October which shows an improvement, with the latest results for customer awareness at 53.8%. Considering this is just after the launch of the new product it is expected that this will increase.<sup>183</sup>

**4.52** Centrelink has in place an external communication strategy to increase awareness of the Customer Charter amongst customers with a special focus on DCALB and Indigenous customers. However, given that the detailed version of the Customer Charter commitments and standards are included only in the long version of the Customer Charter, which is to be included on Centrelink's website only, this may prove an obstacle for customers without internet access to become familiar with the Customer Charter commitments and standards.

**4.53** The Customer Charter brochure, available at Centrelink CSCs, does make reference to the standard of service and the long version of the Customer Charter:

This Service Charter summarises the standard of service you can expect from us, your responsibilities as a Centrelink customer, what to do if you are unhappy with the services you received and how to contact us. We also have a detailed Service Charter that you can get by contacting us or visiting our website at [www.centrelink.gov.au](http://www.centrelink.gov.au).<sup>184</sup>

**4.54** However, the ANAO suggests that at a minimum, future iterations of the Customer Charter brochure should include an explicit reference to the existence of service standards in the long version of the Customer Charter. In response to this suggestion, Centrelink advised the ANAO on 18 January 2007 that the standards will be included in future reprinting of the Customer Charter brochure.

## Conclusion

**4.55** The 2004–05 ANAO audit identified that there was low customer awareness of the Customer Charter and its content, particularly amongst vulnerable customers. This remains an issue for Centrelink. Centrelink has

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<sup>183</sup> Centrelink, *Performance Audit – Centrelink's Customer Charter Follow-up Audit*, Letter 29 March 2007.

<sup>184</sup> Centrelink, *What you can expect from Centrelink: The Customer Service Charter at a glance*, p. 1.

developed an external communication strategy with a special focus on vulnerable customers in order to address this issue.

**4.56** As part of the external communication strategy, Centrelink has a number of planned activities with community agencies, MSOs and ISOs, as well as including information in multicultural and Indigenous publications. They have also developed an audio-visual method of communicating the Customer Charter to vulnerable customers, especially important for illiterate and semi-literate customers.

**4.57** Centrelink has improved access to the Customer Charter on the agency's website and has conducted more thorough research into customer awareness of the Customer Charter and methods of communicating the Customer Charter and its content to customers.

**4.58** The ANAO notes, however, that the long version of the Customer Charter (the only version of the Charter that sets out Centrelink's service commitments and standards) is only available on Centrelink's website. The ANAO considers that this may be a barrier to some customers accessing and understanding the commitments and standards, especially those considered at risk or vulnerable. Accordingly, the ANAO suggested to Centrelink that, at a minimum, the agency should make explicit reference to the standards in future iterations of the Customer Charter brochure available at CSCs. In response, Centrelink advised the ANAO in January 2007 that the standards will be included in future versions of the brochure.

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Ian McPhee  
Auditor-General

Canberra ACT  
18 April 2007

# Appendices



## Appendix 1: Centrelink's Response

Centrelink would like to thank the Australian National Audit Office for the draft Section 19 Report to the follow-up performance audit on Centrelink's Customer Charter. I have appreciated the professionalism shown by ANAO's management and staff in the conduct of this audit.

I am pleased that the Report recognises the hard work that Centrelink undertook to make sure that we responded to and addressed the recommendations from the previous Audit, in particular:

- ensuring the new Customer Service Charter met all the recommended elements of the Australian Government's *Client Service Charter Principles*;
- working with customers (including Indigenous, Multicultural and those in disadvantaged and at risk circumstances) to help determine which commitments were important to them and to guide the design of the Charter products and how it could be promoted;
- widespread consultations held with community agencies (which support customers) and peak community bodies to seek their input and assistance in identifying the critical elements of a Centrelink Customer Charter;
- changes to the Centrelink website to ensure easy and ready access to information about the Charter from the home page;
- the commitment to report regularly against each of the commitments; and
- the public launch by the Minister.

I welcome the additional suggestions that ANAO has made in the report, and I am pleased to note that Centrelink has already put in place several of these suggestions, namely:

- the standard relating to reviewing a decision has been amended and is already available on the website and in other internal documents; and
- Centrelink is reporting quarterly against the standards on the Centrelink website.

In addition Centrelink will be incorporating the other suggestions into its project plan and activities for its next review of the Customer Service Charter, specifically:

- the actual standards will be included in the future versions of the Customer Service Charter brochure available at CSCs;

- information about the Ombudsman will be included in the future versions of the Customer Service Charter brochure available at CSCs;
- the ANAO's suggestion about staff confusion with the new arrangements will be considered when communicating to staff as part of future reviews of customer products; and
- an additional question will be included in the Customer Satisfaction Survey, for those customers who indicate they do not consider a standard has been met, to them why they hold this view.

In addition Centrelink agrees that at a time when we do get the technology to measure and report on queue wait times accurately, then we would reconsider this as part of a review of the Service Charter and its commitments/standards.



## Appendix 2: The Uhrig Review

Mr John Uhrig AC was appointed in November 2002 by the Australian Government to conduct a review of the corporate governance of Commonwealth statutory authorities and office holders. The objective of the review was to identify issues surrounding existing governance arrangements and to provide options for Government to improve the performance and get the best from statutory authorities and office holders, and their accountability frameworks.<sup>185</sup>

One of the recommendations of the review was that:

The Government should clarify expectations of statutory authorities by Ministers issuing Statements of Expectations to statutory authorities; by statutory authorities responding with Statements of Intent for approval by Ministers; and by Ministers making public Statements of Expectations and Intent.<sup>186</sup>

The Australian Government's response to the Uhrig Review stated:

The Australian Government has endorsed the governance principles and templates developed by Mr Uhrig and as a result Ministers will assess statutory authorities and other bodies within their portfolios against these principles. All portfolio bodies, of which there are around 170, including those which have regulatory functions, will be assessed by Ministers and any necessary improvements implemented. The Government will clarify its expectations of statutory authorities by issuing public Statements of Expectations and authorities will respond with Statements of Intent. These measures will give clients greater certainty in their dealings with agencies and greater confidence to raise issues of concern.<sup>187</sup>

In his Statement of Expectation to Centrelink, the then Minister for Human Services identified a number of areas in which Centrelink could improve its service delivery:

In particular, within the context of government policy and legislation, I expect you to improve customer service by reducing:

- the number of times customers need to visit Customer Service Centres;

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<sup>185</sup> Department of Finance and Administration, *Review of the Corporate Governance of Statutory Authorities and Office Holders*, <<http://www.finance.gov.au/governancestructures>> [accessed 6 June 2006].

<sup>186</sup> Department of Finance and Administration, *Review of the Corporate Governance of Statutory Authorities and Office Holders: Executive Summary*, <[http://www.finance.gov.au/governancestructures/corporate\\_governance\\_report.html#ThePrinciples](http://www.finance.gov.au/governancestructures/corporate_governance_report.html#ThePrinciples)> [accessed 6 June 2006].

<sup>187</sup> Minister for Finance and Administration, Media Release 57/04: *Australian Government Response to the Uhrig Report*, <[http://www.financeminister.gov.au/media/2004/mr\\_5704.html](http://www.financeminister.gov.au/media/2004/mr_5704.html)> [accessed 27 June 2006].

- the time customers wait for services, either in offices or on the phone; and
- the complexity of and repetition across forms and the time that customers and other parties spend completing forms.
- In 2004–05, the average time that customers spent in a queue on their last visit to Centrelink was approximately 15 minutes and the average time waiting on a telephone call being answered was around 190 seconds. I expect you to make marked improvements in both these waiting times.<sup>188</sup>

In addition, the then Minister specified that Centrelink develop performance indicators and appropriate targets, including those for service challenges, in consultation with the Secretary of Human Services.<sup>189</sup>

The CEO of Centrelink responded to the then Minister’s Statement of Expectations with a Statement of Intent agreeing to address the service challenges, stating:

I am redeveloping the Customer Charter, and it will support Centrelink customers and staff as they work to resolve matters of concern quickly and seamlessly.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> The Hon. Joe Hockey MP, Minister for Human Services, *Statement of Expectations to CEO, Centrelink*, 27 October 2005, pp. 2–3.

<sup>189</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>190</sup> CEO, Centrelink; *Centrelink Statement of Intent*, 16 December 2005.

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