

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES, CALL CENTRES, DELAYS

1392. Hon. C.L. Edwardes to the Minister for Public Sector Management

I refer to new reports about delays being experienced by members of the community in being attended to by call centres and ask: -

- (a) which Government departments use call centres;
- (b) how long have they been using them;
- (c) what measurement do they have on the success of these call centres;
- (d) what is the annual cost to each of the departments using call centres;
- (e) what is the basis of the contracts for the use of these call centres;
- (f) which departments still operate on the basis that a person (as distinct from a recorded message) still answers the phone to an incoming call;
- (g) is the Minister aware of any complaints about call centres;
- (h) if so, what action does he propose to take to ensure that the service to the community is improved; and
- (i) if not, will the Minister investigate this matter as a priority and report back to the House?

Dr G.I. GALLOP replied:

I am advised that:

Premier; Minister for Public Sector Management; Federal Affairs; Science; Citizenship and Multicultural Interest:

I am advised that :

Department of the Premier and Cabinet

- (a) Call centres are not used in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.
- (b)-(i) Not applicable.

Anti-Corruption Commission

The Anti-Corruption Commission has provided the following information:

- (a) Anti-Corruption Commission does not use call centres.
- (b)-(i) Not applicable.

Governor's Establishment

- (a)-(i) Not applicable to the Governor's Establishment

Office of the Public Sector Standards Commissioner

The Commissioner for Public Sector Standards advises as follows:

- (a) Nil – this Office does not have a call centre.
- (b)-(e) Not applicable.
- (f) Calls to this office are answered by a person.
- (g)-(i) Not applicable.

Deputy Premier; Treasurer; Minister for Energy:

Office of Gas Access Regulation

- (a)-(i) Not applicable

Department of Treasury and Finance

- (a) The Office of State Revenue operates an in-house telephone team to answer calls in relation to general taxation and grant enquiries. The Office of the Auditor General has categorised this as a call centre for the purposes of its recent examination. The phones are operated by revenue officers who are rotated out of their assessing teams on to the phones to deal specifically with

phone calls. In all, around 50 officers are rotated on a weekly roster basis forming, at any one time, a telephone team of up to 11 officers. The department does not consider this a “call centre” in the usual sense;

- (b) Since 1999/2000;
- (c) No formal measurement mechanism exists. However, this mode of operation was chosen to avoid interruptions to officers undertaking assessing duties, and to ensure that by rotating, officers are not constantly having to deal with phone enquiries, some of which can be abusive. Overall, this is considered to provide a better level of service to customers and better conditions for staff;
- (d) No annual cost figure is available. The unique nature of the telephone team makes the tracking of costs specific to phone duties very difficult. This is especially so where officers take post-call work (unresolved work items) generated from phone calls back into their assessing teams when their rotation ends;
- (e) No contract exists as the function is performed in-house;
- (f) With one minor exception where interactive voice response is used, when a person connects to the department, they speak to a person rather than being directed through a push button menu;
- (g) No;
- (h)-(i) Not applicable.

Western Power Corporation

- (a) Western Power
- (b) 18 years
- (c) Western Power Customer Charter Performance Indicators
- (d) \$6.2 million
- (e) Western Power Owned – no contract to external providers
- (f) Western Power is a multimedia Contact Centre and makes/receives contact via voice, email, efax, and web using both Customer Service Representatives and Interactive Voice Response (IVR) messaging.
- (g) Some country callers preferred the arrangements in place before the establishment of the Call Centre whereby the customer could directly contact Western Power depots. Streamlining calls through the call centre enables grouping and prioritisation of fault jobs and frees up depot staff to undertake restoration work.
- (h) Western Power’s Call Centre is under continuous development to deliver ongoing improvements in offerings and delivery
- (i) N/A

Office of Energy

- (a) The Sustainable Energy Development Office within the Office of Energy contracts with a small business to provide a telephone information service on becoming more energy efficient and using renewable energy;
- (b) The telephone information service has been operating since 1997;
- (c) The success of the service is measured by monitoring monthly call volumes and topics of enquiry. In addition, quarterly customer satisfaction surveys are used;
- (d) The cost in 2001/02 was \$64, 000. For 2002/03 the estimated cost is \$55, 000;
- (e) The cost of operating the service is on a per hour basis;
- (f) The Office of Energy’s switchboard (main contact number) is operated by a person to answer incoming calls. There is no recorded message during normal office hours;
- (g) No complaints have been received in relation to the telephone information service; and
- (h)-(i) N/A

Office of the Auditor General

- (a) The Office of the Auditor General does not have a call centre.
- (b)-(i) Not applicable

Office of the Native Title

- (a) The Office of Native Title does not have a call centre.
- (b)-(i) Not applicable

WA Treasury Corporation

- (a) The WA Treasury Corporation does not use call centres.
- (b)-(e) Not applicable
- (f) All phone calls are answered in person.
- (g)-(i) Not applicable

Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries; the Midwest, Wheatbelt and Great Southern:

Department of Agriculture

- (a) The Department of Agriculture does not use call centres.
- (b)-(i) Not applicable

Department of Fisheries

- (a) Department of Fisheries
- (b) Since December 1992
- (c) There is no formal measurement process
- (d) \$18,010 for 2001/02
- (e) Terms and conditions of contract set in accord with the Department of Contract and Management Services (CAMS) General Conditions of Contract for the Provision of Services
- (f) Department of Fisheries
- (g) No
- (h) Not applicable
- (i) Not applicable

Forest Products Commission

- (a) The Forest Products Commission does not use call centres for any of its activities
- (b)-(i) Not applicable

Mid West Development Commission

- (a)-(e) Not applicable to Mid West Development Commission
- (f) MWDC operates on the basis that an employee (as distinct from a recorded message) will answer all incoming calls during normal working hours.
- (g) The MWDC is unaware of any complaints about call centres
- (h)-(i) Not applicable

Wheatbelt Development Commission

- (a)-(e) Not applicable to Wheatbelt Development Commission
- (f) The Wheatbelt Development Commission still operates on the basis that a person (as distinct from a recorded message) still answers the phone to all incoming calls whilst there are staff in attendance
- (g)-(i) Not applicable

Great Southern Development Commission

- (a) The Great Southern Development Commission does not use call centres for any of its activities.
- (b)-(i) Not applicable

Minister for Housing and Works; Local Government and Regional Development; the Kimberley, Pilbara and Gascoyne:

- (a) Department of Housing and Works
- (b) Homeswest has used an after hours call centre for emergency maintenance for approximately 30 years. Following the launch of Western Property on 1 July 2002, a call centre was set up to cater for break-down repairs for Government agencies including after hours maintenance for Government buildings and Homeswest tenants.
- (c) National customer service survey of Homeswest customers for Homeswest maintenance. Monthly survey for Western Property users.
- (d) \$836,748.
- (e) Tenancy after hours maintenance – Homeswest.
Breakdown repairs including after hours contact – Western Property.
- (f) Department of Housing and Works.
- (g) No.
- (h) N/A
- (i) N/A

Call centres are not used by any other department under the portfolio of the Minister for Housing and Works, Local Government and Regional Development, the Kimberley, Pilbara and Gascoyne.

Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection:

- (a)-(e) The Department of Consumer & Employment Protection does not use external call centres. All customer enquiry services are provided using in-house facilities.
- (f) The general information lines of the Department are either answered in person or, if all operators are occupied, by a recorded greeting that informs callers who they have called and that some calls may be monitored for staff performance and providing various options. Once the call is picked up by the next available operator they are spoken to by an officer not recorded messages. None of these call lines have incoming 'caller directed' selections.
- (g) Not applicable.
- (h) Not applicable
- (i) Not applicable

Attorney General; Minister for Justice and Legal Affairs; Electoral Affairs; Peel and the South West:

Department of Justice

- (a) The Department of Justice uses call centres to deliver a number of services to the public and staff:
 - 1. Human Resources Job Application Request Service
 - 2. Business Hours Switchboard Service
 - 3. After Hours Switchboard Service
- (b)
 - 1. Since 1996.
 - 2. Since 1985.
 - 3. Since 1999.
- (c)
 - 1. Measured by the delivery of job packages to those who request them.
 - 2. Measured monthly against a service agreement.
 - 3. Measured monthly against a service agreement.
- (d)
 - 1. \$15,000 during calendar year 2002.
 - 2. \$71,000 during calendar year 2002.
 - 3. \$17,000 during calendar year 2002.
- (e)
 - 1. The contract for this service was let under ComsWest and is now operated under the Basic Telecommunication Services contract (Department of Treasury and Finance 98897).
 - 2. One-year period with two annual renewals.
 - 3. One-year period with two annual renewals.

- (f) 1-3 A person answers calls, with assistance of a recorded message during periods of high call volumes.
- (g) 1-3 No.
- (h) 1-3 Not applicable.
- (i) 1-3 Complaint procedures already exist.

Legal Aid WA

- (a) Legal Aid WA.
- (b) Legal Aid WA has provided a telephone service in a variety of forms since its inception. 68,930 calls were completed in 2001/02.
- (c) Measurements include timeliness of calls answered, number of deflected calls, number of abandoned calls and average call length.
- (d) \$778,823.
- (e) Not applicable.
- (f) In 2001/02 51% of calls were answered immediately. Of the remaining calls, 80% were answered within 3 minutes and the average wait in the queue was 63 seconds.
- (g) No.
- (h) Not applicable.
- (i) Not applicable.

Director of Public Prosecutions
Electoral Commission
Equal Opportunity Commission
Office of the Information Commissioner
Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services
Peel Development Commission
South West Development Commission

The above organisations do not use call centres.

Minister for the Environment and Heritage:

- (a) None
- (b)-(e) Not applicable
- (f) Department of Conservation and Land Management, Department of Environmental Protection, Water and Rivers Commission, Office of Water Regulation, Heritage Council of Western Australia, Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority, Conservation Commission, National Trust of Western Australia, Aqwest Bunbury, Busselton Water Board.
- (g)-(i) Not applicable

Perth Zoo

- (a) Perth Zoo uses BOCS Ticketing to provide all centre services for its series of summer concerts. Members of the community are able to pre-purchase tickets for Perth Zoo events via the telephone call centres. The service also includes ticket printing and postage to customers. This service is required by Perth Zoo as the agency does not have the internal resources or funding to operate a call centre receiving such a high volume of calls.
- (b) Perth Zoo has used BOCS Ticketing for two years, commencing in November 2001. Prior to July 2001, TicketMaster 7 provided call centre services as part of a total ticketing and call centre contract with Perth Zoo.
- (c) Measurement on the success of the call centre is gauged through customer feedback to Perth Zoo. Random spot checks are also undertaken to monitor service levels.
- (d) The budgeted annual cost for BOCS call centre services in 2002/03 was \$13,000.
- (e) A Request for Quotation (RFQ) for call centre services for 2002/03 with a one-year option to extend was issued in September 2002. BOCS Ticketing was the successful supplier.

- (f) Not relevant to these call centre activities. Perth Zoo operates its own reception service for incoming calls from Monday to Friday. This is staffed by Zoo officers. A recorded message providing information on activities and events at the Zoo is provided as an additional service.
- (g) A very minimal number of complaints have been received from the public regarding BOCS Ticketing commission fees and provided information.
- (h) All feedback regarding customer complaints is directed to BOCS with a request for appropriate action.
- (i) Not applicable

Minister for Police and Emergency Services:

Fire and Emergency Services Authority

The Fire and Emergency Services Authority advise:

- (a)-(b) The Emergency Services Levy call centre contract was awarded on 22 May 2003 and commenced operations on 17 June 2003.
- (c) A monthly report will be provided detailing the questions asked, the length of each call and the caller's postcode. In addition Key Performance indicators have been established to ensure customer service response times are met.
- (d) The contract is for a period of twelve months initially, with an estimated value of \$82,500.
- (e) The contract is based on a variable contract. Initially 20,000 three-minute calls have been purchased.
- (f) Calls to the Emergency Services Levy call centre are answered by a person. The tender document indicates that 80% of calls must be answered within 20 seconds.
- (g) No.
- (h)-(i) Not applicable

Western Australia Police Service

The Western Australia Police Service advise:

- (a) It has an operations centre that receives telephone calls from the public, not a commercial call centre.
- (b)-(i) Not applicable

Minister for Planning and Infrastructure:

- (a)-(b) The following Government departments use call centres:
 - Department for Planning and Infrastructure (DPI): the Licensing call centre was initiated in September 1997 and Transperth has operated a telephone information service for over 30 years.
 - Main Roads WA: for road fault reporting since 4 December 1998
 - Western Australian Government Railways Commission (WAGRC): bookings/reservations since 1985. A manual call system was in place between 1976 and 1985
- (c) The DPI Licensing and Main Roads WA call centres have detailed statistics for measuring its performance and effectiveness. Transperth conducts independent research of customers, showing that 83% of customers were either 'satisfied' or 'extremely satisfied' with the service. Feedback may also be given through the Transperth Customer Comment Line (13 16 08). Currently in excess of 95% of calls to the WAGRC call centre are answered within 28 seconds.
- (d) The annual cost of each call centre is as follows:
 - DPI (Licensing and Transperth) – between \$4.3 and \$4.8 million
 - Main Roads WA - \$98 000
 - WAGRC - costs are estimated at \$1.37 million. Call Centre costs are part of the overall function of the bookings/reservations office and accordingly the figure provided represents a joint function of making bookings and the sale of tickets
- (e) The basis of contracts for each call centre is as follows:

- DPI Licensing – in-house
- Transperth – commercial contract with a private sector company
- Main Roads WA – commercial contract for a fixed lump sum cost plus set up cost
- WAGRC – in-house

- (f) DPI Licensing – calls are initially responded to by a recorded message

Transperth – an operator answers calls if available, if not, the call is answered by a pre-recorded hold message, awaiting an operator

Main Roads WA – telephone operators answer all calls directly

WAGRC - calls are handled personally Monday to Friday from 6am to 6pm, Saturday from 6.30am to 5.30pm and on Sunday from 7.30am to 5.30pm. After that a recorded message advises the times in which bookings can be made and also provides an emergency telephone number.

- (g) I am aware of complaints received from time to time in relation to the performance of call centres and I am committed to improving performance of DPI Licensing call centre.

- (h) DPI Licensing – performance is being monitored for improvement. Additional training is being provided to staff and staffing levels are being maximised to approved levels. New technology is to be introduced to improve the speed with which calls can be dealt with. As a preventive measure, the quality of information sent to customers is being reviewed. New systems are currently being developed to further improve services provided by the call centre.

Transperth - the call centre carries penalties if call answer rates do not reach 90% of all incoming calls on a daily basis. A 'ratchet incentive' arrangement is in place to encourage higher levels of service on an annual basis.

Minister for State Development; Tourism; Small Business:

Department of Industry and Resources

- (a) DoIR – for after hours and emergency callers only.
- (b) 12 months.
- (c) Number of calls and the time taken to resolve the query. A monthly report lists the calls and the action taken.
- (d) \$5,000.
- (e) An annual saving of \$15,000 was achieved and this arrangement provides a much simpler method by which contact officers can be reached after hours compared to the previous method of extensive listings in the White Pages.
- (f) DoIR.
- (g) No.
- (h) N/A
- (i) N/A

Western Australian Tourism Commission

- (a) The Western Australian Visitor Centre operates a Call Centre on behalf of the Western Australian Tourism Commission.
- (b) Since the mid 1970s.
- (c) An annual customer satisfaction survey is conducted by independent researchers – Patterson Market Research.
- (d) 2001/2002 financial year – estimated costs based on 25% of the total operating cost for the WA Visitor Centre:
Gross: \$402,000
Net: \$234,000
- (e) Not applicable – the Call Centre function is not contracted out.

- (f) The WA Visitor Centre system uses voice recognition technology to answer calls. This voice recognition system has been recognised both nationally and internationally as being a benchmark in the tourism industry.
- (g) Yes – I am aware there have been some complaints received by the Western Australian Tourism Commission about the call centre. However, the aim of the voice recognition technology is to ensure a minimisation of such complaints in the future.
- (h) Answered by (g).
- (i) Answered by (g).

Small Business Development Corporation

- (a) The Small Business Development Corporation does not utilise a Call Centre.
- (b)-(i) Not applicable.

Rottneest Island Authority

- (a) The Rottneest Island Authority (RIA) operates an in-house Call Centre for the delivery of RIA services including ballot management, accommodation bookings, product information, and general enquiries.
- (b) The RIA Call Centre has been operative since September 2000.
- (c) Performance measurement indicators are:
 - Number of calls;
 - Call waiting times;
 - Call abandonment rates;
 - Grade of Service measures.
- (d) Annual budget for the RIA Call Centre is \$0.625million in 2002/2003.
- (e) Not applicable. The RIA Call Centre is a business unit of the RIA and staffed by personnel employed under the Public Sector Management Act 1994.
- (f) Not applicable. All calls are handled on a personal basis.
- (g) The Minister for Tourism has not received complaints regarding the RIA Call Centre.
- (h) Not applicable.
- (i) Not applicable.

Minister for Education and Training; Sport and Recreation; Indigenous Affairs:

Department of Indigenous Affairs

- (a)-(i) Not applicable. The Department of Indigenous Affairs does not use call centres.

Department of Sport and Recreation

- (a)-(i) Not Applicable. The Department of Sport and Recreation does not use call centres.

WA Institute of Sport

- (a)-(i) Not Applicable. WAIS does not use call centres

WA Sport Centre Trust

- (a)-(i) Not Applicable. The WASCT does not use a call centre.

Department of Education and Training

- (a)-(i) Not Applicable. The Department of Education and Training does not currently offer a call centre facility to the wider community.

Department of Education Services & Curriculum Council

- (a)-(i) Not Applicable. Department of Education Services & Curriculum Council do not use call centres.

Minister for Community Development, Women's Interests, Seniors and Youth; Disability Services; Culture and the Arts:

Community Development, Women's Interests, Seniors and Youth

- (a) The Department for Community Development does not use a call centre.
- (b)-(e) Not applicable
- (f) The Department for Community Development aims to ensure that telephone calls to all its offices around the State are answered directly by officers of the Department and not by recorded messages. Occasionally a number of calls may be received by an office simultaneously and a caller may be advised that their call has been placed on hold and will be answered as soon as possible. The Department is committed to providing personalised and responsive services to the community and believes this includes direct and immediate responses to telephone calls from members of the public. Currently the Department also operates a number of 24 hour telephone helplines to ensure that people requiring emergency assistance from the Department receive a timely response at all times. These include the Crisis Care line, an information and counselling service for people in crisis needing urgent help, the Family Helpline and the Men's Domestic Violence Helpline.
- (g)-(i) Not applicable.

Disability Services

- (a) The Disability Services Commission does not use a call centre.
- (b)-(e) Not applicable.
- (f) The Disability Services Commission aims to ensure that telephone calls are answered directly by officers of the Commission and not by recorded messages. Occasionally a number of calls may be received by an office simultaneously and a caller may be advised that their call has been placed on hold and will be answered as soon as possible. The Commission is committed to providing personalised and responsive services to the community and believes this includes direct and immediate responses to telephone calls from members of the public. In the fifty Local Area Co-ordination offices throughout regional and metropolitan Western Australia, callers will either be responded to in person, or if the Local Area Co-ordinator is out of the office, will be asked to leave a message on the answering machine. Due to the number of offices and the small number of staff in each office, it is not possible to employ reception staff in these offices.
- (g)-(i) Not applicable.

Department of Culture and the Arts

- (a) The Department of Culture and the Arts does not use a call centre.
- (b)-(e) Not applicable.
- (f) The Department of Culture and the Arts has a reception service which answers incoming calls.
- (g)-(i) Not applicable.

ArtsWA

- (a) ArtsWA does not use a call centre.
- (b)-(e) Not applicable.
- (f) ArtsWA uses reception services provided through the Department of Culture and the Arts for incoming calls.
- (g)-(i) Not applicable.

State Library of Western Australia

- (a) The State Library of Western Australia does not use a call centre.
- (b)-(e) Not applicable.
- (f) The initial response to a call to the State Library is a recorded message which provides two options – [1] to listen to a recorded message with the Library's opening hours or [2] to speak with an operator. People are automatically transferred to an operator if they hold.
- (g)-(i) Not applicable.

ScreenWest

- (a) ScreenWest does not use a call centre.

- (b)-(e) Not applicable
- (f) ScreenWest uses reception services provided through the Department of Culture and the Arts for incoming calls.
- (g)-(i) Not applicable

WA Museum

- (a) The Western Australian Museum does not use a call centre.
- (b)-(e) Not applicable
- (f) The WA Museum has a reception service that answers incoming calls.
- (g)-(i) Not applicable

State Records Office

- (a) The State Records Office does not use a call centre.
- (b)-(e) Not applicable
- (f) The State Records Office has a reception service that answers incoming calls.
- (g) SRO has not received any complaints.
- (h)-(i) Not applicable

Perth Theatre Trust

- (a) Perth Theatre Trust (BOCS Ticketing).
- (b) 20 years.
- (c)
 - Patron feedback
 - Promoters satisfaction
 - Number of calls answered
 - Percentage of calls lost
- (d) Nil - self-funding.
- (e) Not applicable - the BOCS call centre service is not contracted out.
- (f) All incoming calls to the BOCS call centre are personally answered by a BOCS ticketing operator/seller.

PTT administration uses reception services provided through the Department of Culture and the Arts for incoming calls.
- (g) None.
- (h) Not applicable
- (i) Not applicable

Art Gallery of Western Australia

- (a) The Gallery does not use a call centre.
- (b)-(d) Not applicable
- (f) The Gallery's visitor services officers or security personnel answer general incoming calls 24 hours a day. If staff are not available to answer calls on their direct lines, people are given the option to leave a message or speak with the operator. A 24 hour information line is also available.
- (g)-(i) Not applicable.

Minister for Health:

Department of Health

- (a) Department of Health
- (b)

BreastScreen WA (BSWA)	4 years
Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS) (includes Quit WA)	7 years
Health Call Centre	4.5 years

- (c) Regular performance monitoring is undertaken (eg: speed to answer calls, call lengths, abandonment rate). Independent evaluations have also been conducted and consumer feedback obtained.
- (d) Approximately \$6.1 million
- (e) Contract with McKesson Asia Pacific to provide telephone based clinical and health programs. BSWA Call Centre and ADIS are provided as part of core business.
- (f) Calls to the above programs are personally answered.
- (g) No complaints regarding the performance of these programs have been received necessitating review of current service provision.
- (h) Not applicable
- (i) Not applicable

Office of Health Review

- (a) No
- (b)-(e) Not applicable
- (f) All incoming phone calls are answered by reception staff
- (g)-(i) No applicable

Healthway

- (a) Healthway does not use call centres
- (b)-(i) Not applicable

Minister for Racing and Gaming; Government Enterprises; Goldfields-Esperance:

- (a)-(i) Nil.