

Millions of people in Australia rely on the Department of Human Services (DHS) every day, for essential services including social security payments, Medicare, child support and aged care.

Australia needs these essential services to be both accessible and of high quality, and employees of DHS resourced to do the best they can for everyone needing assistance.

However, after years of budget cuts, DHS systems and staff are under extreme pressure.

Last year, 22 million calls to Centrelink went unanswered – a third of all calls. 15.7 million calls were blocked and abandoned over a recent six month period, while just 10.6 million Centrelink calls were answered by a Centrelink operator. Many people using online services such as myGov have reported serious flaws. The number of complaints to the Commonwealth Ombudsman remains high.

People who rely on Centrelink expect and deserve high quality public services. Employees in DHS must have the resources to deliver high quality public services. People are trying to do the right thing and reports changes as required, but the system is letting them down.

The upcoming budget provides an opportunity for the Federal Government to address these issues by:

- Restoring adequate funding to DHS
- Investing in high quality, in-house IT systems so that those clients who wish to conduct their business online can access a reliable service;
- Increasing DHS permanent staff numbers so that claims and queries are processed quickly and clients who need over-the-phone or in-person services can get them;
- Ensuring that rural and regional Australia has fair access to government services.

