



Australian Government  
Department of Human Services

# Delivering Quality Outcomes Review Implementation Report

*child support*





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# Overview



In late 2009, the Department of Human Services (DHS) Secretary commissioned an independent review to explore decision making and quality assurance processes within Child Support. In undertaking the Delivering Quality Outcomes (DQO) review David Richmond (AO) interviewed 433 staff including 22 senior executives, met with 26 external stakeholders and received 133 written submissions including 16 from external stakeholders. There were also over 5000 pages of documents supplied to the review for consideration.

The review resulted in a comprehensive report containing 40 priority recommendations and 75 supporting recommendations, all of which were accepted by Child Support for implementation.

A copy of the full DQO Report is available on the Child Support website.

This report provides a summary of the implementation of the DQO recommendations and brings to a conclusion the work being undertaken under the banner of Delivering Quality Outcomes.



# Delivering the intended changes

The implementation of the DQO recommendations has delivered a significant number of improvements across 5 key areas.

## Governance

Child Support has implemented a revised structure and business model aligned to a new service delivery model. This will provide more consistent and efficient service delivery that supports improved collection and quality.

Delegations and authorisations to undertake specific work have been reviewed to remove unnecessary escalation points and enable staff to meet customer's needs at the earliest point of contact.

A Business Ownership Framework and Register is in place to establish clear responsibility for maintaining and improving the products and processes used to deliver service to customers.

Improved business improvement processes are in place to ensure improvements to service delivery are achieved through improved planning, scoping, prioritising and monitoring of changes.

An increased internal audit focus has been established within the Department of Human Services to assess Child Support's processes and procedures and ensure improved processes are consistently adopted and embedded.

## Customers

### Improving Collection

A range of measures have been introduced to improve collection and help customers pay their child support:

- Reinforcing collection as a core responsibility for all staff. This is reflected in products such as the Child Support Strategic Directions 2010-11 and the Child Support 2010-2012 Compliance Program and the Customer Management Approach which provides a nationally consistent approach to delivering service
- increasing options for customers to pay via credit cards, debit cards or Government EasyPay (automated phone payment service)
- improving case selection for intensive collection services
- embedding early intervention activities into business as usual to help customers who fall behind in their payments to get back on track quickly
- improving information sharing and matching to identify collection opportunities.

### Improving Quality

To support continued improvement to quality, Child Support has introduced:

- a Quality Assurance Framework that guides the quality assurance activities to be undertaken and addresses systemic issues impacting on Child Support customers
- an issues escalation and resolution process, with appropriate tracking mechanisms, to help resolve systemic issues. A Policy Suggestions Mailbox provides a further avenue for staff to share feedback and policy suggestions on behalf of customers.

### Improving Support for Customers

Child Support has introduced an integrated referral framework to help staff match customers with appropriate external services. This provides a systematic way of identifying customers who may need intensive support and/or referral to other Portfolio, Government or community providers for early intervention and assistance.

New customers are being provided with better and consistent advice, options and referrals during their initial phone contact through the introduction of a Parent Referral Guide. Further improvements will be delivered later in the year with greater online registration support for customers.

Reforms to the Change of Assessment process provide customers with special circumstances with a simpler, quicker process and decisions that are explained in a way that they can understand. These improvements have included a simplified application form, streamlined process and standardised notices of decisions.

Child Support has established dedicated teams to support customers with complex situations including disputed care arrangements and estimates of income. These teams provide specialised support and accurate information to ensure timely outcomes for customers.

### Improving Communication

Extensive consultation and co-design has been used to revise payer account statements and assessment notices. This will be implemented 2011-12, making it easier for customers to understand the child support scheme. New forms have been made available to customers online, allowing them to update their information at a time that suits them. In addition, a range of fact sheets have been developed to help international child support customers understand and meet their child support responsibility.

## Staff

A new, more structured approach to skilling frontline staff is helping Child Support “get it right the first time”. The approach provides:

- establishing the critical staff skills and knowledge required to achieve outcomes in Child Support through a Skills Pathway
- more tailored training using a variety of delivery methods and increased use of team based learning
- increased assessment of technical competency to deliver training where it is needed
- a consistent cycle of development supported by both team leaders and technical support staff
- a Technical Support Model that provides technical support and specialist expertise where it is needed most.

A review of procedural instructions and support tools is also making it easier and quicker for staff to access the information that helps them get it right the first time.

National and business area decision monitoring has been designed to monitor critical activities and tailor approaches based on these priorities.

In addition, through multiple national, business and site forums, Child Support has increased the visibility and contact between frontline staff and senior leadership to quickly identify and resolve issues that are impacting on providing quality services.

The business knowledge and leadership capabilities of team leaders are also being enhanced through the introduction of a Team Leader Development Program. This program will ensure team leaders are best placed to support staff to improve the quality of service to customers.

## Technology

New technology such as short message service (SMS) and automated outbound dialling has been trialled to facilitate customer communication, achieving improved levels of customer contact and collection.

A range of software enhancements have been delivered to improve the quality of service provided including:

- a revised help function built into Cuba to help staff resolve customer issues quickly and accurately,
- ‘at a glance’ summary of products and services that can be provided to customers, helping staff to better tailor the products and services offered in the future
- a customer summary screen that allows staff to quickly access key customer information and pop up notifications to help staff to ensure customers have up to date contact details, accurate assessments and appropriate payment methods in place.

Improved use of imaging (scanning) of mail is delivering customer’s correspondence to staff faster allowing them to resolve customer issues quickly and accurately.

Dual computer monitors have been given to all staff, allowing them to access procedural and support tools while also accessing customer information. This helps staff resolve customer issues faster.

Detailed business requirements have also been developed for longer term improvements to ensure the technology continues to keep pace with the needs of Child Support and customers.

In addition, development has begun on a new tool that provides staff with access to key customer information from across the Department. This helps deliver Centrelink, Medicare and Child Support services from the one location.

## Stakeholders

The new Child Support Stakeholder Engagement Strategy clarifies the use of national and regional stakeholder meetings and supports:

- increased stakeholder input in to our service delivery design
- co-design of Child Support products with stakeholders.

Improvements have been made to the way we liaise and support Members of Parliament and their electorate offices. We now deliver a nationally consistent level of support and systemic issues can be better resolved.



# Achieving Quality Outcomes

The broad achievements from implementing the DQO review are:

- revised structure, governance and business model directly aligning with Child Support's service delivery model including realignment from a state based structure to a national business line model
- better customer support through improved review mechanisms both for internal decisions and customer feedback
- streamlined and specialised service offers to ensure complex processes are managed well, particularly around income, care and change of assessment
- improved approach to collection with an expanded focus on payment options, centralised case selection and better intelligence sharing
- improved technology, including Cuba database enhancements and initial enhancements to online services that align with Service Delivery Reform.

Child Support's overall performance is reflected in the DHS Annual Report 2010-11 and the performance in regard to quality of its services is reflected in the Annual Quality Review (itself a recommendation from the DQO Review). Many of the achievements reflected in these reports have been directly influenced by the implementation of the DQO recommendations, in particular:

- improved collection
- improved customer satisfaction
- improved quality.



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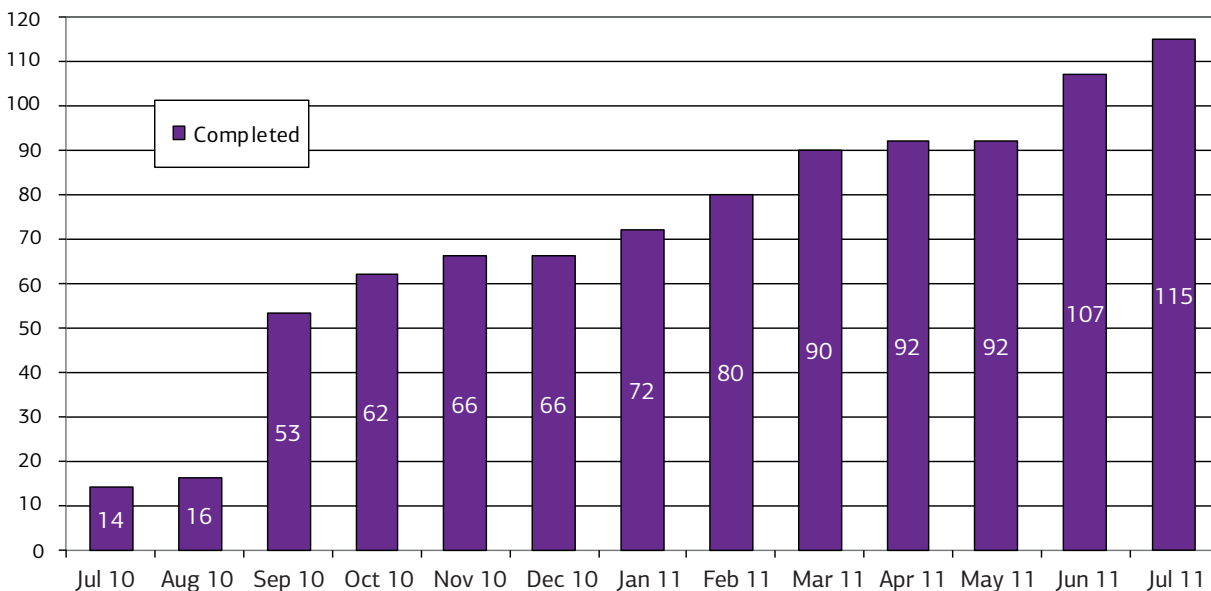
# Approach to delivery

The DQO Recommendations were successfully delivered through a program of work that included 34 separate projects and was supported by:

- responsibility for projects assigned to Senior Executive
- regular review of progress and communication to stakeholders
- co-design and input by stakeholders into specific projects
- oversight of implementation by a Reference Group to identify and resolve potential implementation issues, assure satisfactory project delivery and embedding of recommendations into business as usual
- mid implementation reviews of all projects and recommendations to ensure delivery was on track and consistent with the intent of the review and Service Delivery Reform
- a Departmental audit of the implementation to ensure adequate processes were in place to support the effective delivery of the projects

Child Support has been monitoring the administrative completion of the recommendations which is reflected in the following graph<sup>1</sup>. There are recommendations requiring significant ICT improvements and these are in a queue to be made over the coming months. As indicated by the graph all recommendations have now been actioned, with some administrative action required to finalise projects.

<sup>1</sup> For ease of representation, recommendations reflected as completed include those that were substantially completed in the relevant month and those that were implemented awaiting formal sign off



## Conclusion

The implementation of DQO Recommendations has provided a platform for sustained improvement to collection, customer satisfaction and quality that will be embedded during the 2011/12 financial year. This is a journey for Child Support towards improvement and the following 12 months will require monitoring and further focus to ensure all these changes are adopted. By using the tools systems and structures implemented through the DQO review Child Support will continue to improve outcomes for customers.



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