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Australian Government

Services Australia

Calling a customer or returning a customer's call 111-05050050

Currently published version valid from 24/07/2024 8:46 PM

Background

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This document describes the responsibilities when calling a customer.

Domestic calls

Calls to a customer in Australia generally occur between 8:00 am and 8:00 pm customer's local time.

Note: customers can book online appointments commencing at 8.00 am Australian Eastern Standard Time (AEST) when located outside the AEST time zone. Appointment times will display in the customers local time zone.

International calls

If a call is to be made to a customer who is not in Australia, there are protocols for enabling International Direct Dial access.

Between the hours of 8.00 am to 5:30 pm AEST Monday to Friday, Service Officers can call the [switchboard](#), advise what country the customer is in, and the call will be connected.

Outside the hours of 8.00 am to 5:30 pm AEST Monday to Friday, Service Officers need to arrange for Telstra to enable international calls from a particular phone. Requests are placed through the Authorised Centrelink Representative (ACR). This is usually the Administrative Officer in the relevant service centre. They will submit the appropriate MySupport request to Telstra.

Note: requests for International Direct Dial access require EL2 approval.

Norfolk Island calls

Between the hours of 8.00 am to 5:30 pm AEST, Monday to Friday, Service Officers can call the [switchboard](#), advise the customer is on Norfolk Island, and the call will be connected.

Norfolk Island has its own Island/Country Code which is **+6723**. All Norfolk Island telephone numbers are a 5 digit number:

- all landlines start with **2####**, for example, 21234
- all mobile telephones start with **5####**, for example, 51234

Where international calling is enabled dial: 0011-6723-(plus the 5 digit landline or mobile), for example, **0011-6723-21234**.

Outside the hours of 8.00 am to 5:30 pm AEST, Monday to Friday Service Officers may need to arrange for Telstra to enable international calls to be made from a particular phone. Requests are placed through the Authorised Centrelink Representative (ACR), usually the Administrative Officer in the relevant service centre who will submit the appropriate MySupport request to Telstra.

Note: requests for International Direct Dial access require EL2 approval.

Use of mobile phones

When a Service Officer calls a customer on a mobile phone, other than because of a request for a callback, they should ask:

- if the customer wants to continue the call on the mobile phone, or
- if there is another phone number they would like to be contacted on

When a customer calls on a mobile phone, the Service Officer should not offer to call them back to reduce the cost to the customer, even if the customer has been in a queue for some time. Customers concerned about the cost should be advised instead to call back from a landline or public phone.

Participation Solutions Team (PST) skilled Service Officers receiving a PST related call may call customers back if they have contacted the agency using their mobile phone and ask to be called back. However, customers can avoid additional phone charges by using a landline or the free phones available in service centres.

Maintaining privacy

When the call is answered, the Service Officer advises their name and that they are calling from Services Australia.

To maintain the customer's privacy, it is not normally appropriate for the Service Officer to:

- disclose the reason for the call, or
- state the team, business area or program the Service Officer works with until the person being called is authenticated

There are specific circumstances, where the Service Officer may identify which program they are calling from before authentication, for example, 'Centrelink'. See [Process](#) page for more detail.

If the person refuses to identify themselves, (for example, if they think it is a scam call), the Service Officer should:

- give the customer the correct number to call back
- record a **DOC** with the reason for the unsuccessful call attempt

The [Resources](#) page contains a link to contact details for the Services Australia switchboard.

Related links

[Privacy concerns when calling customers, returning calls or leaving messages on answering machines](#)

[Call and screen recording - information and access](#)

[Answering calls in Centrelink](#)

[Appointment Based Service](#)

[Online Document Recording \(ODR\)](#)

[Creating, reviewing and deleting documents \(including Fast Notes and DOA DOCs\)](#)

[Risk identification and management of threats to the safety or welfare of a child](#)

Process

This document describes the responsibilities when calling a customer.

Calling a customer

Step	Action
1	<p>International and/or Norfolk Island calls + Read more ...</p> <p>Is the customer currently residing on Norfolk Island or overseas?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ calls to Norfolk Island customers, go to Step 2 ○ calls to International customers not in Australia, go to Step 3 • No, go to Step 4
2	<p>Calling Norfolk Island customers + Read more ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between the hours of 8.00 am to 5:30 pm Australian Eastern Standard Time (AEST), Monday to Friday, call the switchboard, advise the customer is on Norfolk Island, and the call will be connected • Outside the hours of 8.00 am to 5:30 pm AEST see Step 3, or • Where international calling is enabled, dial '0011 6723 (plus the 5 digit landline or mobile)'. For example, '0011 6723 21234' <p>Note: Norfolk Island has its own Island/Country Code, which is +6723. All Norfolk Island telephone numbers are a 5 digit number:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all landlines start with 2#####, for example, 21234 • all mobile telephones start with 5#####, for example, 51234 <p>Go to Step 4.</p>

3	<p>Calls to International customers + Read more ...</p> <p>When making a call to a customer who is not in Australia, there are protocols for enabling International Direct Dial access.</p> <p>Between the hours of 8.00 am to 5:30 pm AEST Monday to Friday</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call the switchboard • Advise what country the customer is in • Call will be connected <p>Outside the hours of 8.00 am to 5:30 pm AEST Monday to Friday</p> <p>To arrange for Telstra to enable international calls from a particular phone:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • place the request through the Authorised Centrelink Representative (ACR). The ACR: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ is usually the Administrative Officer in the relevant service centre ○ will submit the appropriate mySupport request to Telstra <p>Note: requests for International Direct Dial access require EL2 approval.</p>
4	<p>Calling a customer or actioning a callback to a customer + Read more ...</p> <p>Calls to a customer in Australia generally occur between 8:00 am and 8:00 pm customer's local time.</p> <p>Note: customers can book online appointments commencing at 8.00 am Australian Eastern Standard Time (AEST) when located outside the AEST time zone. Appointment times will display in the customers local time zone.</p> <p>If the customer is subscribed to Desktop Messaging, send a pre-call notification SMS through Desktop Messaging before calling them. For pre-call messages, allow a lead-in time of 5 minutes in case there is a delay sending the message.</p> <p>See Desktop (DEMC) Messages on the Resources page to view pre-approved message text.</p> <p>Begin the outbound call.</p> <p>If the call is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not answered, go to Step 5 • answered by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ an answering machine or other service, go to Step 6 ○ a person, go to Step 7 <p>Note: be aware of privacy concerns when calling customers, returning calls or leaving messages on answering machines.</p>
5	<p>Call is not answered + Read more ...</p> <p>If the call is not answered, make 2 genuine attempts to contact the customer by phone.</p> <p>If the contact is unsuccessful, record the contact attempt on the customer record.</p> <p>Further action may be required regarding any ongoing activity. Refer to the relevant process in Operational Blueprint for direction.</p> <p>Procedure ends here.</p>

6	<p>If the call is answered by a machine or other answering service + Read more ...</p> <p>If the number called has an answering machine, leave a short message. The message must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Service Officer's first name and that they are from Services Australia • an appropriate telephone number for the customer to return the call. Choosing to leave a direct, queue or other telephone number is a business area decision <p>For example: 'Hello, this is [Service Officer's name] calling from Services Australia. Please contact us at [appropriate phone number]. Thank you'</p> <p>DOC the contact attempt on the customer's record.</p> <p>Further action may be required regarding any ongoing activity. Refer to the relevant Operational Blueprint for direction.</p> <p>Procedure ends here.</p>
7	<p>When the call is answered: Greeting + Read more ...</p> <p>When the call is answered, Service Officers use a best practice outbound greeting phrase or another appropriate greeting of their own. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Hello, this is [Service Officer's name] from Services Australia' • 'Hi, my name is [Service Officer's name]. Am I speaking with [customer's first name]?' • 'Hi, this is [Service Officer's name] from Services Australia, who am I speaking with?' <p>Note: sometimes, using the customer's first name might not be appropriate due to cultural reasons. If unsure, Service Officers should use a greeting that allows the customer to provide their first name.</p> <p>If a pre-call SMS has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • been sent, the customer has been advised: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ they will get a call today from Services Australia ○ the call will show as a private number • not been sent, the Service Officer must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ only state they are calling from Services Australia ○ not identify the program or business area they work with at first. This could reveal the type of business the person being sought has with the agency and impact on their privacy <p>Do not state what program or business area the call is from (that is, Centrelink, Medicare, Child Support) until after the customer has confirmed their name and date of birth.</p> <p>When there may be risk of Family and Domestic Violence or other privacy concerns, (for example, in UTLAH or MoC assessments), do not disclose the program. Services Australia must always be used in the first instance.</p> <p>Circumstances where the program may be disclosed at the beginning of the call</p> <p>In rare instances it may be appropriate for a Service Officer to state which program or business area they are calling from if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the customer is otherwise unwilling to proceed with the call, and • they have not confirmed their name or date of birth <p>s47E(d)</p>

	s47E(d)
8	<p>When the call is answered: Call recording and privacy statement + Read more ...</p> <p>Tell the customer at the beginning of every outbound call that the call may be recorded for quality assurance and training purposes. Use the following script before proceeding with the call:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Before we proceed with this call, I need to inform you that this call may be recorded or listened to for quality and coaching purposes' <p>Minor variations that do not change the intent of the message are acceptable.</p> <p>Note: Repeat this script message for every subsequent customer if dealing with multiple customers on the same call.</p> <p>The privacy statement is also required for non-English speaking customers requiring an interpreter.</p> <p>See Call and screen recording - information and access for more information.</p>
9	<p>Ask by name for the person who needs to be contacted + Read more ...</p> <p>The call could be answered by a person who is not the customer. Confirm the name of the person who answers the phone. If they are not the customer or an authorised representative of the customer, ask for the customer by name.</p> <p>Is the customer or an authorised representative available?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, go to Step 10 • No, go to Step 12
10	<p>Customer Authentication and disclosure of Program or Service + Read more ...</p> <p>Once the customer or authorised representative is on the call, authenticate them and establish Proof of Record Ownership (PoRO).</p> <p>See Authenticating a Centrelink customer for this process.</p> <p>If the customer is unwilling or unable to proceed with PoRO:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Service Officer may need to state which program or business area they are calling from for the customer to answer the authentication questions correctly as the customer may have different details recorded in different program systems

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the program or business area may be disclosed after the customer confirms their name and date of birth <p>Note: be aware of privacy concerns when calling customers, returning calls or leaving messages on answering machines.</p>
11	<p>Identification and authentication + Read more ...</p> <p>Has identification and authentication of the person on the phone been established?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes, action the call/callback. Procedure ends here No, do not release any information or receipt numbers, go to Step 12
12	<p>Person sought is not available or not identified + Read more ...</p> <p>Before ending the call, the Service Officer advises:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> they will call again later, or provides an appropriate telephone number for the customer to contact <p>Give the person (caller/call recipient) the correct number to call back if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the person refuses to identify themselves, or customer authentication and Proof of Record Ownership (PoRO) cannot be established <p>Record on a DOC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the reason for the call attempt, and why the contact was unsuccessful, and if the customer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> will be called back, or was advised to contact the agency <p>Further action may be required regarding any ongoing activity. Refer to the relevant Operational Blueprint for direction.</p>

Resources

Contact details

[Switchboard - Services Australia](#)

User guides



[Desktop \(DEMC\) Messages](#)



Australian Government

Services Australia

Genuine attempts to contact by phone

Currently published version valid from 27/10/2023 10:11 PM

When contacting the customer by phone, make **every** reasonable and genuine effort to ensure successful contact. This must occur before an unfavourable decision is finalised.

Pre-call notification

If the customer is subscribed to electronic messaging, send a pre call notification (SMS) before calling. See:

- Centrelink desktop electronic messaging
- Child Support electronic messaging

Allow at least 5 minutes between sending the message and making a genuine attempt to call.

Messages created before 8:00am will not be sent until 9:00am (Canberra time) the same working day. Messages created after 8:00pm will not be sent until 9:00am (Canberra time) the next working day.

Nominees and authorised representatives

If unable to contact the customer, call their correspondence nominee, if they have one. See:

- [Authorised representatives and nominees](#)
- [Disclosing information to a nominee](#)

Genuine attempt to contact

A single genuine attempt to contact is by calling:

- on **every** current phone number the agency has recorded for the customer and correspondence nominee, if they have one
- at different times of day and when the customer is likely to be available
- over more than one day.

This means that a single genuine attempt to contact may take up to two working days if the initial contact is unsuccessful.

Note: See [Using the National Relay Service](#) for deaf or hearing impaired customers.

No current phone number

If the first contact attempt is unsuccessful because the phone numbers have been disconnected, or it is identified that the customer/nominee is no longer available using the numbers, no further contact attempts are required.

Unsuccessful contact attempt

If the first contact attempt is unsuccessful, but the customer's phone numbers are still current, the work item use **s47E(d)** or place the work item on hold for allocation to another staff member for the next working day. See [Workload Management](#).

Business areas may have different requirements for workload management. Access local support resources to clarify.

Record unsuccessful contact attempt

Record the following details on the customer's record:

- what numbers were called (for example, 'mobile number called')
- the date and time of each call

- the result of each call (for example, no answer and no message facility, message left and details of the message)
- sufficient detail to allow a subsequent officer to complete the work

Annotate the same **DOC** for each update to the same genuine attempt to contact.

Leaving a message for the customer

If there is a message facility (with or without the customer's name), or a third party answers, leave a **short message** asking the customer to call back. When leaving a message, include all of the following:

- the customer's first name
- the caller's first name (only if leaving a direct number)
- that the call is from Services Australia (do not include team or program)
- a request to call back including the day and time by which this is required
- contact number

Do not disclose the reason for the call.

If a customer is unwilling or unable to identify themselves

See [Privacy concerns when calling customers, returning calls or leaving messages on answering machines](#).