



Improving the customer experience via the telephony channel



Stewart Smillie
Assistant Commissioner
Australian Taxation Office



Introduction



The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) is the federal Government's principal revenue collection agency and is part of the Treasurer's portfolio. The Office is responsible for administering a wide range of revenue laws.

The ATO manages and shapes the revenue systems that give effect to social and economic policy and fund services for Australians.

By using Genesys technology to enable service improvements and taking an organisational perspective to maximise its internal capacity the ATO is making the client experience *easier cheaper and more personalised*.

This presentation by Stewart Smillie (Assistant Commissioner – Client Contact Capability) will highlight how the ATO is approaching support to the community via the telephony channel.



Improving the customer experience



- ❖ Pre 2002 - the ATO had implemented a tax reform program for the Government. During this program a number of key changes were made to our revenue products including the introduction of a Goods and Services Tax (GST).
- ❖ In March 2002, the Commissioner Michael Carmody outlined his desire for the organisation to look for ways to help make people's experience with the tax system easier, cheaper and more personalised.
- ❖ The program aimed to secure both quick wins and longer term improvements that would reward the majority of the community that has worked with the ATO to deliver significant tax reform over the past few years.

Improving the customer experience



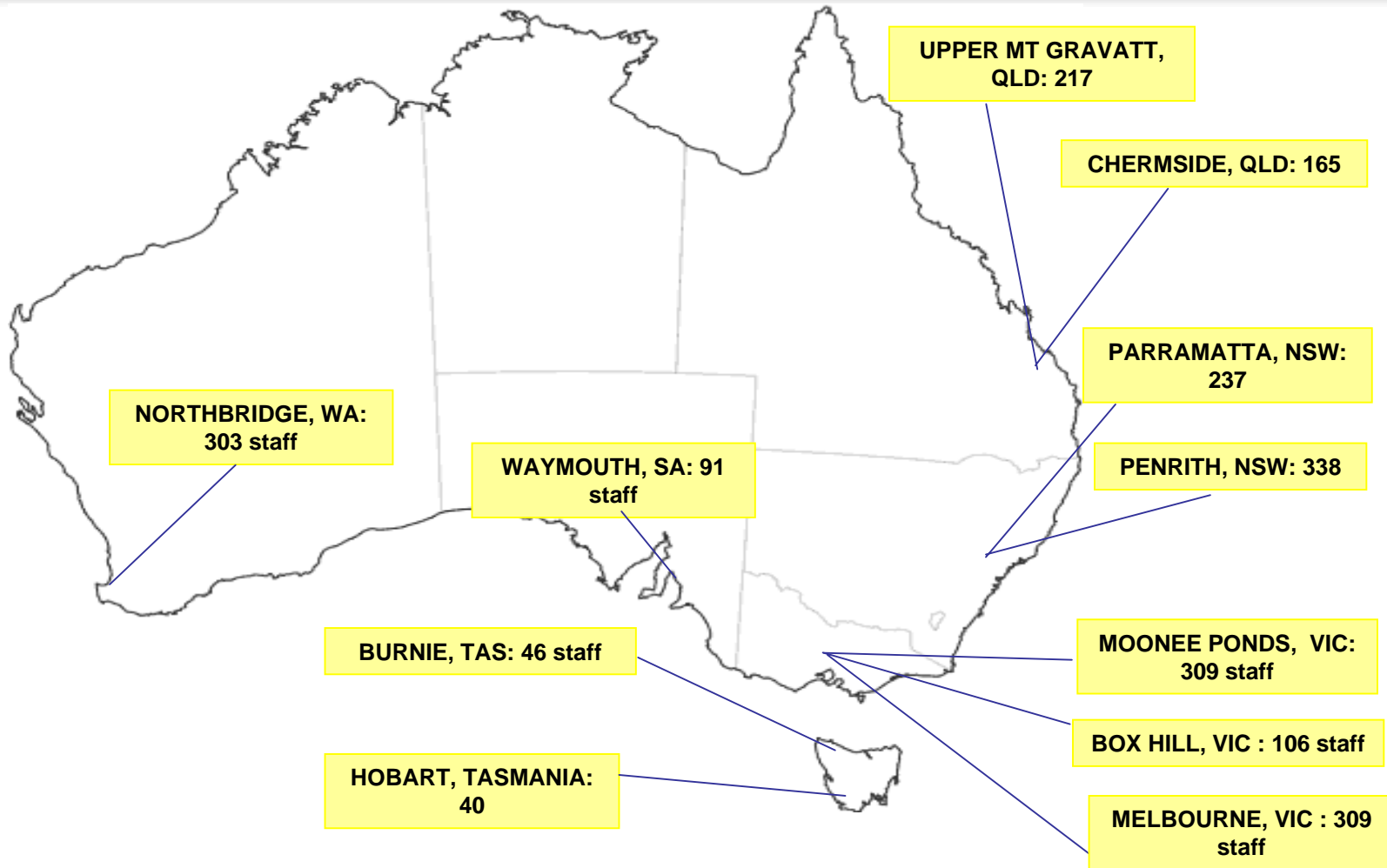
- ❖ Essential to improving this experience is the Tax Office's channel management strategy. With a population spread across large distances telephony is the most logical and cost effective choice.
- ❖ Like any large organisation the ATO is organised into a series of business units which are defined by segments. Most of these segments have built their telephony capability in isolation to meet their specific needs.

Improving the customer experience



- ❖ After the implementation of Tax Reform the executive took a decision to consolidate all telephony services as an enterprise capability.
- ❖ An Executive Telephony Management Group is made up of key senior executives from the business units that have a telephony capability and who collaboratively manage the phone channel.
- ❖ A key focus of this group is the constant improvement of telephony services and the application of models and processes, eg. the ATO 8am – 6pm service window.

The ATO Call Management Locations.



Improving the client experience

Our Challenges



- ❑ Clients are geographically dispersed across 3 time zones
- ❑ Some sites contained new PBX while others were a mix of technologies
- ❑ Initial efforts to build bridges between the systems failed to produce workable solutions
- ❑ Full potential of systems could not be achieved
- ❑ Vulnerable to business continuity events
- ❑ Business had developed training and procedures in isolation leading to lost capability

Improving the customer experience



- Addressing the technology challenges:
 - ✓ Commenced a technology refresh that has delivered 12 key sites using a single PBX system and common platform.
 - ✓ In the event of an interruption to Business Continuity our call loads can be switched between sites within 2 hours.
 - ✓ Places control of managed services back to the organisation, ensuring market competition delivers value for money.
 - ✓ Further focus on the Channel (infrastructure) and coordination of resources/workload with a national telephony focus.

Improving the customer experience

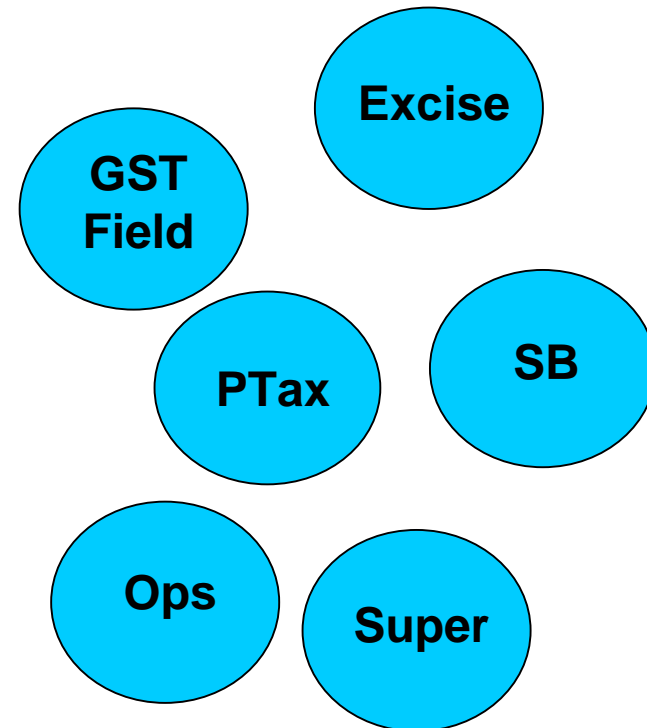


Where are we taking the management of the phone channel?

The office has traditionally looked at call centres and phone work as being unique to business units based on the particular Market segment or product.

No one consistent customer experience Across the different business units/segments.

Rather than pool resources across the enterprise, BSLs were required to be self contained and operated independently.



New Approach



One robust infrastructure

Improving the client experience

Improving the customer experience



With the introduction of the Telephony Executive Group and the appointment of a Capability Leader, we have created a drive to manage high volume telephony as a cross enterprise function. Customer experience and efficiency improvements are now being achieved.

This now provides the office with a **Core Contact Centre Capacity (CCCC)** supplemented in various ways to cope with peak workloads.

This has resulted in a reduction in the base resource numbers of 100FTE or \$6-7 mill annually.



Improving the customer experience

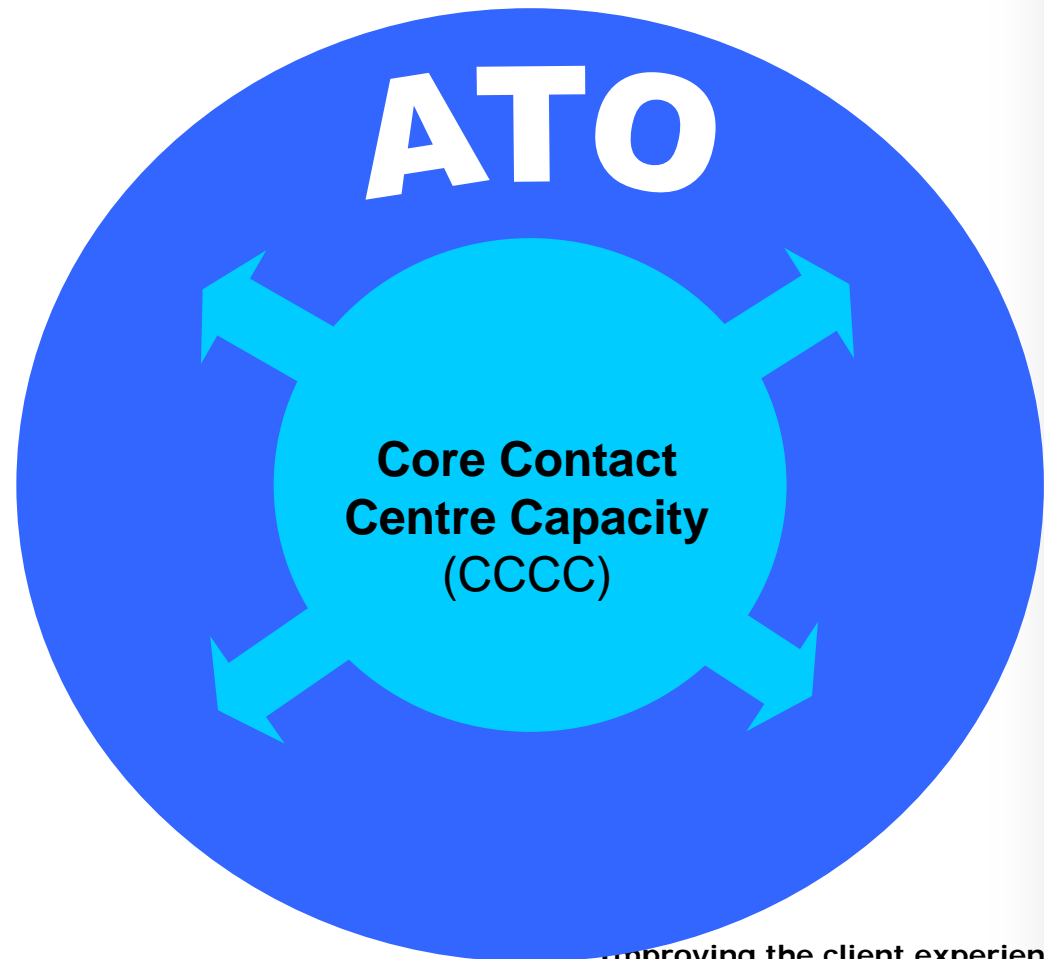


The new design concept is: **use technology and a cross enterprise view to enable the ATO CCCC to expand as necessary in real time, to meet the desired service level.**

Excess CCCC could be used for other purposes; but materialising excess CCCC capacity is a challenge.

Internal BSL CCCC flexibility (e.g. PTax) continues.

It is a natural progression of our approaches to date



Improving the client experience

Recognise phones deliver business outcomes



- ✓ The phone channel is a major channel for getting business outcomes eg.
 - ☺ Debt collection; lodgement enforcement; help with forms; account information; account maintenance
 - ☺ Provision of advice: delivers benefits in compliance behaviour and better revenue returns.

- ✓ An investment in phone service is an investment in achieving business outcomes – **a profit centre not just a cost centre**; a good way to do business for clients and for us.

- ✓ ATO operates with multiple channels; research shows that phone will continue as a main channel of choice for some time

Telephone Lodgment Service



- The Telephone Lodgment Service allows clients to lodge one of the following:
 - Income Tax Returns, or
 - Applications for Refund of Imputation Credits
- This service uses Interactive Voice Recognition (IVR) Natural Language Speech Recognition (NLSR) rather than Dial Tone Multi Frequency (DTMF).
- This means that rather than using the telephone keypad the client speaks in a normal conversation tone, as if to a person, in response to questions relating to the transaction.
- With both transactions the ATO is looking to gather data from the client and then effect a revenue transfer (usually a refund to the client).

The benefits to clients include:

- easy:** a shorter form, called a 'tax record', is issued with fewer items to complete
- faster:** most peoples lodgments by phone take only 10 minutes (excluding preparation time), and in receive their refund is received within 14 days
- convenient:** the telephone lodgment service is available 24 x 7 for the cost of a local call, a tax return can be lodged as soon as it's prepared
- secure:** the system will check that the telephone identification number matches the tax file number to confirm the client's identity
- tax calculator:** the system will calculate an estimate of the tax refund or payable amount.

Lessons Learned so far.....



- Senior Executive (CEO) commitment is required to ensure all decision makers are focussed on the same outcomes.
- Articulating a plan which the organisation and all staff can align with delivers the framework that will deliver change.
- Understand the technology and the impact it will have on your business processes. Be prepared to change processes to achieve the longer term outcomes.
- Deliver a technology solution that supports the operation of the call centre, contact centre and expert routing, as to deliver less will hold back the solution of expanding capability and using the subject experts as part of your client contact capability.
- Focus on the client experience: this allows organisations to assess the impacts of strategies such as channel movement etc.

Our Roadmap to the Future.



- One contact number for the general community – 133ATO.
- 15 – 20% of all calls handled in the Self Help environment, annually. (700,000 – 1mill as a short term target moving to increase numbers annually)
- Continue to build our staff skills and expertise and use this to expand our use of expert contact strategies.
- Reduce mis-directed calls by getting the call to the right place at the right time using Voice Recognition.
- Build more efficient business processes to enable more work to be processed in real time over the telephone rather than as an escalation to a back end process.

Drivers for Continual Change.



Community Expectations – taking customer service to the highest level.



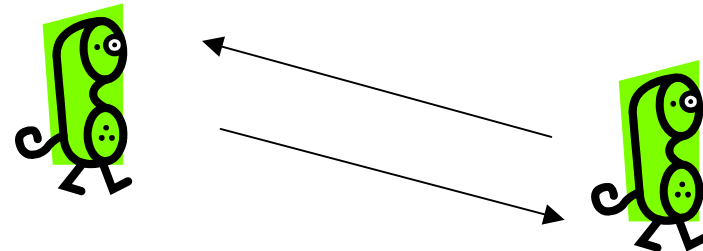
Compliance improvements through voluntary actions.



Technology benefits – realising the available return on investment.



Call routing to experts increases the size of the total enterprise capability.



Improving the client experience