

## QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

### SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING : 19 October 2015

#### IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

#### (SE15/103) - Citizenship Determinations - Programme 2.1: Citizenship

Senator Carr, Kim (L&CA) written:

- Are you aware of reports of a freeze on the processing of citizenship applications as described in the Saturday Paper's article "Secret Freeze on Refugee Citizen Rights" on September 5, 2015?
- Can you clarify whether there have in fact been delays in processing?
  - Have there been any communications from the Department to individuals explaining the cause of these delays?
  - Have there been any communications to relevant communities affected by these delays?
  - Are you aware of any specific ethnic communities that are over-represented in the group of Permanent Residents who are being affected by these delays?
- What is the average time it takes for someone to gain citizenship after making an application?

*Answer:*

1. The Department is aware of the newspaper article published on 5 September 2015 in the Saturday Paper, Melbourne. The Department has not implemented a 'freeze' on the processing of citizenship applications.
2. The Department has a service standard of finalising 80 per cent of citizenship by conferral applications within 80 days (from lodgement to decision). In 2014-15, the Department finalised 82.9 per cent of conferral applications within the service standard.
3. The Department communicates directly with applicants or their authorised representative when further information or assessments are required for their citizenship application.
4. The Department's Ethnic Liaison Officers regularly meet with a range of community organisations to provide an opportunity for visa and citizenship matters to be discussed.
5. Of those applications outside the service standard of 80 days to finalisation, the top ten countries of birth as at 17 August 2015 were: Afghanistan, Iraq, India, United Kingdom, Peoples Republic of China, Sri Lanka, Iran, Myanmar, New Zealand and Vietnam.
6. In 2014-15 the average time from lodgement to conferral (or acquisition) of Australian citizenship was 162 days.