



Administrative Appeals Tribunal

Registrar's opening statement

Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee

Budget Estimates, 4 April 2019

Thank you, Chair.

Senators may recall that, since the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, or AAT, was amalgamated in 2015, there has been a significant increase in demand for our services. In 2017-18, we received almost 59,000 applications, with around 51,000 in 2016-17 and 41,000 in the preceding financial year. This growth in demand is particularly evident in the Migration and Refugee Division, where applications have more than doubled over the past three years and quadrupled over the last decade.

The AAT is funded to finalise 18,000 matters in the Migration and Refugee Division each year. Last financial year, we received almost 38,000 applications for review in this division. The historical funding model means we are unable to finalise enough matters to keep pace with the growth in demand for services. The consequence has been an increasing number of matters on hand. The AAT currently has more than 65,000 matters on hand and 85 per cent of these are in the Migration and Refugee Division. We are in ongoing discussions with the Government about the appropriate funding model.

In addition, we are working to increase our efficiency to address the growing caseload. We have responded to these challenges by ensuring our processes are as streamlined and efficient as possible. We are pursuing, with promising results, innovative case management strategies, including using staff in triaging and early assessment of matters.

While we are always looking to improve our operations, this will not be enough to address the challenges from the scale of growth in the volume of incoming work and the likelihood this trend will continue. The AAT has also identified potential legislative options to enhance the effectiveness of our review processes. We will continue to work with Government to ensure that we can fulfil our legislated objective.

Thank you and I welcome questions from the Committee.