

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications**  
**Legislation Committee**  
Answers to questions on notice  
**Environment portfolio**

**Question No:** 113  
**Hearing:** Supplementary Budget Estimates  
**Outcome:** Outcome 1  
**Programme:** Environment Assessment and Compliance Division  
**Topic:** HANDOVER OF COMMONWEALTH ENVIRONMENTAL APPROVAL POWERS  
**Hansard Page:** N/A  
**Question Date:** 29 October 2014  
**Question Type:** Written

**Senator Waters asked:**

There isn't a figure in the report for the predicted average reduction in delay to compare to the MCA's claim about one year or two years. What is the current average delay at the Federal approval stage is?

- a. The median delay between which is cited in the report for the 52 biggest projects in the last 10 years ranges from 41 ordinary days for infrastructure, 57 ordinary days for residential and commercial and 69 ordinary days for mining and energy projects. How does that compare to the statutory time limit of 20 – 40 business days?
- b. The Department's analysis assumes (p.9) that, "There will be no increase in state and territory approval timeframes under the One-Stop Shop, as state and territory governments will continue to make approval decisions according to existing processes and statutory timeframes" Upon what evidence did the Department base that assumption?
- c. Since they will get extra work to, and since they've just lost staff, isn't it actually more reasonable to expect that delays will increase rather than decrease if the States are in charge?

**Answer:**

The Department calculated delays for 52 projects, where the Commonwealth approval came after a state or territory approval, by analysing real project data from internal Departmental databases. The unweighted average delay experienced by these 52 projects was 188 days from a state or territory approval date.

- a. The Department's method to estimate savings to business from the One-Stop Shop for environmental approvals considered delays in calendar days rather than business days to more accurately reflect the financial impact experienced by business. All delays used in the Department's calculations, including the median delays quoted above, are based on total delay after state approval irrespective of any statutory time limits.
- b. The assumption is based on the fact that the One-Stop Shop will operate within existing state processes. The One-Stop Shop involves approval bilateral agreements under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) which accredits existing state and territory processes where those processes meet EPBC Act requirements. States and territories will continue to work to the statutory timeframes within their processes.

- c. The delay is calculated on the number of days after a state or territory approval that a Commonwealth approval decision was made. The Department has assumed the delay will decrease because Commonwealth approval is no longer required.