

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

Group 3

Question No. 117

Senator Singh asked the following question at the hearing on 24 February 2014:

The answer to the question at the hearings about the backlog in access decisions is noted. Is it the case, as alleged in the Age article 8 February 2014, that the national security agencies (who must process requests relating to their agencies) view public researchers with “disinterest bordering on contempt”, and will not allocate staff to process the requests? The measures being taken within Archives to reduce the backlog are noted. What measures have been taken to assist the security agencies to expedite their decision making?

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

The Archives is not aware of the national security agencies expressing this view.

The Archives has reviewed the arrangements with the security agencies and provided a timeline for engagement for referrals within a framework of 90 days. The Director-General of the Archives has also written to agencies reminding them of their responsibilities under the Archives Act.

Two projects are underway to address the backlog of applications, one to examine the backlog and the other to improve practices so that a new backlog of applications does not accumulate. The Archives is working closely with agencies to review referral guidelines and develop new procedures around examination by agencies to further reduce any backlog accumulating.