

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING: 24 March 2017

IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

(AE17/270) - Visa overstays - Programme 2.3: Visas

Senator Pratt, Louise (L&CA) written:

How many people in Australia are currently overstaying their visa?

How many people who overstayed their visa were removed from Australia in the last 12 months?

Please provide data from the past 5 years.

What is the longest amount of time that someone has overstayed their visa?

What is the average amount of time that someone overstays their visa?

What steps does the Department undertake to locate and remove someone who has overstayed their visa?

Answer:

How many people in Australia are currently overstaying their visa?

As at 30 June 2016, there were 64,600 unlawful non-citizens in the community who had overstayed a visa or had their visa cancelled onshore. This figure is an estimate only and is captured yearly.

How many people who overstayed their visa were removed from Australia in the last 12 months? Please provide data from the past 5 years.

Figures in the table below for 2011-12 to 2015-16 were extracted from Departmental systems on 11 July 2016. Figures for 2016-17 (Jul-Mar) were extracted from Departmental systems as at 07 April 2017. As data has been drawn from a live systems environment, the figures provided may differ slightly in previous or future reporting.

Onshore departures (assisted/managed) returns and removals*						
	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17 (Jul-Mar)
Total	10,622	13,296	14,978	14,848	14,548	10,967

* Figures includes onshore assisted/managed departures and does not include departures of non-citizens from Offshore Processing Centres. Removals from onshore immigration detention figures include illegal foreign fishers (IFFs), IMAs and border turnarounds (sea and air arrivals who were not immigration cleared). **Note** that reporting in relation to returns and removals has changed, due to recently implemented improvements to methodologies for producing these datasets. As a result, figures may differ from those previously reported.

What is the longest amount of time that someone has overstayed their visa? The longest amount of time is 15 years or more, that people have overstayed a visa remaining unlawfully in Australia.

What is the average amount of time that someone overstays their visa?

Based on recent analysis of Departmental records, the estimated average amount of time that a non-citizen overstays a visa is between 96 and 97 days.

What steps does the Department undertake to locate and remove someone who has overstayed their visa?

The Department fosters an environment of voluntary compliance through:

- provision of information when a person is applying for and granted a visa regarding visa conditions and expiry date
- information services for visa holders to check their visa details and conditions during their stay in Australia through the Visa Entitlement Verification Online (VEVO) system, the MyVEVO app and ImmiAccount
- the Status Resolution Service which provides a range of support services to help resolve the immigration status of those who have overstayed their visa
- the grant of short-stay Bridging E visas with appropriate conditions attached that allow over-stayers to lawfully reside in the community while they prepare for departure
- awareness campaigns and outreach activities with communities aimed at encouraging visa holders to check their conditions, and if they become unlawful how to engage with the Department to resolve their immigration status

Targeted field compliance activity is regularly undertaken by Australian Border Force officers to locate unlawful non-citizens (UNCs) in the community in response to allegations or referrals received. Allegations are received through a variety of channels into the Department, including:

- the Border Watch Allegation and Referral Team (BWART), and
- The Immigration Status Service (ISS) that provides status checks in support of state and territory law enforcement and the Australian Federal Police.

The Department also works closely with other government agencies including through the sharing of information to locate unlawful non-citizens.

To reduce the number of UNCs, the Department has commenced a number of initiatives including; data matching with other government and non-government organisations; and using digital technologies to push key messages to current and future visa holders reminding them of their visa expiry date.