

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING : 22 May 2017

IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

(BE17/286) - Citizenship changes – feedback from the public - Programme 2.1: Citizenship

Senator Carr, Kim (L&CA) written:

Since the changes were announced, how many people have contacted the department?

what is the wait time on the phone?

what is happening with applications received after the announcement – are they being processed, put on hold?

What are people being advised?

What resources do staff have to provide advice? (reports of different advice given by staff)

Answer:

Since the changes were announced, how many people have contacted the Department?

Calls to the Department

- Immediately following the Government's announcement on 20 April 2017, there was an increase in the number of calls relating to the announcement.
- On 20 April 2017, following the announcement, the Sydney Service Centre received 5684 calls.
- On 21 April 2017, the Sydney Service Centre received 6153 calls about the Government's announcement. This number represented more than 63 per cent of all calls received by the Centre that day.
- By 24 April 2017, the number of calls began to reduce and return to the average level.

What is the wait time on the phone?

The average wait time at the Sydney Service Centre on 22 May 2017 was 19 minutes and 36 seconds and almost 60 per cent of calls relating to Citizenship were answered within 10 minutes.

Following the Government's announcement, there was an average increase in wait times. However, the Department has virtual holding technology (VHT) which calls the person back at a time of their choosing and service to minimise wait times.

In-person services

Following the Government's announcement, enquires about the citizenship test at our in-person client enquiry counters was higher than pre announcement, peaking at 336 on 24 April 2017.

What is happening with applications received after the announcement – are they being processed, put on hold?

The Department is still accepting applications for Australian Citizenship. Subject to the passage of legislation, the Department does not anticipate that the reforms will delay the process of new applications being lodged from the date of the Government's announcement.

What are people being advised?

Departmental correspondence and information is available on the Department's website. It provides the following advice to clients:

- *Subject to the passage of legislation required to enact some of the measures, the changes will come into effect, and apply to applications made from the date of the Government's announcement on 20 April 2017. The changes will not apply to applications made before 20 April 2017—that is, the current rules will continue to apply to applications made before 20 April 2017.*

What resources do staff have to provide advice? (reports of different advice given by staff)

The above advice for applicants was provided to client service and Citizenship staff for use when responding to client enquiries. It was also included in the Department's Enterprise Knowledge Support System (EKSS), which provides the client service network with a single source of information to ensure consistency across all enquiry channels.