

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING : 23 May 2017

IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

(BE17/290) - Legacy Caseload - Number on waiting lists - Programme 2.4: Refugee and Humanitarian Assistance

Senator McKim, Nick (L&CA 37-38) asked:

Senator McKIM: My questions are all for the minister, but I note that Ms Lauman has returned to the table and she was responding to questions in this area previously. Ms Lauman, you indicated in your evidence earlier that you have a stakeholder group that consists, at least in part, of some members of the refugee legal sector. Has the department been made aware through that group, or through any other process, how many applicants there are in the cohort that has yet to apply—that is the 7,194 people as of 14 May—who have approached legal services and are on waiting lists to make their applications? If you are aware, could you provide the committee with the number that the department has been informed of?

Ms Lauman: We have a general indication, but we do not have specific numbers.

Senator McKIM: The department has not been provided with a list of people?

Ms Lauman: Some legal service providers have provided lists, but others have chosen not to. So it is by no means definitive.

Senator McKIM: What, to the best of the department's knowledge, is the number?

Ms Lauman: I do not have that on me at the moment, I am afraid.

Senator McKIM: Okay. You do not know that off the top of your head?

Ms Lauman: Not off the top of my head. Certainly we are aware of media statements that have been made, but—

Senator McKIM: Yes.

Ms Zakharoff: Senator McKim—

Senator McKIM: Is that a response to that question?

Ms Zakharoff: I just want to make the point that not everyone requires legal services, nor do they—

Senator McKIM: I understand that.

Ms Zakharoff: So it would be an imperfect answer that we are able to provide, because not everyone who is yet to apply will seek legal services.

Senator McKIM: I appreciate that and I take no issue with that comment, but the answer will be perfect to the best of the department's capacity—

Ms Zakharoff: Yes.

Senator McKIM: because the question I asked was: is the department aware of the number that are on waiting lists that the department has been informed of? If you could take that on notice please and provide that to the committee, thank you.

Answer:

While there are media reports indicating a number of community sector organisations have up to 4000 IMAs on lists seeking assistance with applications lodgments, the Department has no view on the accuracy of this information. The Department does not hold complete and contemporary information on the number of IMAs who have sought, and are awaiting, assistance from the community sector to lodge a Temporary Protection visa or Safe Haven Enterprise visa application.