

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING : 17 October 2016

IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

(SE16/099) - SSVF delays for research students - Programme 2.3: Visas

Senator Carr, Kim (L&CA) written:

1. Assistant Minister Hawke is quoted in The Australian on 14 September 2016 as saying that there “was a national security imperative across the entire visa system”. What does he mean by that?
2. How does that interact with the introduction of the streamlined student visa framework system?
3. Are you aware of reports that there are continuing delays for postgraduate students?
4. I have written to the Minister regarding delays affecting a NHMRC funded research project at the University of Melbourne. In this case a student who won an international scholarship has had her application held up for more than a year because of ‘external checks’. What might these checks be?
5. Are these checks being conducted outside of the Department?
6. There are reports that the Department is now taking into account enrolment dates in allocating caseload? Is this the case?
7. Are you also taking into account the impact of research projects of continuing delays?

1. All people who apply for a visa to Australia must undergo mandatory health, character and security checks in order to meet the legislative requirements for the grant of a visa. These are set out as public interest criteria in Schedule 4, Part 1 of the Regulations and are designed to protect the Australian community.
2. The legislative requirements relating to mandatory health, character and security checks are not new to the student visa caseload and have been in place for many years.
3. The Department is aware of longer processing times for a small number of applicants in the postgraduate sector.

Processing timeframes vary from one case to another, depending on individual circumstances.

4. The Department is unable to grant a visa unless all requirements set out in Schedule 2 of the Regulations are satisfied.

5. Without specific details on the application which this question relates to the Department is unable to confirm.
6. To ensure equity and consistency in the processing of applications, the Department assesses student visa applications based on the date of lodgement. If required and, in limited circumstances, the course commencement date can be a consideration.
7. Yes.