

Tabled Document

No.3

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Senator Barnett commented during Estimates that he would be comparing with previous data he has received from Questions on Notice. These questions are different from those which he asked earlier. They focused mainly on the breakdown of the numbers of requests.

At the Additional Estimates hearings on 9 Feb 2010 he asked:

- (1) Has the Department/agency received any advice on how to respond to FOI requests?
- (2) How many FOI requests has the Department received?
- (3) How many have been granted or denied?
- (4) How many conclusive certificates have been issued in relation to FOI requests?

The answers are attached.

At the Budget estimates hearings on 27-28 May he asked:

In relation to question no. 1 from the February 2009 Additional Estimates hearing, provide a breakdown of those FOI requests and the purpose for which they are intended.

The answers are attached.

## QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

ADDITIONAL BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 9 FEBRUARY 2010

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

### (83) Program : Internal Product

Senator Barnett (L&CA ) asked:

- (1) Has the Department/agency received any advice on how to respond to FOI requests?
- (2) How many FOI requests has the Department received?
- (3) How many have been granted or denied?
- (4) How many conclusive certificates have been issued in relation to FOI requests?

*Answer:*

- (1) All FOI requests by DIAC are processed in accordance with the FOI Act, noting Senator Faulkner's 30 April 2009 letter to departmental secretaries and agency heads seeking to enhance a culture of disclosure.
- (2) From 1 July to 31 December 2009 the Department of Immigration and Citizenship received 5 765 requests (3 360 for access and 2 405 for amendments).
- (3) Of the 5 759 requests (3 300 access and 2 459 amendment) finalised by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship between 1 July and 31 December 2009, 3 448 (59.9%) were granted in full, 1 434 (24.9%) were granted in part, 637 (11.1%) were refused in full, and 240 (4.2%) were otherwise finalised (invalid, withdrawn, transferred)
- (4) Based on current records, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship has not issued any conclusive certificates under sections 33, 33A and 36 of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

## QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

### BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 27-28 MAY 2009

#### IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

##### (5) Output : Internal Product

Senator Barnett (L&CA 52) asked:

In relation to question no. 1 from the February 2009 Additional Estimates hearing, provide a breakdown of those FOI requests and the purpose for which they are intended.

*Answer:*

For the period 1 July to 31 December 2008:

1,153 FOI requests were granted in part;  
1,210 were granted in full, and  
166 were refused.

##### **2,529 Total**

Of the 2,529 requests finalised between 1 July and 31 December 2008, 1,368 were applications from or on behalf of individuals for personal information while the remaining 1,161 requests were from members of the public, the media or from organisations seeking non-personal information, including policy documents, statistics and third party information.

For the period 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008:

7,286 FOI requests were granted in part;  
4,216 were granted in full, and  
385 were refused.

##### **11,897 Total**

Of the 11,897 requests finalised between 1 July 2007 and 30 June 2008, 8,976 were applications from or on behalf of individuals for personal information. The remaining 2,921 requests were from members of the public, the media or from organisations seeking non-personal information, including policy documents, statistics and third party information.

Senator Barnett sought information on changes in FOI performance. The information is as follows.

FOI Compliance Statistics; the percentage of cases processed within the 30 day statutory requirement; the DIAC internal service standard is 90%; it is unlikely that we would achieve 100% compliance because of the complexity of some cases.

2009-10 (to 30 April 2010)

	Jul-09	Aug-09	Sep-09	Oct-09	Nov-09	Dec-09	Jan-10	Feb-10	Mar-10	Apr-10
DIAC %	46.70%	51.30%	56.30%	54.80%	68.60%	76.00%	76.30%	86.80%	88.30%	90.10%
DIAC requests on hand	1 244	1 147	1 300	1 233	1 001	750	880	984	905	808
NSW	38.90%	54.60%	58.40%	58.80%	67.50%	79.70%	77.60%	88.50%	88.60%	87.30%
VIC	49.30%	53.50%	53.80%	50.60%	70.10%	73.70%	76.80%	86.20%	89.00%	93.30%

2008-09

	Jul-08	Aug-08	Sep-08	Oct-08	Nov-08	Dec-08	Jan-09	Feb-09	Mar-09	Apr-09	May-09	Jun-09	
DIAC	81.10%	81.90%	59.20%	61.80%	69.60%	57.50%	65.20%	73.20%	81.30%	72.20%	62.70%	66.90%	
DIAC requests on hand		Data prior to February 2009 is not readily available											
NSW*	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	79.60%	80.30%	83.80%	83.20%	82.30%	79.70%	67.20%	68.50%	
VIC	79.00%	77.40%	45.20%	47.80%	58.50%	41.40%	52.70%	66.50%	80.40%	65.00%	57.20%	64.60%	

\* The NSW FOI site was not established until October 2008, with the first results available from November 2008.

**In relation to the improvement in the numbers of the FOI requests completed, Senator Barnett asked how was this significant improvement in performance achieved? Did the team redesign their business processes/improve workflow?**

Our focus has been on meeting the service standard of processing requests within 30 days. Common strategies that have been deployed include:

- Corporate messages delivered Department-wide reminding staff to maintain good record-keeping practices, particularly the return of original documents to clients and dealing with requests outside FOI where possible;
- an ongoing and proactive campaign to identify requests that can be processed outside the FOI Act, thereby reducing the number of formal requests. This involves raising staff awareness to assist clients to obtain their own information without the need for them to lodge a formal FOI request.
- the implementation of a case-management approach, including initiating processing within the first 24 hours of receipt where possible;
- proactive monitoring of our case load to address issues well in advance of the 30-day service standard;
- better engagement with clients/applicants to improve response times. This has included discussions to identify particular documents needed rather than whole files;
- embracing electronic processing and record-keeping;
- effective use of our case management system (Resolve) to identify, target and finalise requests within the service standard;
- establishing a program of ongoing, targeted training to improve understanding and performance;
- timely escalation of file transfer delays; and
- better engagement with other key stakeholders to improve response times.