

## QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

### SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 17 OCTOBER 2011

#### IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

#### (SE11/0163) Program 1.1: Visa and Migration

Senator Cash asked:

What is the number of Labour Agreement submissions pending a decision before the Department, and more importantly, the exact timeframe they have been in the pipeline?

*Answer:*

As at 31 October 2011, there were 77 requests on hand for a Labour Agreement pending a decision, with the longest negotiation period being 1428 days and the shortest being seven days.

There are only 13 cases which have been on hand for more than a year. The negotiation which has been going on for 1428 days was repeatedly stalled due to the employer failing to provide requested information and then suspending activity during the GFC. Negotiations have actively resumed and a Labour Agreement is likely to be approved in the near future.

Of the 77 negotiations currently underway, the amount of time they have been on hand is as follows:

less than 3 months	between 3 and 6 months	between 6 and 12 months	more than 12 months
23	26	15	13

The older cases are typically from employers in the Accommodation and Food, Agriculture, Fishing and Forestry, and Mining, Manufacturing and Construction industries, seeking substantial concessions. Where substantial concessions are sought, negotiations often take longer due to the amount of evidence required and integrity measures that must be built in to the Labour Agreement.

While the majority of Labour Agreement negotiations progress in a timely manner, those cases which have been on hand for a long time are usually the result of the client not providing information requested by the Department. Additional information is requested to ensure that a fully informed assessment of the employer's business case is conducted. This is to confirm that there is a genuine need for overseas workers and that a labour agreement would not undermine employment and training opportunities for Australians.