

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 15 October 2012

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(SE12/0260) PROGRAM – 1.1: Visa and Migration

Senator McKenzie (written) asked:

My office received advice from Departmental officers that due to the unprecedented volume of applications received in the ENS/RSMS processing centres prior to legislative change on July 1, clients might expect to wait for nine months for their case to be allocated. Why did the Department not prepare for the extra applications and why are they not now allocating additional resources to ensure faster processing times?

Answer:

The Department did prepare for additional applications. The nine month wait for the finalisation of a case, is a worst case scenario. Many applications will be processed in much less time than this. Processing centres continue to meet the published processing standards. The department will process 75% of applications lodged in the following circumstances:

- Pre - 1 July 2012 applications from low risk countries (ETA eligible) have a standard of 5 months and for high risk countries, this is 8 months.
- Post - 1 July 2012 applications have a standard of 6 months.

The publishing of a nine month processing time frame, manages client/agent expectations, thus avoiding regular client/agent enquiries about the status of applications which diverts efforts from processing cases. It is evident that the rush of applications accounted for much of the future pipeline of cases. A reduced lodgement rate post 1 July 2012, is also enabling quicker progress through the pipeline of cases than expected. While the Department has employed additional staff, the focus has been on working more efficiently to finalise the applications quicker than might otherwise be the case.