

Submission to:

Inquiry into Auditor-General Report No. 25 (2018–19)

Efficiency of the Processing of Applications for

Citizenship by Conferral

Janis Una Myra Burt

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Date of Application for Citizenship: 24 April 2018

Status of Application at 24 Oct 2019: 'Received'

Nationality: British

Arrived in Sydney: 09 January 1971 (age 14) - Skilled migration program.

In December of 2017 (age 61), I was made redundant from my job of almost 19 years. I am a self-taught graphic designer working mainly in with the printing industry for more than thirty years. My partner and I have no income so we are living off savings that were meant for eventual retirement.

After applying for several jobs and getting no interviews, I concluded that I needed to up-skill and gain formal qualifications. This would give me the option to work from home, should employment prove difficult due to my age. To this end, I applied for Australian Citizenship on 24 April 2018 with a view to starting my bachelor degree full-time in early 2019.

When time came to enrol I had to cut down to two units from four because the fee was paid out of our savings. I completed the first semester hoping that my citizenship would be processed by the time I finished. I am now deferring for one semester, in the hope that my application will be approved before 2020.

I believe that the delay in the processing of my application is entirely unreasonable. My background is not complicated: I'm a British citizen, arriving in Australia as part of a skilled migration program along with my parents and siblings. I have no criminal record, I've worked, voted and paid taxes for around 46 years, and my English language is good. All members of my original family are Australian citizens and live in W.A.

The impact of all this is not only on my ability to earn income – it also creates a sense of helplessness and diminished self-worth because there's nothing I can do to plead my case. If I make an enquiry all I get is a 'brick wall'. I phoned the department and was told that I was 'well inside the expected time frame' (which expands constantly). Meanwhile, I am missing out on the social interaction and skill development that my studies at university would provide. I feel that I am taking one step forward and two steps back.

P.17- Time efficiency:	"Significant periods of inactivity are evident for both complex and non-complex applications accepted by the department for processing."
P.38- Unreasonable delay:	"Home Affairs did not have processes in place to monitor and address periods of processing inactivity, including the length of time between an application being received and substantive processing work commencing. "
P.26- Complexity:	"Citizenship applications from the humanitarian stream have been identified by Home Affairs as being the most complex to process on average and applications from the skilled stream as being the least complex. "