

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Environment portfolio

Question No: 367
Hearing: Supplementary Budget Estimates
Outcome: Corporate
Programme: Policy Analysis and Implementation
Topic: REGISTER OF ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANISATIONS
Hansard Page: N/A
Question Date: 29 October 2014
Question Type: Written

Senator Waters asked:

Please provide a table setting out the following information for each financial year between 2007-08 and 2013-14:

- a. How many applications for DGR status were made?
- b. How many applications were decided?
- c. How many applications were rejected and how many approved?
- d. What was the average waiting time for the applications decided in that financial year?
- e. The FTE staff dedicated to assessing applications for DGR status if possible
- f. If not possible, the number of individual staff dedicated to assessing applications for DGR status.

Answer:

Given the historical nature of the question, attempting to answer it would substantially and unreasonably divert the resources of the Department from its other operations.

In 2013–14, approximately 20 applications for entry onto the Register were received. This number is approximate as organisations may make incomplete applications, and additional documentation is requested to allow assessment of the application. Additionally, some organisations seek feedback on their founding documents (Constitution, Rules of Association, Deed of Trust etc) or other aspects of their application prior to making a formal application for entry onto the Register.

In 2013-14, 40 applications for entry onto the Register were approved by the Minister for the Environment and the Acting Assistant Treasurer. The dates on which organisations were entered onto the Register are publicly available at <http://www.environment.gov.au/about-us/business/tax/register-environmental-organisations/listed-organisations>.

In 2013–14, two applications for entry onto the Register were rejected by the Minister for the Environment.

Average waiting times for applications to be decided may be misleading. Waiting times can range from 30 days to years, depending on factors such as:

- organisations may make incomplete applications, and additional documentation is required to allow assessment of the application; or
- where an application does not meet various aspects of the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1997* (Cth), the Department provides feedback to the applicant and provides an opportunity to rectify those areas. This may involve amendments to their foundation documents which can be a lengthy process.

This year, the Department has virtually eliminated the application backlog, and is developing streamlining measures to further reduce the administrative burden on environmental organisations.

As at 30 June 2014, there was one full-time staff member (Executive Level 1) dedicated to Administration of the Register. This staff member has access to additional resources and assistance as required, including the services of the General Counsel Branch of the Department.