

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING : 27 February 2017

IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

(AE17/032) - FOI Requests - Internal Product (DIBP)

Senator Carr, Kim (L&CA 63) asked:

Senator KIM CARR: Of the 23,000 FOI requests that were lodged last year how many were completed on time?

Mr Wright: I will have to take that on notice because, as I said, there are varying timeframes. To be clear I would like to take that on notice.

Senator KIM CARR: How many requests for extensions were made by the department?

Mr Wright: Again, I do not have those precise figures in front of me.

Senator KIM CARR: Is it the practice of the department to seek an extension of time automatically?

Mr Wright: No.

Senator KIM CARR: It is not?

Mr Wright: No.

Mr Pezzullo: Are you asking about the entire case load of 23,000-odd applications?

Senator KIM CARR: Yes.

Mr Pezzullo: How many extensions have we sought?

Senator KIM CARR: Yes.

Mr Pezzullo: We will take that on notice.

Senator KIM CARR: I am interested to know at what point you seek an extension. Is there a process now in train to manage the workload where you seek an extension, as a matter of course?

Mr Wright: No, not as a matter of course. Generally, we do it up-front. It comes down to the type of request that is being put in. If the request appears to be voluminous in size then we will go back to the applicant to either revise the scope of the request, which is in line with the legislation, or to seek an extension to how long we have to provide the information.

Senator KIM CARR: That is why I was seeking to know how many requests that the department sought for an extension.

Mr Wright: I will take that on notice because I do not have the detail on that.

Answer:

1. Of the 22,913 FOI requests finalised in 2015-16, a total of 15,710 were finalised within statutory timeframes.

2. The Department does not keep statistics on the number of times it sought an extension of time under the FOI Act in 2015-16. To obtain this statistic a review of all 22,913 FOI requests would be required which the Department considers to be an unreasonable diversion of resources.

The number of extensions of time granted for 2015-16, was as follows:

Section 15AA extension of time (granted by the FOI applicant)	5,171
Section 15AB extension of time (within statutory timeframe but complex or voluminous, granted by the OAIC)	28
Section 15AC extension of time (outside statutory timeframe, granted by the OAIC)	5
Total	5,204