

## QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

**BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING : 23 May 2017**

IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

**(BE17/096) - Citizenship test - english language capability - Programme 2.1:  
Citizenship**

Senator Watt, Murray (L&CA 43) asked:

Senator WATT: Before I deal with the English-language testing aspect, what modelling has been done to determine the proportion of people who are currently gaining citizenship who would not qualify for citizenship on the basis of these new tests?

Mr Pezzullo: Or would find it harder to qualify. I think that is probably the better way to put it. Mr Wilden?

Mr Wilden: It is very hard to model the starting point, because there are a number of unknowns.

Mr Pezzullo: But are they known unknowns?

Mr Wilden: They are known unknowns. There are several known unknowns such as a person's current standard of English. We do not test for it; that does not mean they do not possess it. In those respects, it is very hard to say. There is a large group of people who come through who are from English-speaking countries and whom you would expect to pass. There is the group who come through the direct-entry skill program who are going to be requiring English language at that level. So there is a number of cohorts who already would meet that standard based on those profiles. There is another group that, obviously, we know might have a slightly longer journey because they will have to focus on their English language if they are from non-English-speaking and disadvantaged backgrounds such as refugee humanitarian. And there is a group in the middle where we do not have enough information about their current level of English to know how that will translate.

Mr Pezzullo: To add to Mr Wilden's evidence: I think it is also the case that the other known unknown is the number of people who otherwise would have failed or not successfully passed the test—let's put it that way—at the third attempt who now are coming back for a fourth, fifth or whatever number of attempts to eventually get to a point where they have passed the test. Do we have data on how many people go beyond three?

Mr Wilden: Yes. I do not have it available. We can provide on notice the number of attempts people do make. Those who pass—

Mr Pezzullo: So that is another variable.

Mr Wilden: That is right, yes. There is a high pass mark for the first attempt, but you very quickly get to the need for many people to have multiple attempts.

*Answer:*

Of the 92,149 clients who sat the citizenship test from 1 July 2016 to 31 May 2017 and passed, 1,979 clients (2 per cent) sat the test three times or more.