

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

ADDITIONAL BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 9 FEBRUARY 2010

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(108) Program 6.1: Multicultural and Citizenship Services

Senator Humphries asked:

In response to question 118 following the October Estimates, DIAC provided details of:

- (1) How many people have passed the citizenship test in 06/07, 07/08, 08/09?
- (2) How many people failed in the citizenship test during the same periods?
- (3) How many exemptions were granted for the citizenship test in the same period?
- (4) How many were assisted during the citizenship test?
- (5) What nationalities are people sitting the test?

Can this information be updated to include 09/10 to date?

Answer:

- (1) There were no citizenship tests administered in 2006/07. The Australian citizenship test was introduced on 1 October 2007.

In 2007/08, 46 500 clients passed the test on their first or subsequent attempt.

In 2008/09, 87 413 clients passed the test on their first or subsequent attempt.

From 1 July 2009 to 31 January 2010, 44 985 clients passed the test on their first or subsequent attempt.

- (2) In 2007/08, 2213 clients had attempted the citizenship test and not passed by 30 June 2008.

In 2008/09, 3439 clients had attempted the citizenship test and not passed by 30 June 2009.

From 1 July 2009 to 31 January 2010, 1641 clients had attempted the citizenship test and not passed by 31 January 2010.

- (3) Under the legislation there are no discretions allowing the Minister, or a delegate, to exempt a person who is an applicant for citizenship by conferral from the citizenship test.

However, the following persons are identified within the legislation as not required to sit a citizenship test (ie, there is no legislative requirement for these persons to undertake the test):

- those who lodged their citizenship application before 1 October 2007
- those aged under 18
- those aged 60 and over
- those who suffer from a substantial impairment or loss of hearing, speech or sight
- those who can provide specialist medical evidence of a permanent or enduring physical or mental incapacity which means they are not capable of:
 - understanding the nature of their application, or
 - demonstrating a basic knowledge of the English language, or
 - demonstrating an adequate knowledge of Australia and of the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship
- those who were born to a former Australian citizen
- those who were born in Papua before 16 September 1975 to an Australian citizen born in Australia as currently defined
- persons who are stateless and were born in Australia.

Departmental systems have only recently been updated to support reporting on the number of applicants within the above categories. During January 2010, 100 clients acquired Australian citizenship without having to sit the Australian citizenship test.

- (4). There is an assisted test of 90 minutes duration. In 2007/08, 560 assisted tests (1% of total test attempts) were administered including re-sits where the client did not pass on their first or subsequent attempt.

In 2008/09, 1106 assisted tests (1% of total test attempts) were administered including re-sits.

From 1 July 2009 to 31 January 2010, 300 assisted tests (0.5% of total test attempts) were administered including re-sits.

- (5) In 2007/08, clients born in more than 172 countries sat the test. The top ten countries by birth with the highest client participation were the United Kingdom, China, India, Iraq, South Africa, the Philippines, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Sudan.

In 2008/09, the top ten countries by birth with the highest client participation were the United Kingdom, India, China, South Africa, the Philippines, Bangladesh, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, Vietnam and Iraq.

From 1 July 2009 to 31 January 2010, the top ten countries by birth with the highest client participation were India, the United Kingdom, China, South Africa, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, New Zealand, Vietnam, Bangladesh and Malaysia.