

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

ADDITIONAL BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 21 FEBRUARY 2011

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(120) Program 2.1: Refugee and Humanitarian Assistance

Senator Cash asked:

In an answer to a question in writing regarding the number of people with offshore Humanitarian Program applications under consideration, the Department provided information which showed that 35,540 applications were under consideration. Would all of these applications have an Australian sponsor? How long will it take to process all those applications and when will they be issued visas to Australia?

Answer:

There are two groups of applicants for humanitarian visas who require an Australian proposer:

- All applicants for a subclass 202 visa
- Persons applying for subclasses 200, 201, 203 and 204 visas under the immediate family provisions (spouses, dependent children, or where the proposer is aged under 18 years, their parents).

For visa subclass 202 (Global Special Humanitarian visas), all applicants must be proposed. People seeking to propose their immediate family members (spouses, dependent children or, where the proposer is aged under 18 years, their parents) must be either an Australian citizen or a permanent resident. For other subclass 202 visa applications, the proposer may have any connection with the applicant, and must be an Australian citizen or permanent resident, an eligible New Zealand citizen or an organisation operating in Australia.

For visa subclasses 200, 201, 203 and 204 (Refugee visas), only persons applying under the immediate family provisions require an Australian proposer. The applicant must be the spouse, dependent child or, where the proposer is aged under 18 years, the parents of the Australian proposer. The proposer must be an Australian citizen or permanent resident of Australia. These applications make up a very small proportion of applications for Refugee visas. A proposer is not required for any other application made for visa subclasses 200, 201, 203 and 204.

For the 2010–11 program year to date (1 July 2010 to 28 February 2011), it took an average of 29 weeks to finalise cases. The Department's service standard is to finalise 75 per cent of cases within 12 months (52 weeks).

In order to be granted a visa, the applicant must meet all of the visa criteria. Not all applicants currently being assessed will meet visa criteria and therefore not all will be granted visas.