

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

ADDITIONAL BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 21 FEBRUARY 2011

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(68) Program 1.1: Visa and Migration

Senator Cash asked:

How many are subject to a Labour Agreement?

What is the average processing time for those 457 visas subject to Labour Agreements and those which are not?

Answer:

In the 2009-2010 program year 980 primary Subclass 457 visas were granted under a labour agreement. In the 2009 -2010 program year, the mean processing time for Subclass 457 visas granted under a labour agreement was 83 days and the median processing time was 45 days.

In the 2010-11 program year to 28 February 2011, the mean processing time for Subclass 457 visas granted under a labour agreement has reduced to 38 days, while the median processing time has reduced to 17 days.

In 2009-10 the mean processing time for all Subclass 457 visa grants was 37 days and the median processing time was 21 days.

In 2010-11, to 28 February 2011, the mean processing time for all Subclass 457 visa grants has reduced to 33 days while the median processing time remains at 21 days. The median processing time has been as low as 18 days as at 31 December 2010. The small increase in median processing time since then is due to a sharp increase in applications in recent months.

In the 2009-10 program year there was a longer processing time for Subclass 457 visas granted under a labour agreement than for visas granted under the standard 457 program. This was because the Department accepts visa applications in association with a labour agreement request as soon as an employer has provided a formal labour agreement submission. This allows those visa holders who are onshore and working for the employer to be granted a bridging visa while the labour agreement request is being negotiated. The Department cannot lawfully approve the visa application until the outcome of the labour agreement request is known.

With the negotiation timeframe for labour agreements reducing significantly since the introduction of a streamlined decision-making framework in October 2010, processing times for visa applications under a labour agreement are now on par with processing times under the standard program.