

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

ADDITIONAL BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 21 FEBRUARY 2011

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(75) Program 1.1: Visa and Migration

Senator Cash asked:

How long is it taking to provide skills assessment? Is there a backlog on any particular skills? How many departmental officers are employed in the skills processing centre? Will there be any additional people engaged to ensure the government's promise for a five-day turnaround is met?

Answer:

Senator Cash's questions refer to both the General Skilled Migration (GSM) and the Long Stay Business visas (Subclass 457) programs. The response to the last question is with reference to Subclass 457 visas. There was no promise made by the Government for a five day turnaround for GSM visas.

Skills Assessments are provided by assessing authorities specified under the Migration Regulations. Assessing authorities determine the length of time needed to assess the skills of applicants. For the top 10 occupations granted in GSM in the program year to the end of February 2011, the times taken for skills assessments are tabulated below:

	Occupation	Assessing Authority	Processing Time as published on assessing authority websites
1	Accountant (General)	Chartered Practising Accountants Australia (CPA)	Ten working days.
1	Accountant (General)	Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia (ICAA)	One to four weeks with fast track service available.
1	Accountant (General)	National Institute of Accountants (NIA)	Four to six weeks.
2	Software and Applications Programmer (NEC)	Australian Computer Society (ACS)	Twelve weeks.
3	Registered Nurse (NEC)	Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (ANMC)	Six to eight weeks.
4	Motor Mechanic (general)	Trades Recognition Australia (TRA)	The majority of applications are assessed within 30 working days.
5	Cook	Trades Recognition Australia (TRA)	The majority of applications are assessed within 30 working days.

6	Electronics Engineer	Engineers Australia	Sixteen weeks from the date of receipt. Accredited Australian and Accord qualifications – currently about 3-4 weeks.
7	Mechanical Engineer	Engineers Australia	As above.
8	Civil Engineer	Engineers Australia	As above.
9	General Medical Practitioner	Medical Board of Australia	Six to eight weeks. Assessment Process for Area of Need Specialists within approximately five working days.
10	Electrician (general)	Trades Recognition Australia (TRA)	The majority of applications are assessed within 30 working days.

The Department is not aware of a backlog beyond published timeframes in skills assessments for these occupations.

At end January 2011 there were 193.75 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Departmental officers employed at GSM visa processing centres. At end February 2011 there were 148.58 FTE employed at Subclass 457 visa processing centres.

With reference to Subclass 457 visas:

Currently, a five-day processing time for complete, decision-ready Subclass 457 applications is only offered where applications are supported through a robust, transparent process of endorsement by the Queensland Government for flood-related reconstruction work. To date there has been only modest demand for this endorsement and the priority processing measure has only required two staff members and not on a full-time basis. A broader pool of experienced staff is available to process these applications if the volume increases.