

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 28 MAY 2008

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(33) Output 1.1: Migration and Temporary Entry

Senator Ellison (L&CA 69) asked:

Is there an assessment as to the average time that is spent waiting to sit the English language tests, and is there a breakdown of country and location?

Answer:

International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is the preferred English language test for visa applicants required to provide evidence of their English language proficiency. IDP Education Pty Ltd (IDP), through its subsidiary IELTS Australia Pty Ltd, is a partner in IELTS. IELTS tests are delivered at over 450 test locations in 121 countries. IDP's fellow IELTS partners are the British Council and Cambridge University.

Following consultation with their IELTS partners, IDP have advised that there are currently no delays in test registration and candidates would be able to secure a test date within 4-8 weeks in all countries.

In high capacity markets like India the test is offered in approximately 40 different locations on average three times per month. There is capacity to test approximately 16,000-20,000 candidates per month. Candidates can register up to one week before a test date. At present there is no waiting time in India.

In the People's Republic of China (PRC), the test is offered in approximately 30 locations on average four times per month. There is capacity to test between 23,000 and 26,000 candidates per month. The top 12 test locations in China are:

1. Beijing
2. Shanghai
3. Shenyang
4. Guangzhou
5. Nanning
6. Tianjin
7. Zhengzhou
8. Fuzhou
9. Wuhan
10. Hangzhou
11. Nanjing
12. Shenzhen

These test centres account for 70 percent of the IELTS test volume in the PRC. The average waiting time for the top 12 is under four weeks for the “Academic” test and under five weeks for “General Training” test. An additional 1200 places for the “General Training” test has been scheduled for July/August to assist applicants in northern China.

Both IDP and British Council carefully monitor waiting times in all locations and in countries where demand exceeds centre capacity the Test Partners have the capacity to conduct mega tests to ensure access is available and to support our centre network. Most recently IELTS Australia has arranged at short notice a mega test in South Africa to assist candidates to gain access to the test prior to 30 June. Three hundred places were offered and to date 202 candidates have registered for a place.

In the past 12 months from 1 April 2007 to 30 March 2008 just over one million test places were made available for candidates in response to the demand for tests.