

## QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

### BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 27 MAY 2009

#### IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

##### (6) Program 1.1: Visa and Migration

Senator Fierravanti-Wells (L&CA 61 and 62) asked:

Have we done an audit of how many agents operate out there, both registered and non-registered? Do we actually know? Is there an estimate of how many complaints have been received about unregistered migration agents? Has any work been done with regard to whether there is some form of sampling, surveying such as client surveying or some other form of registering that and is that a sensible expenditure of resources?

*Answer:*

As at 30 April 2009 there were 4069 migration agents registered with the Migration Agents Registration Authority.

By its very nature, unregistered practice is difficult to quantify. This is because the provision of unregistered immigration assistance is an offence and those that engage in such conduct do so outside of the law.

Between 1 July 2008 and 17 June 2009, the Department received 61 allegations of unregistered immigration assistance. As at 17 June 2009, there are 27 active investigations on hand.

To date, the Department has not conducted a formal survey of clients engaging unregistered agents and at the present time there are no plans to do so. However, the Department is taking a proactive approach to addressing unregistered practice, implementing a range of strategies including:

- advising clients that if they choose to use a migration agent they should use a registered agent;
- providing warning letters to unregistered persons who may not be aware that they need to be registered in order to provide immigration assistance;
- implementing an Infringement Notice Scheme that will enable delegated departmental officers to impose a fine on individuals engaging in unregistered activity;
- discouraging the advertising of unregistered practice;
- providing better information to client contact staff around Australia to help them consistently and appropriately respond to suspected cases of unregistered practice; and
- considering ways in which the availability of low or no cost immigration advice services could be increased.