

## QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

### BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 26 MAY 2010

#### IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

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

Senator Humphries (L&C 63) asked:

Has the length in time for processing international student visas increased since the introduction of the integrity measures? If so, by how much?

*Answer:*

The Department measures the time for finalising Student visas against service delivery standards based on Assessment Levels. The Department aims to finalise at least 75 per cent of a caseload within the service delivery standard.

Student visa applications are assessed according to their level of immigration risk. Levels of risk are categorised into Assessment Levels (AL), with AL1 representing the lowest immigration risk and AL 5 as the highest. The higher the AL, the higher the minimum evidentiary standards are which an applicant has to satisfy (for example their financial capacity, English proficiency and other requirements).

The prescribed service delivery standards for Student visas are provided below, and are available on the Department's website.

#### **Applicant outside Australia at time application is lodged**

Assessment Level 1	Assessment Level 2	Assessment Levels 3 & 4
14 days	21 days	90 days

#### **Applicant in Australia at time application is lodged**

Assessment Levels 1 & 2	Assessment Levels 3 & 4
14 days	30 days

#### **Impact of integrity measures on service delivery standards**

In August 2009, the Department implemented new measures to strengthen checks on Student visa applications in high risk areas of the student market. The measures targeted parts of the Student visa caseload in India, Mauritius, Nepal, Brazil, Zimbabwe and Pakistan.

In conjunction with the enhanced document checking, the new measures include interviewing of clients in relation to their genuine intention to study and their ability to sustain the cost of living in Australia.

While the impact is dependent upon on the quality of Student visa applications the Department has received, the new measures increased Student visa processing times in the first few months of its implementation in affected countries.

Over the last few months the processing times have returned to levels comparable to those prior to the implementation of the new measures. As at 31 May 2010, the total offshore average processing times for Student visa applications indicate that the current program year has outperformed the previous program year in meeting Student visa service delivery standards.