

## QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

### BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 27-28 May 2013

#### IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

#### **(BE13/0290) PROGRAM – 1.1: Visa and Migration**

Senator Cash (Written) asked:

What is the turnaround time for tourist visa applications by post for (a) individuals and (b) groups? How does this turnaround time compare internationally with, for example, countries such as the USA, Singapore and the UK.

*Answer:*

While the Department does receive applications for groups of people travelling together, visa applications are usually processed individually. It is therefore difficult to provide turnaround for groups. However, the Australian Government does have some special arrangements that allow for quicker processing of large groups of visitors from the People's Republic of China through the Approved Destination Status (ADS) Scheme.

In terms of other countries of origin, the large majority of visitors to Australia enter on an Electronic Travel Authority (ETA) which is generally granted within minutes of electronic application. In the period from July 2012 – March 2013 there have been over 1.6 million ETAs granted.

Of those not eligible for ETAs, during the quarter ending 31 March 2013, 75 per cent of *offshore* Tourist (subclass 676) visa applications were processed within 11 calendar days. These processing times are consistent with the previous quarter.

During the quarter ending 31 March 2013, 75 per cent of *onshore* Tourist (subclass 676) visa applications were processed within nine calendar days. Statistics on Australia's Visitor visa processing times are published quarterly on the Department's website at <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/statistics/pdf/visitor/visitor-visa-quarterly-report-mar13.pdf>

It is difficult to compare visa processing times against other countries as this information is not held by the Department. Additionally, different countries will have different visa products that will not necessarily align with Australia's.