

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 21 OCTOBER 2008

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(66) Output 2.3: Australian Citizenship

Senator Fierravanti-Wells (L&CA 120) asked:

In relation to citizenship ceremonies, is it appropriate for the presiding officer to also represent the minister and read the minister's message?

Answer:

The vast majority of Australian citizenship ceremonies are conducted by local government councils. In most cases the local Mayor is the presiding officer.

It is a requirement that the Minister is invited to all Australian citizenship ceremonies. In practical terms he cannot attend every ceremony and therefore often nominates a representative to attend the ceremony on his behalf.

The representative may be a government member of the House of Representatives, a government senator, a senior officer of the department or another person deemed appropriate by the Minister.

The role of the representative is to read a short welcoming message from the Minister at the beginning of the ceremony.

When neither the Minister nor his representative attends a ceremony, the Minister's message must be read by the presiding officer. The presiding officer does so, not as a representative of the Minister, but rather in the capacity of presiding officer.

Citizenship ceremonies are apolitical and bipartisan. They must not be used as forums for political or partisan expression or for the distribution of political material. All elected local representatives at the federal, state or territory, and local government level, should over time have an opportunity to provide a welcoming speech to citizenship candidates. Not all elected representatives should speak at every ceremony.