QTON No. 002

Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory
Standing Committee on Public Accounts and Administration

Inquiry into Home Buyer Concession Scheme Administration

Answer to question taken on notice

Asked by: Mr James Milligan MLA

Addressed to: Ms Lisa Holmes, Acting Commissioner for Revenue, Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

In relation to: Assessment of applications for the Home Buyer Concession Scheme

Hearing: 15 October 2025
Uncorrected Proof Transcript p. 51
Transcript provided: 22 October 2025
Answer Due: 30 October 2025

Ms Holmes took on notice the following question:

THE CHAIR: I would just like to ask, how long is it estimated that it would take to assess each application? Not the reassessment, but when someone puts through an application, if you were to assess it, how long would you expect it would take for someone to run that assessments, providing all documents were provided?

Ms Stephen-Smith: If the Revenue Office were assessing it other than the residency requirement?

Ms Holmes: I would have to take that on notice.

THE CHAIR: Because if there was something introduced to say that every application must be assessed before given approval, we would like to know well how long would it take for that assessment to occur? And could you put it a timeframe for the department that every application must be assessed within seven days, let us say? Because you can go for a bank loan, apply for a bank loan and you will have an answer within five days.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Sometimes, it took my bank 28 days to get me an answer.

THE CHAIR: Yes. So you see where I am going with this? So yes, if you could sort of provide whatever you can?

The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

The ACT Revenue Office (ACTRO) cannot accurately estimate how long it would take to assess a Home Buyer Concession (HBC) application due to the number of factors that would impact any assessment. However, ACTRO has advised it could take a minimum of 10 business days. Factors and assumptions that affect this estimate include:

- the availability of additional funding to undertake this work, as it would be an additional function and would not replace subsequent compliance activities as any assessment would still be conditional;
- the current 'barrier-free processes' continuing, with the purchaser still indicating on their Buyer Verification Declaration that they are applying for the HBC and an HBC application and all required documents with correct information being lodged immediately after settlement/Land Titles registration; and
- the assessment process that was followed, including:
    - upload of property and transfer details into ACTRO systems after settlement and Land Titles registration as per current processes;
    - verification of documents provided (to the extent possible), noting documents might include contracts of sale, tax returns, payslips, mortgage/loan documents, and Court orders; and
    - determination and notification to homebuyer (via electronic means).

If assessment was required after a contract had been entered into but before settlement and transfer lodgement with Land Titles, extensive new processes and system changes would be required to establish ACTRO accounts prior to a settlement occurring (which might not subsequently occur). These accounts would then need to be verified against the Land Titles data after settlement occurs. This would result in a two-stage up-front assessment approach as well as subsequent compliance activity.

Any of these actions would result in increased administration for taxpayers and ACTRO. Compliance activity would also still be required to verify requirements like income, prior property ownership, and residency.

- The income criterion cannot be verified in real time – Australian Taxation Office (ATO) income data takes up to three months after the end of the financial year to be available (noting individuals usually have up until 31 October to lodge their tax returns). Depending on the timing of a property transaction, assessment of this criterion could take from weeks to up to 18 months to verify after (and if) a person has lodged their ATO tax return.
    - Further, the ATO may undertake its own compliance activity in relation to an individual's tax return, which may subsequently have a material impact on their eligibility for the HBC.
- Data to investigate prior property interests is not immediately available to ACTRO.
- The nature of the residency criterion precludes upfront assessment and can take more than two years, sometimes longer, before verification may commence (especially for new builds which would need to await a certificate of occupancy).

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and Administration

Signature:

Date: 30/10/25

Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA, Minister for Finance