



STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY
Mr Jeremy Hanson MLA (Chair), Dr Marisa Paterson MLA (Deputy Chair),
Ms Jo Clay MLA

Inquiry into ACT Budget 2021–22
ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE
26 October 2021

Asked by Mr Jeremy Hanson MLA on 26 October 2021: Dr John Boersig took on notice the following question(s):

[Ref: Hansard Transcript [DATE] [PAGE 15-16]]

In relation to:

THE CHAIR: No, I am going to take one.

You talked about the situation in Afghanistan. Could you explain more what that is that you are doing there? I mean, we are talking about foreign nationals or matters outside our jurisdictions. How are you getting involved in matters involving people in Afghanistan?

Dr Boersig: Because we provide migration and refugee advice as part of a commonwealth initiative. So the people coming into the ACT, there are something like 60 families that have come into the ACT, all on temporary visas. All those visas have to be reviewed and these are complex and lengthy processes that have to be submitted to government, detailed applications.

And just to do that with the volume of people, we are looking at—we are working with Red Cross, Companion House, to develop a—you call it a Tiger Team to meet this need which all comes up in the next few weeks. Those initial three-month visas are finishing and we are expecting a whole range of applications that will come in our door. There is no one else who is doing this work in the ACT.

THE CHAIR: Have you requested any surge funding for that or not?

Dr Boersig: We are talking to both the territory government and to the commonwealth government about that. In other jurisdictions some support is provided by state jurisdictions because we are a SHEV community, we welcome people into the ACT. And we are certainly approaching the commonwealth government but the long and the short of it is that we have got to direct resources to meet this need. These are dreadful stories of people who escaped at very short notice and it is trying to put their affairs in order. If you do not get these applications right three years down the track you can come a cropper. That is all used for further inquiries say, for example, by ASIO.

THE CHAIR: And, yes, well done on doing that work. Have you again been able to quantify, you know, what that surge means in terms of resources in dollar terms?

Dr Boersig: We were initially looking at 30 applications. We have previously thought there were about 30 people here. We have since found there are about 60. We are expecting to put on two people full-time to deal with that, as well as we are coordinating with about 10 volunteers, mostly law students, to come and help us do this. And we are trying to work with agents, a migration agent, to provide oversight with that on top of that.

THE CHAIR: Thanks. And can you take on notice, if you are able to, just give me a bit of a dollar figure of what that would be and over what period, because I assume that this is a bit of a temporary arrangement. It is not going to be ongoing. It would be an amount for this financial year and maybe going into next financial year, I am not sure. If you could just take that on notice if you are able to do that, please?

Dr John Boersig: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:—

Legal Aid Commission (ACT) expenses relating to processing the 60 Afghanistan migrants is estimated to be \$97,000, depending on disbursements. This expense will be incurred over a 3 month period and includes costs for two full time staff (one lawyer and one paralegal volunteer coordinator), one senior lawyer working 2 days per week, one migration agent working 1 days per week, and interpreter costs.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety

Signature:



Date: 2/11/21

By the Chief Executive Officer, Legal Aid Commission (ACT), Dr John Boersig