

Question on Notice

No. 1052

Asked on 13 October 2022

MR R KATTER ASKED THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL AND MINISTER FOR JUSTICE, MINISTER FOR WOMEN AND MINISTER FOR THE PREVENTION OF DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE (HON S FENTIMAN) –

QUESTION:

With reference to the 1,651 Blue Cards applied for in Queensland Indigenous communities of Aurukun, Cherbourg, Coen area, Doomadgee, Hope Vale, Kowanyama, Lockhart River, Mapoon, Mossman Gorge area, Mornington Island, Napranum, Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council communities, Palm Island, Pormpuraaw, Torres Strait Island Regional Council, Woorabinda, Wujal Wujal and Yarrabah—

Will the Attorney-General advise how many of these cards applied for in the 2021-22 period (a) have been approved, (b) have been denied and (c) are still awaiting an outcome?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Traeger for his question.

Blue Card Services (BCS) is committed to breaking down barriers for First Nations Queenslanders and over the last three years has implemented a number of strategies to provide support to First Nations applicants through each step of the blue card process, thus enabling greater participation in the system and better outcomes for First Nations applicants and their communities. In 2021-22, BCS:

- continued the implementation of the *Safe children and strong communities*¹ strategy and action plan;
- expanded the dedicated team of identified liaison officers that help First Nations stakeholders with the blue card application and assessment processes and to provide a cultural lens into the decision-making process;
- provided targeted cultural capability training for staff;
- developed educational resources and podcasts for First Nations' communities and individuals and provided free, tailored workshops in person and online;
- published regular Blue Card Yarns newsletters; and
- increased attendance in remote communities and at community events giving people the opportunity to learn about the blue card system, eligibility and how to apply.

¹ <https://www.publications.qld.gov.au/ckan-publications-attachments-prod/resources/7bdda690-f23e-45f0-996b-08f5f33f1849/safe-children-and-strong-communities.pdf?ETag=740314a09eabb693702bee873aba4ead>

As a result of the work BCS has undertaken in the 34 identified remote communities, the clearance rate has increased from 86% in 2019/20 to 89% in 2020/21 and 91% in 2021/22 and a reduction in negative notices from 3% in 2018/19 to 1.5% in 2021/22. Where an application did not proceed due to the applicant not responding to a request for information there has been a reduction from 5% in 2018/19 to 4% in 2021/22.

The below table provides responses to the Member's questions in respect of the 2021/22 period and reflect the statistics as at 20 October 2022.

Indigenous Community	Applied	Approved	Denied	Awaiting outcome
Aurukun	81	51	1	20
Cherbourg	80	54	2	16
Coen	26	23	0	2
Doomadgee	93	75	0	6
Hopevale	44	36	0	1
Kowanyama	68	50	2	6
Lockhart River	52	43	2	1
Mapoon	7	5	0	2
Mossman	245	235	0	3
Mornington Island (Gununa)	32	24	1	2
Napranum	33	24	0	2
Palm Island	119	90	6	14
Pormpuraaw	45	32	2	3
Woorabinda	97	70	4	15
Wujal Wujal	6	5	0	1
Yarrabah	145	122	2	13
NPA Regional Council	206	180	2	9
TSI Regional Council	272	261	1	2
TOTAL	1651	1380	25	118

Of the 25 people who were denied a blue card, BCS was mandated under the legislation to deny nine applications because the applicant was a disqualified person. Of the 16 remaining, nine applicants (56.3%) did not engage in the assessment process by not providing submissions when requested to do so and as a result the risks to children were unable to be mitigated.

Before denying a blue card, BCS undertakes extensive steps to make contact and assist the applicant to engage in the process. This includes BCS identified officers visiting community, attempting to contact the applicant by post/phone/email/text messaging, engaging with their known employer or community leaders.

Of the 118 applications awaiting an outcome, 72 (61%) of those are awaiting information from other agencies or from the applicant and cannot be progressed until that information is received, and 46 (39%) applications are at different stages of the assessment process.