



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

Trade Sub-Committee

MEDIA ALERT

Issued: 3 March 2015

Chair: Hon Bruce Scott MP

Deputy Chair: Maria Vamvakinou MP

Department of Immigration and Border Protection to discuss visas for tourism and students from the Middle East

The Department of Immigration and Border Protection will outline its key role in making Australia accessible for tourists, students and business people from the Middle East at a public hearing in Canberra tomorrow.

The Trade Sub-Committee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade wanted to hear from the Department for its inquiry into trade and investment with the Middle East following concerns raised about the complexity of Australia's visa process by diplomatic representatives of Middle Eastern countries at a roundtable last month.

More than 80,000 visitors came from the Middle East to Australia as tourists in 2013 with over half from the United Arab Emirates. According to the Tourism and Transport Forum (TTF), international air services to Australia from the Middle East grew 27 per cent in 2014, mostly due to the strength of Australian airline alliances with UAE-based carriers such as Emirates and Etihad.

The Middle East has been identified as a key growth market by Tourism Australia with estimates that visitors from the Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE have the potential to spend more than \$1 billion per annum as tourists in Australia. To promote this, the TTF is urging the government to streamline its visa system for the Gulf countries and also provide premium passenger services for passport control and customs for the high end visitors from the Middle East and offer similar services at business jet terminals.

The Department will also be asked to explain Australia's student visa process and how it can be streamlined to help Australian universities and other education providers attract more students from the Middle East ahead of higher education competitors from the United States of America, United Kingdom, Europe and New Zealand.

Public hearing

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| Date/Time | Wednesday 4 March 2015, 11:05 am |
| Location | Committee Room 1R3, Parliament House, Canberra |
| Organisation | Department of Immigration and Border Protection |

Live audio broadcast will be available at www.aph.gov.au/live

For media comment: contact the Trade sub-committee Chair, the Hon Bruce Scott MP on (02) 6277 4949 (Parliament House)

For background information: Further details about the inquiry, including the full terms of reference and how to contribute, can be obtained from the committee's website at www.aph.gov.au/jfadt or by contacting the committee secretariat on (02) 6277 2313 or emailing jscfadt@aph.gov.au.