

Joint Standing Committee on Migration

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Inquiry into the Working Holiday Maker program - 13 August 2020

Outcome: National Skills Commission

Department of Education, Skills and Employment Question No. IQ20-000176

Mr Julian Leaser MP on 13 August, Proof Hansard page 30–31

Temporary Visa Holders and the Agricultural labour market

Question

Senator HENDERSON: I want to just touch on the evidence given by Agri Labour a short time ago in relation to the suggestion that the working cap on international student visas be raised so as to unlock a workforce immediately. Is that something that you have looked at or considered?

Ms Jensen: That really is a matter for Home Affairs, who are responsible for the visa policy.

Senator HENDERSON: We can debate who's responsible for it, but addressing the labour shortage issues in regional Australia is the policy area that I'm asking about. That's not something that you have looked at all or can make any comments about?

Ms Jensen: That's correct.

Senator HENDERSON: That's fine. I don't have any other questions.

CHAIR: Thanks, Senator Henderson. Just taking up Senator Henderson's point there, you haven't looked at the question not only of student visa holders but of other temporary visa holders? You haven't looked at all at the effect on the agricultural labour market of meeting shortages or having a number of additional people on those visas, regardless of Home Affairs dealing with the visas? Do you understand the question I'm asking?

Mr Turvey: Yes. The National Skills Commission was just recently established, and the legislation to establish the Office of the National Skills Commissioner is still in the parliament, but we have assembled resources in the department to start assisting the commissioner in analysing the labour market and particularly, because of the COVID situation, looking at the changes that are occurring in the labour market. As part of that exercise, we will be having a look at the role that migration plays in supplementing the domestic labour market. We hope to publish some information about the evolution of the labour market and the impacts of COVID in the next month or so. But we have some pretty complex modelling exercises underway at the moment so I don't really have anything I can share with you today.

CHAIR: Maybe you could take that on notice.

Mr Turvey: Certainly.

Answer

The National Skills Commission has provided the following response.

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment is currently finalising its submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration's Inquiry into the Working Holiday Maker (WHM) program. The submission will include input from the National Skills Commission (NSC) on the labour market impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, including for the horticulture sector and the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing industry. This submission will also provide key labour market data for those regions where WHM visa holders seek jobs.

The NSC is also responsible for the labour market analysis that informs the skilled migration occupations lists (SMOL), that underpin Australia's temporary and permanent skilled visa

programs. This includes the Regional Occupations List (ROL) that covers a number of agricultural-related occupations (such as various Farm Managers).

The NSC will continue to work with, and respond to requests for labour market analysis on migration and population issues from, the Department of Home Affairs and other relevant departments. The NSC will also:

- Publish reports on the labour market impact of COVID-19, including analysis of ABS data, vacancy data, and the findings of surveys of businesses (such as those collecting data on staffing changes, business impacts, actions taken in response to the pandemic and future expectations).
- Use available data and information to analyse the labour market impacts and outcomes of temporary and permanent migration programs, including the extent to which they supplement the workforce for occupations and industries.
- Continue to work with the ABS on updates to the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO), including ANZSCO coding determinations for new and emerging occupations. This will ensure the SMOL and migration programs that use ANZSCO better reflect the current and future labour market.
- Continue to publish the Australian Labour Market Update (ALMU) that informs potential and recent migrants and temporary entrants on labour market conditions. Recent editions of ALMU have highlighted the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Australian labour market.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE

Inquiry into the Working Holiday Maker program - 13 August 2020

Outcome: Employment

Department of Education, Skills and Employment Question No. IQ20-000177

Mr Julian Lesser MP on 13 August 2020, Proof Hansard page 32

Interdepartmental Committees

Question

CHAIR: Are there interdepartmental committees that have been established and that your department is participating in to look at workforce shortages as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Ms Jensen: Not to my knowledge as yet. I will take that on notice just to be sure. There are quite a lot of different committees where staff are working with the department of agriculture, but I'm not aware of one specifically about workforce issues at this stage.

Answer

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE) has participated in a number of cross agency meetings to discuss workforce shortages in the health and care sector and agriculture sector as a result of COVID-19. This includes the role of our labour market and seasonal worker programs in helping to address these shortages. DESE also works with the Department of Health in relation to how the pandemic and COVID-19 restrictions are impacting all sectors of the economy.