

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Treasury Portfolio

Inquiry into the Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

2020 - 2021

Division: Centre for Population
Topic: High unemployment and skilled migration
Reference: Committee Hansard page 16 – 30 July, IQ20-000187

Question:

Senator PATRICK: How does the high unemployment intersect with the benefit that often flows from skilled migration, for example?

Mr Yeaman: The skilled migration program is primarily targeted at those areas where there are skill shortages. I think it is the case that over the next six to 12 months we're going to see, across the board, across large parts of Australia, higher levels of employment in all states. There will be a reduction. We know that there are pressure points—for example, some of the seasonal worker schemes, where there is traditionally a large migrant workforce that helps service those industries. I think the government is well aware of the pressures in those areas and the need to, as soon as possible, either find a substitute workforce or return some flow of that international workforce into those sectors. Beyond that, the reality is that we're going to be seeing lower levels of migration overall, and that's going to mean, picking up the secretary's points from earlier on, that we're going to need to see an increased focus on training and flexibility in the labour market to help Australians move to the areas within the economy that are growing.

Senator PATRICK: If you could you take on notice, Mr Peisley—noting it's your area of expertise—what information you have that is specific to South Australia, I'd be grateful for that.

Mr Peisley: I'd be happy to do that.

Answer:

Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows that over the last four years, South Australia's population was around 7 per cent of Australia's population, and that net overseas migration to South Australia was around 5-6 per cent of net overseas migration to Australia.

State and territory population estimates are usually published in the Budget and are next expected to be published in the 2020-21 Budget in October.

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Inquiry into the Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

2020 - 2021

Division: Social Policy Division
Topic: Spending on social housing
Reference: Committee Hansard page 21 – 30 July, IQ20-000192

Question:

Senator WHISH-WILSON: In terms of fairness—you can perhaps take this on notice, given I've run out of time—can you remind us what the government is spending on social housing for low-income Australians. It's the states, of course, that tend to have responsibility for this. Has there been any program to increase construction of social housing around the country?

Ms J Wilkinson: Most of the state and territory governments have announced policies to put additional spending into social housing. We're very happy to take that on notice and give you a list of the spending that's been announced over the last several months.

Answer:

The States and Territories have primary responsibility for social housing, with the Commonwealth providing general welfare supports through the transfer system, such as JobSeeker payments and Commonwealth Rent Assistance, and through the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement with the States.

The states and territories have announced a range of social housing investments this year, reflecting their responsibility for social housing. This includes:

- \$60.5 million for maintenance works and upgrades on public housing in NSW;
- almost \$500 million to build and upgrade community and public housing in Victoria;
- \$10 million for maintenance of public housing in South Australia;
- \$319 million to build, buy, renovate and maintain social housing in Western Australia;
- \$100 million to build new social housing in Tasmania;
- \$100 million to build new social housing in Queensland; and
- \$61 million to build new public housing in the ACT.

The Commonwealth Government spends more than \$6 billion every year to support Australians in need of housing assistance. This includes around \$1.6 billion a year through the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement to states and territories to support housing and homelessness services, and around \$4.6 billion a year in Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) to assist income support and family tax benefit recipients in the private rental market and community housing.

The Government also supports the community housing sector through the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation, which has approved more than \$1.4 billion of housing loans under the Affordable Housing Bond Aggregator, supporting the delivery of more than 1,700 new social and affordable dwellings and the refinancing of a further 5,400 existing dwellings.