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**Joint Standing Committee on Migration
Questions on Notice – Public Hearing 18 March 2009**

Question

- 2. How many families with dependent children are currently on bridging visas, where the parent(s) or guardian(s) do not have work rights or access to Medicare?**

Permission to work depends on factors such as whether the person is an applicant for a permanent visa, whether they had work rights with their previous visa and whether they have a compelling need to work. Access to Medicare benefits is dependent on whether the person has permission to work and a range of other factors, such as the type of permanent visa they are applying for.

In the current financial year, some 300,000 BVs have been granted, as at 26 March 2009. Of these some 77% were granted permission to work. Some 6% of BVEs were granted to minors.

Departmental systems are unable to provide statistical reports which identify the number of families with dependent children where the parent(s) or guardian(s) do not have work rights.

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- 6. How many people have been in detention for more than six months, where the Ombudsman has made a recommendation that they be released into the community?**

As at 30 April 2009, there were 82 clients remaining in immigration detention for 6 months or more. Of these, 33 clients have been in immigration detention for 2 years or more. The Ombudsman has provided the Department with assessments for 23 of these cases, ten with recommendations that the client be released into the community.

The Ombudsman recommended that 5 people be granted a visa and 5 people be put into Community Detention.

In these cases, the Department has responded by placing two clients into community detention, three are being considered for temporary visas, one is undergoing public interest checks for the grant of a permanent visa, and four remain in secure immigration detention.

Of the four clients remaining in secure immigration detention, one has been referred to the Minister for his consideration and one will be referred to the Minister following receipt of further information. Both of these clients have had visas cancelled on character grounds (associated with prior criminal conduct). Of the remaining two, one is on a removal pathway, and one will be referred to the Minister for consideration of a community detention placement.

In one case where the Ombudsman has recommended both community detention and in a subsequent report the grant of a suitable visa, this client remains in community detention.