

**Dora Chin-Tan, Acting CEO, Office of the MARA (OMARA)**

Thank you Chair and members of the committee. The OMARA's last appearance before the Committee was in October 2014. I am pleased to provide my first update on the OMARA's performance.

**Profile**

The number of registered migration agents as at 31 January 2015 was 5,493 - up from 5,118 at the end of the previous financial year.

These figures continue to be brought to the Committee's attention because they represent a consistent growth of just under six per cent a year in net numbers in the profession – even though about 400 agents left the industry last financial year.

Agents in their first year of practice represent about 18% of the profession.

Registered migration agents are still most active in the lodgement of 457 Temporary Work visas and in Employer Sponsored, Business Skills and Protection visas.

**Ensuring only suitable persons are registered**

As the Committee is aware, the OMARA regulates the sector and is charged with protecting consumers and ensuring only qualified agents are registered.

We continue to meet that obligation. In this financial year to date:

- Nine applications for registration have been refused; and
- 20 applications for registration have been withdrawn.

**Complaint Handling**

As at 31 January 2015 the OMARA had 308 complaints on hand and had finalised 339 in this financial year to date.

The registration of three migration agents was cancelled for the maximum period of five years. These agents have sought review in the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. Their sanctions involve serious breaches of the Code of Conduct for migration agents and include:

- not performing immigration services as promised;
- misappropriating client monies;
- providing false or misleading information; and
- encouraging the lodgement of visa applications that were vexatious and unfounded.

I would like to balance this by saying the majority of agents have never come to the OMARA's notice and most agents who are the subject of complaints, work constructively with the OMARA to resolve those matters without the need for sanction.

The report on the independent review of the OMARA's operations is still under consideration.

I am happy to answer questions from members of the Committee.