

2004-05

Senate Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry, Tourism and Resources Portfolio
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2004-2005

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY, TOURISM AND RESOURCES
OUTCOME/OUTPUT: ALL Outcomes and Outputs
TOPIC: EMPLOYEES FROM NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING BACKGROUNDS
REFERENCE: WRITTEN QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

QUESTION No.14-19

Senator Ludwig asked:

14. What efforts has the Department made to identify employees from a non-English Speaking background and what languages they are fluent in?
15. What proportion of the Department's personnel have a non-English speaking background?
16. For each language other than English that the Department has identified employees with fluency, can the Department provide how employees were fluent? For each language other than English, how many were identified as being fluent?
17. Of these employees, what efforts has the department made to identify the language proficiency of these employees? For each language other than English, how many were identified as having proficiency?
18. Of these employees, how many has the Department identified as possessing accredited language skills to either translator or interpreter standard? For each language other than English, how many were identified as having accreditation at the a) translator and b) interpreter level?
19. Of these employees, how many has the Department funded in whole or in part accreditation of language skills to either a) translator and b) interpreter level?

ANSWER

Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources

On commencement of employment, all employees are asked to voluntarily provide information for the Department's workplace diversity/employment database. This information also assists DITR in reporting to the Australian Public Service Commission for the State of the Service Report.

Employees are asked to provide the following information:

- What was the employee's first language spoken?
- What year did the employee arrive in Australia?
- What was the employee's mother/father's first language spoken?

Staff are able to update their information on the database electronically and the Department issues reminders to staff (the last being earlier in 2004) about keeping the information up to date.

At 1 July 2004, 8.5% of the Department employees had voluntarily registered that they were from a non-English speaking background.

While DITR collects information provided voluntarily by its employees on the first language spoken, it does not seek information on the employees' fluency in those languages, unless the employee claims payment of the Community Language Allowance. DITR currently pays one employee a Community Language Allowance. Employees claiming the Community Language Allowance are required to demonstrate they have passed the Language Aide Test conducted by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters.

The Department has not provided funding for accreditation of language skills for any employees.

IP Australia

IP Australia's Workplace Diversity form seeks information on whether the employee comes from a non-English Speaking background and first language spoken.

Of the 797 employees employed by IP Australia on 8 December the following information is available:

- 529 come from an English speaking background;
- 135 come from a non-English speaking background; and
- 34 speak English and another language.

Currently, IP Australia does not maintain data on employee's fluency in other languages. IP Australia is developing a voluntary register of people who are fluent in non-English languages, and are able to assist with translation. This data base will be searchable by language and made available to all staff.

Geoscience Australia

At the time of engagement, Geoscience Australia seeks information on whether the employee comes from a non-English speaking background and first language spoken. This information is collected on a voluntary basis and not all employees provide this information (80.4% have supplied). Of the staff that have supplied data, 15.1% (or 12.1% of total staff) identify as having a non-English speaking background.

Geoscience Australia does not seek/maintain data on employees' fluency/proficiency in other languages, or on employees with accredited language skills.

Geoscience Australia has not provided funding for accreditation of language skills for any employees.

Tourism Australia

Tourism Australia's employee induction form seeks information on whether the employee comes from a non-English Speaking background and first language spoken. This information is collected on a voluntary basis.

Approximately 28 percent of Tourism Australia employees have voluntarily identified that they come from a non-English speaking background.

Tourism Australia has established a database of staff, the languages they can speak and their proficiency, as identified by the individuals themselves. Approximately 35% of Tourism Australia employees have identified they are fluent in languages other than English.

Tourism Australia has not provided funding for accreditation of language skills for any employees.