

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2004-2005 ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome: 3

Output Group: 3.3 – Support for the Australian education and training export industry and international relationships.

DEST Question No. E795_05

Senator Carr provided in writing.

Question:

- a. Has DEST/AEI held discussions on the potentially negative implications of the proposed changes to Australian permanent residency visa requirements on recruitment in the international education market?
- b. Will changes making it almost essential to have a postgraduate degree to qualify affect Australia's market position in overseas student recruitment?
- c. What projections have been made? Please provide them.

Answer:

Permanent residency requirements: implications of changes to criteria

DEST has provided the following response on advice from DIMIA

- a. Any changes to the migration program, including changes to the skilled migration pass marks are discussed in Cabinet in the context of the annual migration program submission. DEST is part of the submission consultation process.

The passmark for independent skilled migration by overseas applicants was increased from 115 to 120 points in April 2004. In announcing the passmark changes, Senator the Hon Amanda Vanstone, Minister for immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, also announced that this increase would not affect eligible overseas students applying in Australia for independent skilled migration, until April 2005. As part of the same package, students were able to claim 5 extra bonus points if they had lived and studied for at least 2 years in one or more regional areas or low population growth metropolitan area.

The passmark increase was associated with introduction of the new Skilled Independent Regional (SIR) visa where applicants only need to achieve 110 points as long as they obtain state/territory government or regional certifying body sponsorship and live and work in that region. This was designed to achieve a better dispersal of the skilled migrant intake, particularly to regional Australia.

The claim in *The Age* article of 20 December 2004 that "it will be almost essential to have a postgraduate degree to qualify" **is not correct**. While it is true that students with Australian postgraduate qualifications will be eligible for additional points under the test, additional points are also allocated for a number of other factors, including age, possessing an occupation on the Migration Occupation in Demand List (MODL), English language ability, having an Australian relative, having lived and studied in regional Australia and spouse skills. Many overseas students applying for a Skilled Independent

Overseas Student visa will therefore continue to be able to meet the 1 April 2005 pass mark of 120 points.

- b. The increase in the pass mark for the Skilled Independent Overseas Student visa is not likely to affect Australia's market position in overseas student recruitment.

It is worth noting that Australia was the first country to establish clear and open pathways to migration by successful overseas students, which is a strong marketing factor for the Australian international education industry. Additional pathways continue to be opened up to meet the Government's aim of encouraging settlement in regional and low population growth areas.

- c. No projections have been made.