

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2008-09 SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome 3

DEEWR Question No. EW903_09

Senator Humphries asked on 23 October 2008, EEWHR Hansard page 74.

Question

Exemption from the Activity Test for Humanitarian and Refugee Entrants

We are not talking here about migrants or permanent residents under other programs; we are talking about only humanitarian entrants. Can you tell me why this applies only to them and not to migrants in other categories?

Answer

Humanitarian and Refugee (HR) entrants are eligible for the full range of income support payments and employment services from their date of arrival in Australia. Those of working age and receiving New Start Allowance and Youth Allowance (other) payments are automatically granted an exemption from the Activity Test for a period of 13 weeks. During this time they are not required to participate in employment services but may volunteer to do so.

Exemption from the Activity Test provides scope for HR entrants to receive the benefit of the intensive settlement support provided through the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Services (IHSS) program. Examples of HR entrants' initial needs that may be addressed through IHSS include clothing and footwear, initial orientation and the securing of accommodation, emergency medical attention, torture and trauma counselling, and referral to government and community services. HR entrants may also commence in the DIAC Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) during their period of exemption from the Activity Test.

If an HR entrant chooses to volunteer to participate in employment services during their period of exemption from the Activity Test they receive the joint benefits of employment services assistance, IHSS, AMEP or other appropriate programs. Their participation in other services is accounted for in the plan agreed with their employment services provider. This arrangement will also continue under the new employment services that commence from 1 July 2009.

Other migrants, who enter under the skilled migration or family reunion programs, arrive in Australia under different circumstances to HR entrants. These other migrants must serve a two year waiting period before they are eligible for income support payments and the full range of employment services administered by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.