

Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace Relations

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates – 2012-2013

Outcome 3 – Employment

DEEWR Question No. EW0656_13

Senator Xenophon asked on 17 October 2012, Hansard Page 97

Question – Assessment of flight attendant skills shortages

Senator XENOPHON: And, further to Senator Thistlethwaite's question, has any assessment been done by the department about skill shortages in the area of flight attendants? Mr Kovacic: We will take that on notice. CHAIR: That is separate from the advice. What does your department say about the skill shortages in flight attendants? Mr Kovacic: I am not sure that we have said anything, but I will take that on notice. Ms Paul: The agency which is responsible—at least it was when I had it in my department—for maintaining the list of occupations in demand, the skill shortage list, is the National Workforce and Productivity Agency, which is now an agency of the department of innovation, industry et cetera. It was formerly part of this portfolio; it is an agency. The way these things have traditionally worked in an administrative sense is that Immigration and its minister, obviously, are responsible for the final consideration of what might be included in a visa category. That is informed by the list of occupations in demand, which is maintained now by the other department, or at least the agency connected to the other portfolio—innovation and industry et cetera. Both of those departments are informed by our work. They ask for our advice but we are not the decision maker in either case. The other department makes the decision on the list, or at least it did when I had it, and the immigration department and its minister make the decision on the visa. To my recollection—I will correct this if I am now out of date—we take an advisory role, not a decision-making role in either case. We have now taken all of this on notice in any case. Senator XENOPHON: Generally there is usually some cause and effect between the advice and the decision. Ms Paul: I do not know about this. We have taken this on notice. We would hope our advice gets listened to, in a general sense. Senator Thistlethwaite was going to who does what, so I was just trying to spell that out. CHAIR: Given the policy work that you do, were you aware that there was such a skill shortage in flight attendants? Mr Kovacic: My understanding is that we actually did not provide any commentary in terms of what— CHAIR: No, I am asking whether you— Mr Kovacic: Look, I don't know; we will take it on notice. CHAIR: I understand you have not provided advice; I am just asking whether you were aware. Ms Paul: I think we have taken it on notice, because we do not know here.

Answer

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) conducts ongoing research to identify skill shortages in the Australian labour market. The focus of this research is on skilled occupations (that is, those which generally require at least three years of post-school education or training).

Against this background, DEEWR has not undertaken skill shortage research for the occupation of flight attendant.