

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING: 13 February 2006

IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

(5) Output 1.1: Non-Humanitarian Entry and Stay

Senator Hurley has asked:

How many student visa holders have gained permanent residence in Australia in relation to passing the NAATI translators test and how many fail in their attempt to secure permanence residence?

- Can people who fail the test be given a second chance?

Answer:

The question could relate to two groups of people:

- people who apply for General Skilled Migration (GSM) on the basis of their having the occupation of translator/interpreter; or
- people who seek to be granted bonus points under the points test on the basis of having community language skills.

We have addressed both possibilities.

In the 2004-05 Program Year, 189 Skilled – Independent Onshore Overseas Students were granted a GSM visa on the basis of a passing a National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) examination for their nominated occupation as a translator or interpreter. Potential applicants are advised that if they are concerned about their ability to pass the NAATI examination, then they should sit the examination and obtain the results before lodging a GSM application.

Less than 2 per cent of Skilled – Independent Onshore Overseas Student visas were refused overall. No specific data is kept on the number of translators and interpreters who fail to be granted an Onshore General Skilled Migration visa for failing to pass the NAATI examination.

Can applicants who fail the test be given a second chance?

Applicants are required to have applied to have their skills assessed as a translator or interpreter by NAATI by the time they apply for their GSM visa and to provide a pass result by the time their application is decided. DIMA provides a reasonable period for applicants to provide evidence of their proficiency as a translator or interpreter as their nominated occupation and for the award of bonus points.

There are no restrictions imposed by DIMA on the number of times an applicant may attempt

to obtain a 'pass' result in the NAATI translators test up until the time their application is decided. However, given that most GSM applications are processed within 6 months, there would be limited opportunity for an individual to sit multiple tests because NAATI require that:

- the maximum number of tests is 9 per annum in the following fields:
 - interpreting;
 - translating into English; and
 - translating into LOTE (language other than English).
- applicants can sit one or all 3 fields in the one test (there is usually a 2 month turn around for results);
- applicants have 3 opportunities to sit all 3 fields; and
- if an applicant fails all 3 attempts, they are barred from sitting another test for 3 years.

There is no scope for applicants to submit a 'pass' result after the decision is made on their application.

Bonus points for community language

A NAATI assessment as an interpreter may also be used by a Skilled – Independent Onshore Overseas Student seeking bonus points under the GSM Points Test.

Bonus Points can be awarded for three factors including having community language skills (as evidenced by a NAATI examination or having a degree in a community language). Applicants who wish to be awarded bonus points on the basis of a NAATI examination must provide the examination results by the time their application is decided.

In the 2004-05 Program Year, 1433 Skilled – Independent Onshore Overseas Students who were granted a GSM visa were awarded bonus points. DIMA's current reporting systems do not differentiate between persons who get bonus points because of proficiency in a community language and persons who acquired bonus points for other reasons.