

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

ADDITIONAL BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 9 FEBRUARY 2010

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(113) Program 1.1: Visa and Migration

Senator Humphries asked:

- (1) How many international students currently on 485 visas are awaiting resolution of their application for permanent residency?
- (2) How long on average, have these students been waiting for a decision on their applications?
- (3) From which countries are these students, and in what proportions?
- (4) What mechanism is used to extend their visa?
- (5) Are they given Bridging Visas?
- (6) What if any conditions are placed on those visas?
- (7) Do they have work rights or access to Medicare?

Answer:

- (1) As at 31 January 2010 there are **8068** former international students who hold Skilled - Graduate (Subclass 485) visas and are awaiting resolution of their application for a permanent General Skilled Migration (GSM) visa.
- (2) On average the majority of subclass 485 visa applications are processed within 12-15 months from the date of application.
- (3) Citizenships of the 8068 former international students who hold a Skilled - Graduate (Subclass 485) visa and have applied for a permanent GSM visa are as follows: China – 28 per cent; India – 27 per cent and the balance of 45 per cent split between 87 countries.
- (4) A Skilled - Graduate (Subclass 485) visa cannot be extended.
- (5) Yes. Holders of Skilled - Graduate (Subclass 485) visa awaiting a decision on their permanent onshore GSM visa are entitled to a Bridging Visa while they wait for their visa application to be finalised.
- (6) Generally, no conditions are imposed on Bridging visa holders who are awaiting a decision on their onshore GSM visa application.
- (7) Applicants for an onshore General Skilled Migration (GSM) visa are generally issued a Bridging visa A. Bridging visa A enables the holder to live and work without restriction in Australia. They are usually able to access Medicare. Questions about eligibility requirements for permanent or temporary visa applicants should be addressed to Medicare.