

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

ADDITIONAL BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 21 FEBRUARY 2011

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(335) Program 5.1: Settlement Services for Migrants and Refugees

Senator Cash asked:

How does the department evaluate the transition from migrant and refugee receiving settlement services to full time worker in Australian society?

Answer:

The Department's settlement services for migrants, including refugees, focus on building self-reliance, developing English language skills and fostering connections with mainstream services. The objectives of settlement policy are met through a number of programs and services. Many of the longer-term needs of migrants, such as employment, education and health care, are shared with other Government agencies and the community.

The end result of settlement can therefore be seen in broad terms as the active participation of migrants as self reliant members of the Australian society. Economic well-being (such as employment) is just one of many settlement indicators

To understand the needs and outcomes of our clients, the Department is working to develop a good evidence base, for example:

- the Department is involved in an Interdepartmental Working Group (other primary stakeholders include the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Centrelink and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet) to develop an evidence base for research examining the settlement outcome of refugees and vulnerable migrants. A number of research projects are proposed for the coming year;
- in late 2009 the Department initiated the Continuous Survey of Australia's Migrants (CSAM) which will survey, every six months, new family and skill stream migrants on, amongst others things, their experiences in the labour market;
- a range of language-related research is funded under the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP). Over 2008-2009, the AMEP Research Centre undertook an intensive ethnographic study which explored the interactions that AMEP clients have in English in their AMEP classrooms and in the broader community in order to better understand the language learning process. The ethnographic study will be continued over the next four years;

- the Department has commissioned three specific pieces of independent research and evaluation, all of which are expected to be released during 2011:
 - an evaluation of how effectively and efficiently the Settlement Grants Program is meeting its objective of assisting new arrivals with the greatest settlement needs to become self-reliant and participate equitably in Australian society;
 - a survey on the settlement outcomes of new arrivals to obtain a better understanding of how newly arrived humanitarian entrants are faring and which variables contribute to them settling successfully; and
 - a project on the social, economic and civic contributions of first and second generation of humanitarian entrants.