

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

ADDITIONAL BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 21 FEBRUARY 2011

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(47) Program 1.1: Visa and Migration

Senator Cash asked:

What were the major issues requiring changes to policy that prompted the Review of Business Skills Visa Program?

Answer:

The objectives of the program have a distinct focus on business innovation to strengthen Australia's links and competitiveness in the international market place and to enhance the domestic economy through employment generation and diversity of production.

Despite the benefits of objective assessment of visa applicants afforded by the existing criteria, a question remains as to whether the program is fully meeting its conceptual objectives.

It is now over seven years since the introduction of the two stage Business Skills visa regime and the business environment has changed. Australia has experienced a relatively strong economy despite the global financial crisis and the current economic situation differs from the period of inception of the program. Recent economic growth experienced in some countries has given rise to new affluence and there is now a much larger pool of business persons and investors eligible for Business Skills visas.

The Department is conducting a comprehensive review of the Business Skills visa program to:

- Determine whether the program is meeting its intended objectives;
- Determine what role (if any) the Business Skills program should play in building Australia's economy, particularly the economies of regional Australia;
- Determine whether the program's objectives are appropriately designed to attract the highest calibre of business migrant to Australia;
- Ensure that the program aligns with and contributes to the broader strategic objectives of the Skilled Migration Program; and
- Determine whether adjustments to the program are necessary to enhance its ability to meet objectives.