

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

ADDITIONAL BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 13 FEBRUARY 2012

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(AE12/0178) Program 1.1: Visa and Migration

Senator Cash asked:

In January 2012 Prime Minister of New Zealand John Keys (sic) was reported as expressing concerns for the some 100,000 New Zealanders living in Australia who may never be eligible for permanent residency and citizenship. He indicated that the Australian government and the Prime Minister was looking at changing the current arrangements but that the Ms Gillard said there were financial implications and a lot of work still to be done.

- a. Has the department been asked to contribute to this “work”?
- b. If so, what are its recommendations to changing the current arrangements?
- c. Does the department have a view on changing the current visa arrangements to allow New Zealanders to gain permanent residency and eventually citizenship?

Answer:

a. Yes, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, along with a range of other agencies, have been asked to contribute to this work. This would be the same as for any matter that had cross-portfolio implications.

b. Some of the Department’s early policy thinking was released by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs in response to a Freedom of Information request on 24 August 2011. Following is a link to this release:

http://fahcsia.gov.au/about/foi/foi_disclosure_log/Pages/default.aspx

As this is a matter under development, the Department is unable to comment further.

c. Since at least the 1920s, immigration arrangements have allowed New Zealand citizens to travel to, live and work in Australia as long as they remain New Zealand citizens. These travel arrangements are even more flexible than those that exist for Australian permanent residents.

The Department’s view is that any changes to eligibility for a permanent visa, and subsequently citizenship have cross-portfolio implications and decisions would need to be taken in a whole-of-Government context.