QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING: 13 FEBRUARY 2012

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(AE12/0218) Program 1.1:   Visa and Migration

Senator Cash asked:

Under the State Sponsored Skilled Migration program, Western Australia receives an allocation of an additional 100 places where it can sponsor an applicant based on their occupation for a role. Under the previous arrangement, Western Australia was allocated 500 places and was the only state to use its allocation. Has the Department considered allocating off-list nominations proportionately by calculating the number of visas as a percentage of each state or territories total allocation, rather than an arbitrary 100 places for each state/territory? If not, why not?

Answer:

State Migration Plans were introduced during 2010. The Plans allow States and Territories to target the skills in need in their particular jurisdiction underpinned by labour market research. The additional facility to nominate applicants with occupations outside those identified by the State or Territory's labour market research is to allow sufficient flexibility for the nomination of applicants with very specialised skills, or in the case of "niche" occupations not reflected appropriately in their State Migration Plan.

The previous arrangement which allowed for 500 nominations applied prior to the existence of State Migration Plans when identification of occupations in need was more constrained and the capacity for the State or Territory to change the occupation list was more restrictive. Western Australia is the only jurisdiction to have used the facility to its full extent.

With State specific Plans in place, which allow States and Territories to identify exactly which occupations are required in their jurisdiction, an overflow of 100 places is considered appropriate. In early December the Department agreed to increase the number of "off-list" places for Western Australia to 150 for the 2011-2012 program year. The Plans include midyear and annual reviews when changes to the occupation list can be proposed.