

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 27-28 MAY 2009

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(89) Program 2.1: Refugee and Humanitarian Assistance

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

What proportion of entrants under the Humanitarian program remain unemployed at the end of their first year in Australia, by country of origin? Provide the number of Humanitarian entrants who are classified as unemployed after three years, four years after and five years?

Answer:

There is limited recent data available on humanitarian entrants who are classified as unemployed.

Humanitarian entrants are selected on the basis of their need and eligibility for protection, rather than their skills and employment prospects. However, there are some indications from research conducted both in Australia and internationally that the employment of humanitarian entrants improves over time:

- Access Economics, in its Migrants Fiscal Impact Model: 2008 Update, notes that the profile of the humanitarian intake is heavily skewed towards the younger age cohorts, so that within the humanitarian intake, new labour force entrants exceed new retirees over time. The report also notes that labour force participation rates for this group (which start low) are expected to move up steadily over time.
- Analysis of Census data conducted in 2004 in the United States found that refugees on average had lower annual earnings than economic migrants on arrival, but their labour market outcomes surpassed those of economic migrants over a ten year period. It also found that refugees improved their English language skills by 11 per cent more than economic migrants during the period.

Research undertaken by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia (LSIA), analyses and compares the experiences of cohorts of migrants who arrived in Australia between September 1993 and August 1995 (LSIA 1); between September 1999 and August 2000 (LSIA 2); and between December 2004 and March 2005; or were granted their visa onshore between December 2004 and March 2005 (LSIA 3). Humanitarian entrants were not part of the sample in LSIA 3 and thus employment outcomes for humanitarian entrants are only available in LSIA 1 and 2.

The LSIA 1 indicates the percentage of unemployed humanitarian entrants (that is, people who are available to work, but not in work) is 35 per cent at

six months, 24 per cent at 18 months and 19 per cent at 42 months.

For LSIA 2 the percentage of humanitarian entrants unemployed was 11 per cent after six months and 12 per cent after 18 months. The limited sample size of humanitarian entrants in the LSIA makes further disaggregation, such as by country of birth, unreliable.

The humanitarian sample size used in the more recent Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007 Labour Force Status and Other Characteristics of Recent Migrants Survey is also insufficient to produce reliable conclusions about employment outcomes for humanitarian entrants.

The Department has recently commenced two research projects, one on the settlement outcomes of new arrivals, and one on the economic, social and civic contributions of humanitarian entrants. It is anticipated that this research will provide updated data on employment outcomes of humanitarian entrants in their first five years of settlement and beyond.