

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 24 MAY 2011

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(BE11/0279) Program 3.1: Border Management

Senator Eggleston (L&CA) asked:

Is it correct that the renewal requirements for the card were significantly tightened? If so, why and what are the new requirements?

Answer:

Yes. In June 2010, DIAC amended the eligibility criteria for Australia's APEC Business Travel Card (ABTC) to bring its eligibility requirements into closer alignment with that of most other APEC economies. New applicants and those reapplying were required to satisfy the following criteria:

1. The applicant must be a senior executive level business person.
2. The applicant must be directly involved in the trade of goods and/or services or the conduct of investment activities when travelling overseas.
3. The business entity (which the applicant represents) must be well-established and well-credentialed in terms of its international trade and investment activities.
4. The business entity (which the applicant represents) must demonstrate significant economic benefit within the APEC region from its business activities.

The purpose of the amendments was to counter any perception, among member economies of the APEC Business Mobility Group (BMG), that Australia was either using the scheme for its own self-interest or did not respect the approach taken more broadly by other APEC members, mindful that each ABTC application creates significant work for all participating economies. Australian cardholders, at the time, represented 30 per cent of all cardholders in the ABTC scheme.

Australia's underlying objective was to maintain the goodwill of other APEC members as this is relied upon to preserve the benefits and long-term viability of the ABTC scheme.

Recognising the need to ensure that the ABTC scheme adequately supports the needs of business travellers, a review of the arrangements commenced in March 2011 involving consultations with a range of peak business bodies and business councils. DIAC is currently in further consultations with business bodies and expects to implement revised eligibility requirements in the latter half of 2011.