

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 21-22 MAY 2012

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(BE12/0199) Program 1.1: Visa and Migration

Senator Cash asked:

Has the Department had concerns raised with it regarding the length of the WHM visa? If so, what are these concerns? Have any representations been made to increase the duration of the WHM visa from 12 months? If yes, what were these representations?

Answer:

The Australian tourism sector has suggested changes to the Working Holiday Maker visa program which would allow visa holders to stay in Australia for longer than 12 months. These suggestions include:

- a) expanding the second Working Holiday (Subclass 417) eligibility framework to include tourism work, thereby potentially increasing the pool of second Working Holiday visa holders in Australia; and
- b) allowing eligible nationals to acquire one Working Holiday (Subclass 417) visa when aged 18-25, and then allowing acquisition of a second such visa when aged 26-35.

The Department has consulted with stakeholder agencies on changes to the Working Holiday Maker program to support tourism and other industries and further work is ongoing. Any outcomes will be announced once any changes are agreed by Government.