

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 21-22 MAY 2012

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(BE12/0235) Program 1.1: Visa and Migration

Senator Boyce (L&CA Written) asked:

Budget Paper No. 2 Immigration and Citizenship, Migration Health Requirements item reads: "The Government will reform the health criteria that applicants must meet to obtain an Australian visa, at a cost of \$4.6 million over four years. Under current arrangements, visa applicants are refused entry to Australia where the estimated costs of treating a pre-existing health condition are above the Significant Cost Threshold set at \$21,000. The reform will increase the Significant Cost Threshold from \$21,000 to \$35,000 to better reflect current health costs, and remove the requirement for offshore Humanitarian Visa applicants to meet the Significant Cost Threshold criteria. This reform will commence on 1 July 2012. These reforms are in response to the report of the Joint Standing Committee on Migration on the Migration Treatment of Disability: Enabling Australia." In this regard FaHCSIA received the following budgetary allocations \$100,000 in 2012/13 and 2013/14, rising to \$200,000 the next and \$400,000 in last year of forward estimate. The Minister for Immigration and Citizenship said this, "However, the change does not alter policies relating to health conditions that are a public health risk, or would require health care or community services that would prejudice the access of Australian residents." Has the Department undertaken any work to make provisions for including the economic and social contributions of family members to off set the costs and community services access of an applicant whose disability may exceed the significant cost threshold?

Answer:

The Department continues to advise the Government on its response to the Joint Standing Committee's recommendations. The Government will respond in due course.