

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 27-28 May 2013

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(BE13/0028) PROGRAM – 1.1: Visa and Migration

Senator McKenzie (L&CA 58) asked:

Senator McKENZIE: So, do I take it then that you are currently reviewing how the expansion of English-language proficiency tests is going within the student visa space to see its applicability into other areas? You are currently reviewing how that is playing out?

Mr Kukoc: I need to take this question on notice.

Answer:

English language settings were considered in early 2010 as part of the broader review of the General Skilled Migration points test settings. The review process included consideration of 220 submissions as part of a public consultation process as well as data on migrant outcomes, including the *Continuous Survey of Australia's Migrants*. An outcome for this review was the introduction of a revised points test on 1 July 2011.

The revised points test included the awarding of additional points for demonstrated higher levels of English proficiency. As points for English are calibrated within the points test in the context of a number of other attributes, such as age, qualifications and skilled employment experience, any subsequent review of English language setting would need to be undertaken as a part of a broader review of all points test settings.

The review of the implementation of alternative English language proficiency tests in the Student visa program is currently underway and will form a basis for considering whether to introduce additional English language tests in other visa programs, including the Skilled Migration program. The review focuses on alternative English language test providers' service delivery obligations which require English language test content to be internationally recognised and benchmarked, a high level of integrity and security of test delivery, appropriate administration arrangements in conducting tests as well as access to online verification of test score results.

The appropriateness of additional English language proficiency tests to meet the objectives of Skilled visa programs will also be considered, as the current alternative English language tests for Student visa applicants have an academic focus. whereas points tested skilled migrants require general English standards in order to meet the workforce, industry and skill assessment benchmarks.