QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 30 October 2006

IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

(119) Output 1.1   Migration and Temporary Entry

Senator Carr (L&CA written) asked:

1. Can DIMA provide an explanation, or any background information, about the reasons for the significant growth in 457 visas issued to workers in the occupations:
•"Computing professionals NEC" [not elsewhere classified]; and
•"Business and information professionals NEC"?

2. Can you tell the Committee what kind of workers these are? Are they predominantly, or significantly, junior or entry-level workers in their respective professions?

3. What countries do they come from, in the main? Does a large number of these workers come from India, which is a low-wage country?

Answer:

1. Other than the strength of the economy and the tightness of the labour market, the department is unaware of the specific reasons for the growth in the number of Subclass 457 visas issued to workers in these classifications. DIMA notes that the ICT Vacancy Index developed by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) indicates that ICT vacancies have generally increased since January 2006. The states/territories which DEWR identifies as having the most ICT vacancies generally correspond with the states/territories where the majority of Subclass 457 visa holders in these occupations are located.

2. The Department uses the ASCO dictionary to identify skilled occupations. ASCO states:
i. "Computing Professionals nec" (2231-79) includes Computer Analyst, Computer Scientist, Computing Tester, Database Analyst, and Local Area Network (LAN) Controller. The entry requirement for this occupation is a bachelor degree or higher qualification or at least 5 years relevant experience. In some instances, relevant experience is required in addition to these qualifications.
ii. "Business and Information Professionals nec" (2299-79) includes Business Researcher and Liaison Officer. The entry requirement for this occupation is a bachelor degree or higher qualification or at least 5 years relevant experience. In some instances, relevant experience is required in addition to these qualifications.

In the first quarter of 2006-07, average salaries for Subclass 457 visas granted to primary applicants in the two occupations was over $77,000 and over $83,000

respectively. This suggests that the 457 workers in these occupations are not junior or entry-level workers.

3. The 5 major source countries for ICT workers in ASCO occupations 2231-79 and 2299-79 in the first quarter of 2006-07 are India (37.5%), United Kingdom (21.9%), USA (7.1%), Ireland (4.2%) and Germany (2.7%).