

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 20 OCTOBER 2009

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(69) Program 5.1: Settlement Services for Migrants and Refugees

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

1. What proportion of new settlers is on welfare? After 1 year, 2 years and 3 years?
2. What proportion of new settlers is on a disability support pension? After 1 year, 2 years, 3 years?
3. Where are the new settlers from?
4. How many of them are children and minors?
5. Where are new settlers settled?
6. Do they have a choice in where they are settled?
7. Is there any strategy to settle people in regional and rural areas and/or where employment and housing is more readily available?
8. Do you keep statistics on secondary settlement? eg if new settlers move after their first place of settlement where do they go and how many people?
9. How much money is provided per authorised and unauthorised arrivals? How is that money allocated?
10. Does this money go with the person if they resettle to another place?

Answer:

1 - 4. The Department is unable to provide data for questions 1 - 4 as it does not maintain data on income support provided by other Commonwealth agencies.

5. Detailed statistical information regarding the location of settlement of new settlers is available through the Department's *Immigration Update* statistical publications. The Immigration Updates are published biannually and can be accessed electronically via the Department's website.

6. The decision on where migrants settle in Australia, in the main, rests with the migrant themselves. However, policy settings can influence choice of location. Some skilled migration visa programs offer concessions where migrants agree to settle in regional areas.

Family migrants generally seek visas to reside with or near their family members already established in Australia.

For humanitarian entrants, the Department does play an active role in the initial settlement location. Many humanitarian entrants already have 'links' in Australia. In these cases, the Department seeks to settle the entrants near their links as they provide valuable social and settlement support.

For unlinked humanitarian entrants, a range of factors is considered when determining a suitable settlement location, in particular the specific needs of the individual or family, and the capacity of the receiving area to address those needs.

It should be noted that all migrants, including humanitarian entrants, are free to move in Australia at any time, if they so choose.

7. Skilled settler arrivals play an important role in contributing to the economic, demographic and social development of regional Australia and low population growth areas. The Australian government in consultation with state and territory governments, has operated a number of initiatives designed to:

- encourage a greater dispersal of skilled migrants across Australia;
- address skill needs that may exist in specific regions of Australia; and
- attract overseas business people to establish new or joint ventures in regional Australia.

State-Specific and Regional Migration (SSRM) initiatives enable state/territory governments, regional employers and development bodies to pursue regional development objectives and employment and business outcomes through the use of more flexible program provisions and threshold criteria for skilled migrants. SSRM initiatives also provide an incentive for skilled migrants to locate to areas of Australia that are seeking more migrants through recognition of family linkages. These concessions have been carefully designed so that they do not undermine the overall integrity of the Migration Program. Applicants must be skilled and meet mandatory health and character requirements.

The SSRM initiatives are designed to deliver skilled and business migrants in line with the needs of each state and territory.

The Department has been undertaking direct settlement of humanitarian entrants in regional areas for some years now through the IHSS. Direct settlement locations include Geelong, Cairns/Innisfail, Toowoomba, Townsville, Port Macquarie, Newcastle, Albury, Goulburn, Wagga Wagga and Launceston. In addition, new communities have been established in Shepparton, Ballarat, and Mount Gambier. The Department has developed a comprehensive and consultative process for identifying and establishing new regional areas for humanitarian settlement. Employment and housing are crucial aspects of this planning process. To produce the best outcomes for new arrivals as well as the receiving towns all stakeholders need to be well-prepared and equipped to assist in settlement of humanitarian entrants.

8. The Department is improving its data to assist in the identification of secondary movements. Migrants, including refugees - like other Australians - are free to move at any point in time. The settlement database receives address data from Medicare Australia on a monthly basis, enabling the Department to capture secondary movements in cases where individuals register with Medicare and update their addresses accordingly.

9. The Department of Immigration and Citizenship currently funds a range of settlement services under Program 5.1, to assist eligible migrants and humanitarian entrants. Funding allocated for settlement services in the 2009-10 budget is \$316 million. Funding is not provided on an individual basis.

Settlement services include:

- The Adult Migrant English Program which provides English language tuition for newly arrived adult migrants and humanitarian entrants who do not have functional English.
- Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) National which provides interpreting services that assist non-English speakers to access information and services.
- The Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS) which provides initial, intensive settlement support to newly-arrived humanitarian entrants for up to twelve months.
- The Settlement Grants Program (SGP) which provides organisations with funding to deliver settlement services to recently arrived humanitarian entrants and family stream migrants who have low English proficiency, and the dependants of skilled migrants in rural and regional areas who have low English proficiency, for up to five years.
- The Complex Case Support (CCS) program which provides specialised and intensive case management services for recently arrived humanitarian entrants with exceptional needs.

These services are targeted towards new arrivals most in need of assistance to settle successfully in Australia. The key eligibility requirement for inclusion in the settlement services target group is generally permanent residence. Eligibility to access settlement services also depends on visa class, length of residency in Australia and English language proficiency.

Current policy settings articulate the settlement services target group as permanent residents who have arrived within the last five years as:

- humanitarian entrants; or
- family stream migrants with low English proficiency; or
- dependants of skilled migrants located in a rural or regional area, with low English proficiency.

Further information on Australia's settlement services can be found on the Department's website at: <http://www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/delivering-assistance/>

10. General settlement services are provided across Australia for Humanitarian entrants and eligible migrants.

IHSS services are normally provided to a client in one location. The Department recommends that clients remain in their initial settlement area for at least six months while receiving initial IHSS assistance. Clients are also encouraged to take advantage of the assistance given to them to learn English, make links with their new community and learn about life in Australia before considering moving to a different location.

As permanent residents however, IHSS clients are free to move to another location if they wish to do so. Clients are advised that it is not common for duplication of services to be approved if they move, although each clients circumstances are considered on a case by case basis. If they choose to move to another location, they are normally expected to meet any expenses, including removal costs and replacing household goods that have already been provided.