

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 19 OCTOBER 2010

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(134) Program 1.1: Visa and Migration

Senator Fifield asked:

- (1) How have visa requirements changed in the past two years for student visa applicants from India and Sri Lanka applying for 572 and 575 visas?
- (2) Are there any further changes pending?

Answer:

- (1) The implementation of new student integrity measures has impacted on the whole Student visa program including applicants applying from India and Sri Lanka. Some of these measures included changes to the financial requirements for Student visa applicants (an adjustment of the living cost component from \$12 000 to \$18 000 per year) and the assessment of course packaging whereby applicants are assessed under the highest Assessment Level applicable to any of the courses in their package (with the exception of ELICOS courses).

Since 1 July 2010 overseas students including students from India and Sri Lanka must obtain Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC) for the proposed duration of their student visa. OSHC is insurance that assists international students to meet the costs of medical and hospital care that they may need while in Australia.

A package of measures to assist the international education sector was announced on 16 December 2010. Vocational and Education Training applicants at Assessment Level 4 may now undertake a package of Certificate level courses to meet requirements for the grant of a visa. Additionally, where students have prepaid boarding fees to their education provider the fees can be counted towards the students' cost of living requirements.

Student visa applicants must meet certain requirements in order to be granted a visa. These requirements are dependent on the Assessment Level for the type of Student visa and the passport held by the applicant. The higher the Assessment Level the higher the level of evidence required.

Assessment Levels for subclasses other than Postgraduate Research (subclass 574) were last changed in September 2008. There were no changes to Indian or Sri Lankan nationals applying for Vocational Education and Training (subclass 572) or Non-award (subclass 575) at that time.

The following Assessment Levels currently apply to India and Sri Lanka for Vocational Education and Training subclass (572) and Non-award (subclass 575).

	India	Sri Lanka
572	4	4
575	3	3

- (2) No. While the Minister has announced a review of the Student visa program which will report to the government in mid 2011, at present there are no additional changes planned that would specifically impact on the Indian or Sri Lankan Student visa caseload.