

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: OCTOBER 2010

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(138) Program 1.1: Visa and Migration

Senator Fifield asked:

What evidence of fraud has been found in relation to Indian providers of eVisas?

Answer:

The Department interprets the term “Indian providers” as referring to education agents.

EVisa is a visa lodgement facility maintained by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship that enables approved education agents to lodge Student visa applications online. There is a group of approved education agents operating in India that has access to the eVisa system. These agents are audited regularly by the New Delhi departmental office.

An audit of fraud in the Indian Student visa caseload was conducted in December 2009. This audit focused on applications in the Vocational Education and Training sector and the Higher Education sector, with a focus on applications lodged through the eVisa system.

The report found the following types of fraud within the Indian Student visa caseload:

- fraudulent documentation including financial documents, academic documents and English test results;
- recycling of financial documents; and
- the use of serial supporters for Student visa applications.

Other forms of fraud have been detected in the eVisa agent caseload. These other circumstances tend to focus on the verification of claims made on the student visa application.

Substantial levels of document fraud identified in the caseload (found in approximately 25 per cent of the refused applications) have led to the suspension of eVisa access for some Indian Student eVisa agents. Document fraud is predominantly found in financial documentation provided in the Student visa application.