

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 15 October 2012

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(SE12/0365A) PROGRAM – 3.1: Border Management

Senator Cash (written) asked:

APEC Business Travel Card: The information document 'New arrangements for Australians applying for an APEC Business Travel Card' (attached), available on the Immigration website, refers to stage two of the eligibility and approval criteria. The document states that DIAC expects stage two to "commence in the coming months". Could the Department please provide an update on this stage and the "coming months" timeframe?

Answer:

Stage 2 of the new ABTC eligibility requirements were implemented on 1 November 2012.

During 2011, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) undertook a review of Australia's ABTC eligibility arrangements in consultation with a range of peak business bodies and business councils to ensure they appropriately supported trade and investment goals. This followed concerns that the criteria in effect at the time were too restrictive and did not cater for many small and medium businesses.

The review concluded that there was scope for the eligibility criteria to better recognise the broad range of employees businesses rely on to conduct trade and investment activities on their behalf, and for ensuring that small to medium sized businesses enjoyed the same level of access to the ABTC as large global companies.

As a consequence of the review, DIAC established new eligibility criteria that cater for businesses that may benefit from the ABTC scheme. These eligibility criteria were to be implemented in two stages:

- stage 1 of these arrangements was introduced on 16 November 2011; and
- stage 2 was implemented on 1 November 2012.

A key aspect of Stage 2 eligibility requirements is the inclusion of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) and the Australian Industry Group (Ai Group) as an "approved body" for the purposes of business certification. The ACCI and the Ai Group will certify that a business is genuinely engaged in trade and investment in the APEC region.