

**HOME AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO
AUSTRALIAN BORDER FORCE**

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY SPOKEN QUESTION ON NOTICE

Select Committee on COVID-19

30 July 2021

QoN Number: CV19-462

Subject: Breakdown of arrivals

Asked by: Jacqui Lambie

Question:

Senator LAMBIE: I have a question for Home Affairs. I was wondering how many people who aren't citizens or permanent residents are coming to Australia. Do you know that number?

Mr Pezzullo: The commissioner will respond based on his data. If you could assist the commissioner, do you have a particular time period for your question; over what duration?

Senator LAMBIE: Could we break that down for each month since COVID, since May last year?

Mr Outram: I may have to take part on notice, but I will give you the best data I've got. Every month we take a week's snapshot of data for people who are coming to Australia. It is a manual process. My officers have to go through four different data systems and crossmatch and analyse data for every arriving passenger off every aeroplane. From that data we derive whether they are an Australian citizen on an Aussie passport or they have a permanent residency visa on a foreign passport, and then the hardest part is whether they are immediate family of either of the two above categories. I will go through the data. In the week of 20 to 26 February, 84.8 per cent of people coming to Australia were returning Australians in those three categories. Between 20 and 26 March this year, it was 81.5 per cent. Between 20 and 26 April this year, it was 81.9 per cent. Between 14 and 20 May this year, it was 84.8 per cent. Between 17 and 23 June this year, it was 83.9 per cent, so consistently well above 80 per cent are returning Australians, as we call them—that is, citizens, permanent residents or immediate family.

Senator LAMBIE: What is left is about 20 per cent. Who are they?

...

Senator LAMBIE: Do you have any idea of how many non-Australians are coming here for economic reasons? If you don't know that straight away, could we get a breakdown of that? Is there anything else outside the scope that you've explained?

Mr Outram: Let me take it on notice

Answer:

The Department of Home Affairs (Home Affairs) and Australian Border Force (ABF) is unable to provide a month by month break down of arrivals by travel exemption status since COVID-19 travel restrictions were put in place as this would require manual checking of individual records against the reasons for exemption, which constitutes an unreasonable diversion of resources.

Foreign nationals arriving under the critical skills (including medical skills) exemption category has equated to between 7-10% of arrivals required to quarantine within the hotel quarantine caps for each sample period. Those approved under the critical skills exemption category provide assistance to Australia's COVID-19 response and economic recovery.

Those outside of the critical skills exemption consist of other individual exemptions including compassionate circumstances and others automatically exempt and equate to the remainder of arrivals required to quarantine within the hotel quarantine caps.