

**HOME AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO
DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS**

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY SPOKEN QUESTION ON NOTICE

Senate Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade Reference Committee
Inquiry into the issues facing diaspora communities in Australia

15 October 2020

QoN Number: 01

Subject: Visa subclass 866 (permanent protection) statistics for Malaysian citizens

Asked by: Kimberley Kitching

Question:

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Mr Johnson. I want to ask you a component of the same question that I just asked the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. In the ASEAN diaspora there's been an increase in protection visas, for example, sought by Malaysian students. Some of these relate to LGBTI rights and political activism, and so they're seeking protection visas here. Firstly, is it correct? Secondly, how is Home Affairs projecting out, given that with coronavirus there's a decreased number of students here from ASEAN countries? Of those students who did stay to complete courses, are we expecting an increase in permanent residency applications, for example?

Mr Johnson: I think that might be a combined response from Mr Willard and Mr Wilden.

CHAIR: Thank you for bringing so much expertise with you today as well.

Mr Johnson: It's our pleasure, Chair. I think we'll start with Mr Willard, particularly around the student visa cohort and any patterns towards applications for permanent residency in that cohort at the moment.

Mr Willard: We've seen a significant drop-off in student visa applications and student arrivals, as you'd expect. I think we'll see an impact a few years down the track because there is a proportion of student visa holders who do go on to permanent residence. When we looked at this in detail, we found that around 16 per cent of people who once held a student visa end up on a permanent visa. To qualify for the permanent visa, there is of course study to be done. There are temporary graduate visas and there are subsequent temporary work visas. So it often occurs five to six years after the student first arrives. I am very cautious about making predictions in the current very uncertain context of COVID, but I expect we will see a reduction in numbers from that cohort simply because we are not seeing new students come in. But it might not take effect for a few years yet. That's the student visa picture. I will pass to my colleague, Mr Wilden, in regard to protection visas.

Mr Wilden: With the Malaysians, over quite a few years now, we've seen growth in the number of protection claims from that particular cohort. That is a phenomenon we have seen in a few other diasporas as well. Chair, on notice I will get you some

numbers to support this and fill in the detail. But I might just make some general statements which might give context, and then the information on notice will fill the gaps. The numbers that have arrived from Malaysia have gone up significantly over several years. They peaked about 18 months ago and then started to come down. That is not to do with COVID or anything else; it is just the lag time. Many of them are coming in on temporary visas and gaining work—often unlawfully through their tourist visas et cetera. They wait to get picked up and then we see them lodge for protection. Obviously we use a very thorough refugee status determination process for people who claim for asylum. Those are considered on an individual basis and decisions are made on an individual basis. Obviously information around country situations is one of the inputs into that. With the Malaysians, the refusal rates are up in the 90 per cent range. We've found that a lot of them are here for work purposes, not through genuine fear of persecution. There are, however, a number of individuals from that cohort who have been granted asylum. I think you referred to LGBTI and a few other aspects—

CHAIR: And political activism.

Mr Wilden: And political activism. Obviously they are all factors that can lead to claims—and successful claims—for protection. I don't think we'd be able to provide the reasons in terms of a quantum for persons from Malaysia—the grounds upon which they claim asylum and were granted. But we can certainly give you the numbers that have been granted over, say, the last five years.

Answer:

From 1 July 2015 – 31 August 2020, a total of 263 subclass 866 (permanent protection) visas were granted to Malaysian citizens.

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PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY SPOKEN QUESTION ON NOTICE

Senate Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade Reference Committee
Inquiry into the issues facing diaspora communities in Australia

15 October 2020

QoN Number: 02

Subject: Subclass 866 (permanent protection) visa ASEAN statistics

Asked by: Kimberley Kitching

Question:

CHAIR: That would be very helpful. I mentioned Malaysian students as an example because we were having a discussion with the Department of Foreign Affairs And Trade about the rise of authoritarianism in some of the ASEAN countries. I'm interested from a Department of Home Affairs perspective, or from an immigration perspective, about what that might do. These countries are obviously in our region. They are familiar with Australia if they are students here. Leaving aside coronavirus and the great uncertainty that that brings on a number of fronts, I'm interested in what that does to immigration levels et cetera.

Mr Wilden: We can provide some statistics on country of origin for those who have arrived lawfully and have sought asylum post arrival. Again, maybe we could give you a five-year window.

Answer:

Subclass 866 (permanent protection) visas lodgments by ASEAN member citizens each year from 15/16 – YTD (thru 31 August 2020)

Citizenship	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21*	Total
Brunei	<5	<5	<5	5	8	0	18
Cambodia	45	89	107	164	177	17	599
Indonesia	280	426	515	672	775	89	2,757
Laos	9	17	45	85	138	10	304
Malaysia	4812	8579	9319	8013	6046	510	37,279
Myanmar	16	15	35	37	88	41	232
Philippines	90	123	237	487	659	37	1,633
Singapore	8	9	14	18	6	0	55
Thailand	180	232	846	1319	808	98	3,483
Vietnam	302	867	764	782	1069	167	3,951
Total	5,744	10,358	11,884	11,582	9,774	969	50,311

*Thru 31 August 2020

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PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY SPOKEN QUESTION ON NOTICE

Senate Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade Reference Committee
Inquiry into the issues facing diaspora communities in Australia

15 October 2020

QoN Number: 03

**Subject: Update on Australian Citizenship – Your Right, Your Responsibility
report recommendations**

Asked by: Concetta Fierravanti-Wells

Question:

Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: Can I just apologise; I got the two departments confused. I asked a series of questions to DFAT inadvertently. Perhaps it's easier if I just ask those questions again that are relevant to your submission? In relation to comments in relation to social cohesion, it's really important now that social cohesion, because of the security sharpness, needs to be in Home Affairs and needs to be together. When I was parliamentary secretary, I had responsibilities in three portfolios—social services, home affairs and Attorney- General. I think that, finally, I hope, there is a consolidation of where a lot of these issues need to be. My question starts with Australian citizenship. If I may say, I thought the report that Philip Ruddock and I undertook around Australia was quite a good report, and I'd really like to know what progress we've made in relation to the recommendations. If you want to take this on notice, please do so—especially in relation to our recommendations pertinent to English language.

Mr Johnson: I think it can be a combination: we can provide you an update, and we can take on notice some of the more specific questions that you have articulated there. I would also just point to recent announcements by Minister Tudge about an updated Australian citizenship test. That test will have elements in it around Australian values—questions about Australian values. I would also refer you to his announcement about reforms to their Adult Migrant English Program, which does involve a real focus on helping those members of diasporas in Australia who do need English assistance—giving them assistance so that they can really work hard and work together with the providers to get a level of English that supports their social integration and political and civic participation et cetera. I will pass to Anne Leo. She may be able to provide you with—

Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: In the interests of time, I would appreciate it if you could go back to our report and provide me with an update on what happened in relation to each of those recommendations. That would probably benefit the committee more at this stage. There were about 25 recommendations, and I think it would benefit the committee to know in detail what happened. So I'm happy for you to take it on notice in that way.

Mr Johnson: Thank you. We will do that.

Answer:

The Final Report of the National Consultation on Citizenship, entitled *Australian Citizenship – Your Right, Your Responsibility* (the Report), as presented to the Prime Minister, the Hon Malcom Turnbull MP, on 2 May 2016, contained 15 recommendations.

The Australian Government has, or is in the process of, implementing a number of initiatives consistent with the outcomes of the Report, including:

- Updating the Australian Values Statement
- Updating the Australian citizenship test
- Publication of the updated *Australian Citizenship: Our Common Bond* test resource booklet and production of an associated podcast
- Expanding usage of the Australian Citizenship Affirmation
- Improvements to the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP)
- Inclusion of a requirement in Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) contracts for service providers to deliver an orientation program to develop clients' understanding of Australian values and laws
- Updated website and social media content specifically on social cohesion, Australian citizenship and Australian values.

Updates are provided against each of the recommendations contained in the Report at **Attachment A**.

Actions to address recommendations in *Australian Citizenship – Your Right, Your Responsibility*

Recommendation	Action taken
<p>1. <i>The Government should promote an inclusive understanding of Australian citizenship as a ‘common bond’, founded on shared values, rights and responsibilities and encourage expression of these values in everyday life.</i></p>	<p>Publication of the <i>Australian Citizenship: Our Common Bond</i> test resource booklet and podcast</p> <p>On 17 September 2020, the Department of Home Affairs (the Department) published the updated <i>Australian Citizenship: Our Common Bond</i> test resource booklet, which is now available in 40 community languages, and the <i>Australian Citizenship: Our Common Bond</i> podcast for those sitting the updated citizenship test on or after 15 November 2020.</p> <p>The updated booklet contains a new chapter on Australian values, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to the Rule of Law • Parliamentary democracy • Freedom of speech • Freedom of association • Freedom of religion • Equality of all people under the law • Equality of opportunity and a ‘fair go’ • Mutual respect and tolerance for others • Making a contribution • Compassion for those in need • English as the national language • Helping to keep our society safe • Loyalty to Australia. <p>Promoting Australian values</p> <p>The Government will provide \$62.8 million over five years from 2019-20 to strengthen Australia’s social cohesion and community resilience in the COVID-19 recovery period. This includes funding to promote Australian values, citizenship, and our inclusive national identity.</p>
<p>2. <i>Information on citizenship should be prominently displayed in Government shopfronts, at the border, in overseas posts and as part of the Australian Electoral Commission’s enrolment processes.</i></p>	<p>Updated website and social media content</p> <p>With the reduction to the number of in-person client service counters (‘shopfronts’) across government, and a reduced overseas footprint, the Department has focussed significant resources on interacting with potential applicants and clients online. The Department of Home Affairs website and social media channels have been used as the primary means of promoting citizenship, with the Australian Citizenship test resource booklet <i>Australian Citizenship: Our Common Bond</i> being</p>

Recommendation	Action taken
	translated into 40 community languages, and publicised online, to raise community awareness.
<p>3. <i>The Civics and Citizenship component of the National Curriculum should be updated to include material on allegiance to Australia.</i></p>	<p>Improving civics and citizenship education</p> <p>The Department of Home Affairs does not have oversight of any curriculum changes to this subject material, however, the Department is aware that the Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE) is undertaking a project to produce an online hub to provide teachers with access to accurate, high quality resources that align to the Civics and Citizenship (CC) subject of the Australian Curriculum. The project aims to support and improve the teaching of the CC subject in Australian schools. The online hub is due to be launched in early 2021.</p> <p>The CC subject within the Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum aims to ensure students have the skills and values to become active and informed citizens. Through this subject, students are supported to learn about Australian democracy, the roles that people play in Australia's system of government and the rights and legal obligations of Australian citizens. Additionally, students are given the opportunity to discuss the Australian citizenship pledge and compare it to the former oath of allegiance to the monarch to explore notions of allegiance.</p> <p>While the Australian Government plays a national leadership role in school education, State and Territory Government and non-Government education authorities are responsible for implementing the Australian Curriculum and the day-to-day delivery of education programs.</p>
<p>4. <i>Online and other programmes should be developed to provide civics and citizenship education to newly arrived migrants and the wider community, drawing on the Civics and Citizenship curriculum as appropriate. The promotion of civics and citizenship should be a condition of contracts with settlement services providers.</i></p>	<p>Inclusion of a requirement in Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) contracts for service providers to deliver an orientation program to develop clients' understanding of Australian values and laws</p> <p>Established in 2017, the HSP supports humanitarian entrants during their initial settlement to integrate into Australian life. The HSP contracts require service providers to deliver an orientation program to develop clients' understanding of Australian values and laws and build the foundational life skills needed to participate fully in society.</p>
<p>5. <i>The Citizenship Pledge should be updated to include language on allegiance to Australia.</i></p>	<p>Introduction of the <i>Australian Citizenship Legislation Amendment (Strengthening the Requirements for Australian Citizenship and Other Measures) Bill 2017 (the 2017 Bill)</i></p>

Recommendation	Action taken
	<p>The 2017 Bill was introduced into the Parliament on 15 June 2017 to amend the <i>Australian Citizenship Act 2007</i> (the <i>Citizenship Act</i>) and the <i>Migration Act 1958</i> (the <i>Migration Act</i>) to strengthen the requirements to become an Australian citizen.</p> <p>The 2017 Bill included measures to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rename the ‘pledge of commitment’ the ‘pledge of allegiance’ and amend the pledge to require a person to pledge their allegiance to Australia and its people. <p>The 2017 Bill was passed in the House of Representatives on 14 August 2017, but was subsequently discharged from the Senate notice paper on 18 October 2017.</p> <p>Strengthening the Australian Values Statement</p> <p>As part of the Government’s new measures to enhance social cohesion, the Australian Values Statement (AVS) was updated to better reflect the values underpinning Australia’s society and social cohesion. The updated AVS came into effect on 30 October 2020, and requires applicants for most temporary and permanent visas to confirm they understand and will undertake to conduct themselves in accordance with the values of Australian society and will obey the laws of Australia.</p> <p>Applicants for Australian citizenship sign a declaration on the importance of Australian values as part of their citizenship application. The Government has updated the declaration to mirror the wording of the updated AVS.</p>
<p>6. <i>Consideration should be given to expanding the usage of the Pledge to the broader community, for example, through school and community events.</i></p>	<p>Expanding usage of the Australian Citizenship Pledge (the Pledge) and Australian Citizenship Affirmation (the Affirmation)</p> <p>The Pledge is recited by conferees during their Australian citizenship ceremony. The Affirmation is a short statement and is based on the words of the Pledge and provides an opportunity for anyone who feels a strong connection to Australia to express their national pride and spirit and celebrate the values we share as Australians.</p> <p>Everyone is welcome to participate in an Affirmation event. People who are not yet Australian citizens but consider Australia their home can take part from the second line of the Affirmation. Participation in the Affirmation is voluntary and it holds no legal standing. People leading the Affirmation should be Australian citizens but that is the only requirement.</p> <p>An Affirmation can be held on any day of the year, and is especially appropriate on days of significance such as</p>

Recommendation	Action taken
	<p>Australia Day (26 January) or Australian Citizenship Day (17 September). It can be held as part of special events, such as during a citizenship ceremony, on Harmony Day, or as part of a school assembly. The Department has a number of Affirmation products available online to order free of charge, to help raise awareness of, and participation in, Affirmation events.</p>
<p><i>7. Citizenship should remain a desirable and obtainable goal for those legal migrants and permanent residents who wish to become fully fledged members of Australian society, committed to its values and its interests. On balance, dual citizenship benefits Australia and should remain an option available to Australians.</i></p>	<p>Citizenship remains a desirable and obtainable goal</p> <p>According to the OECD Better Life Index ‘Australia ranks at the top in civic engagement and above the average in income and wealth, environmental quality, health status, housing, jobs and earnings, education and skills, subjective well-being, social connections and personal security’.</p> <p>The July 2015 OECD ‘Indicators of immigrant integration’ report, also states that Australia has one of the highest rates of citizenship acquisition in the OECD (more than 80 per cent of permanent residents become citizens).</p> <p>The 2017 final report of the Senate Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism (‘Ways of protecting and strengthening Australia’s multiculturalism and social inclusion’) found that new migrants and refugees consider Australian citizenship represents a sense of security and identity, and is an important milestone in establishing their lives in Australia, indicating that citizenship continues to be a desirable and obtainable goal.</p> <p>Dual citizenship remains an option available to Australians.</p>
<p><i>8. The Government should continue to strengthen the integrity of the citizenship process, including through elements proposed in the Australian Citizenship and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014.</i></p>	<p>Introduction of the 2017 Bill</p> <p>The 2017 Bill included measures from the <i>Australian Citizenship and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014</i>.</p> <p>The 2017 Bill was passed in the House of Representatives on 14 August 2017, but was subsequently discharged from the Senate notice paper on 18 October 2017.</p> <p>Processing and Integrity Improvements</p> <p>A number of initiatives have been implemented in recent years to strengthen the integrity of the Citizenship Program while ensuring timely processing of citizenship applications. This has included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing a risk tiering tool that streamlines the processing of low risk applications while allocating more resources to higher-risk cases

Recommendation	Action taken
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A national allocation model, moving work across sites, to better manage processing times and providing for multiple staff interacting with one application • Development of Subject Matter Experts in complex caseloads • Enhanced Quality Assurance and Quality Check processes.
<p>9. <i>In recognition of the role permanent residency plays as a qualifying step towards becoming a citizen, the Government should consider measures to strengthen the integrity of the permanent residency programme, including through appropriate civics education and other processes, such as testing.</i></p>	<p>Strengthening the Australian Values Statement</p> <p>As part of the Government's new measures to enhance social cohesion, the Australian Values Statement (AVS) was updated to better reflect the values underpinning Australia's society and social cohesion. The updated AVS came into effect on 30 October 2020, and requires applicants for most temporary and permanent visas to confirm they understand and will undertake to conduct themselves in accordance with the values of Australian society and will obey the laws of Australia.</p> <p>The AVS, to be signed by all permanent visa applicants, includes the following additional elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I undertake to make reasonable efforts to learn the English language, if it is not my native language. • I understand that, if in the future I meet the legal qualifications for becoming an Australian citizen and my application is approved, I will need to pledge my loyalty to Australia and its people.
<p>10. <i>The general residence requirement should be increased to a minimum of four years permanent residence immediately prior to the application for citizenship, during which time applicants may be absent from Australia for no more than 12 months in total. Applicants for citizenship should be physically in Australia to lodge their application and to acquire Australian citizenship at a ceremony.</i></p>	<p>Introduction of the 2017 Bill</p> <p>The 2017 Bill included measures to increase the general residence requirement to require citizenship by conferral applicants to have been a permanent resident for at least four years before they are eligible to apply for citizenship.</p> <p>The 2017 Bill was passed in the House of Representatives on 14 August 2017, but was subsequently discharged from the Senate notice paper on 18 October 2017.</p>
<p>11. <i>The Citizenship Test should be retained, revised and updated including online and other means if necessary to include questions about allegiance and more questions about the rule of law, values and democratic rights and responsibilities.</i></p>	<p>Updating the Australian citizenship test</p> <p>The acting Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs, the Hon Alan Tudge MP announced on 17 September 2020 that the Australian citizenship test will be updated to include new questions about Australian values. The updated Australian citizenship test commences on 15 November 2020, and includes 20 multiple choice questions on the following topics:</p>

Recommendation	Action taken
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian Values • Australia and its people • Australia’s democratic beliefs, rights and liberties • Government and the law in Australia. <p>The updated Australian citizenship test puts Australian values at the heart of citizenship testing and aims to ensure people who take up Australian citizenship understand and are committed to the values that unite us as Australians. A person will be required to correctly answer all five questions on Australian values, with a mark of at least 75 per cent overall, to pass the test.</p>
<p>12. <i>The integrity of the Citizenship Test should be strengthened through limits on the number of times a person can sit but fail to pass the Test before their application is refused. A person can make a new application for citizenship once s/he has gained a sufficient understanding to enable them to pass the test. Cheating on the Citizenship Test should incur appropriate penalties.</i></p>	<p>Strengthening the integrity of the citizenship test</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes were made to the Citizenship Procedural Instruction 26 – <i>Australian Citizenship test</i> to clarify that, where an applicant has failed after attending three separate test appointments (noting that, time and resources permitting, they may re-sit the test multiple times at a single appointment), it is open to the decision-maker to refuse a citizenship application on the basis that paragraphs 21(2)(d), (e) and (f) of the <i>Australian Citizenship Act 2007</i> are not satisfied. These changes were approved on 2 April 2020 and uploaded to ‘LEGENDcom’, an electronic database of migration and citizenship legislation and policy documents available on a subscription basis, on 17 May 2020. • Related changes to the Standard Operating Procedure <i>Administering the citizenship test</i> were approved on 19 August 2020 and published on the Department of Home Affairs’ Policy and Procedure Control Register on 17 September 2020.
<p>13. <i>The Government should ensure more individuals formally make the Pledge by reducing the exemptions from participation in citizenship ceremonies and by including the Pledge in processes whereby citizenship is gained by descent, adoption or resumption on reaching their maturity.</i></p>	<p>Introduction of the 2017 Bill</p> <p>The 2017 Bill included measures to extend the requirement to make the pledge of allegiance to all persons aged 16 and over intending to acquire citizenship by descent, persons adopted in accordance with the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption or a bilateral agreement, persons intending to acquire citizenship by resumption, and persons intending to acquire citizenship by conferral who have satisfied the criteria for a person born to a former Australian citizen, a person born in Papua or a person who has satisfied the criteria relating to statelessness.</p> <p>The 2017 Bill was passed in the House of Representatives on 14 August 2017, but was subsequently discharged from the Senate notice paper on 18 October 2017.</p>

Recommendation	Action taken
<p>14. <i>The Government should clarify public understanding that all Australian-born citizens and those who have citizenship by descent are bound by the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship as set out in the Preamble.</i></p>	<p>See action taken in relation to Recommendations 1 ('Promoting Australian values'), 3 and 6 above.</p>
<p>15. <i>In view of the strong emphasis the community places on English language, the Government should improve the Adult Migration English Program (AMEP) and ensure new citizens have adequate (not just basic) language ability, taking into account particular circumstances.</i></p>	<p>Improvements to the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP)</p> <p>On Friday, 28 August 2020, the acting Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs, the Hon Alan Tudge MP, announced major reforms that will be implemented to the AMEP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amending the <i>Immigration (Education) Act 1971</i>, in order to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - remove the cap that limits free English tuition to 510 hours; - raise the AMEP eligibility threshold (and exit point for the program) from functional (IELTS 4.5 or equivalent) to vocational (IELTS 5.5 or equivalent) English; and - remove the time limits on enrolling, commencing and completing AMEP tuition (for those already in Australia as at 1 October 2020).

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PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY SPOKEN QUESTION ON NOTICE

Senate Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade Reference Committee
Inquiry into the issues facing diaspora communities in Australia

15 October 2020

QoN Number: 04

Subject: Delivery of AMEP using public broadcasters

Asked by: Concetta Fierravanti-Wells

Question:

Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: My next question goes specifically to the AMEP. Again, I'm really pleased to see that finally this is in Home Affairs, where it should have been—I fought long and hard, I have to tell you, so I'm really pleased that that's happened. I put some questions to the Settlement Council, and raised the prospect of the usage of our public broadcasters as an avenue for English language learning. I particularly raised this in the context of newly arrived migrant women from certain communities, who tend to be at home a lot. I wonder if we could be a bit more creative in our thinking on this. I recall that at the time I did start this discussion with the public broadcasters, and we were talking about a relatively small amount of money. I wonder if you have the opportunity now, with the advances in technology, to be a lot more creative in terms of that reaching out. In the same vein, particularly in relation to on-the-job English and that sort of thing, how can we look outside the box and be a little bit more creative? Again, I'd be very happy if you could have another look at that evidence, give it some thought and come back to me on notice—unless you want to comment on it now.

Mr Johnson: I might hand over to Mr Wilden, who has administrative responsibilities in that space. Again, it might be a combination of giving you an update and then taking the rest on notice.

Mr Wilden: I think we will take that on notice, because there's quite a bit happening in the AMEP space at the moment, post the minister's announcement of some of the changes around access and hours, a focus on outcomes, et cetera. To pick up your point around mode of delivery, what we've done with COVID, when people were unable to attend face-to-face sessions, is to look at online delivery to give flexibility, so people can do it at different times. We've been getting very positive feedback on that. At this stage we have not talked to any of the broadcasters, but we'll put together an update for you on the changes we've made this year in modes of delivery and on what our future work looks like. Certainly, there is a commitment from government to focus on functional English as it contributes to settlement. It's not a goal unto itself; it is part of your settlement journey, and when and how you receive that support in terms of timing, mode of delivery and volumes must both meet the

needs of the individual and contribute to that settlement outcome. I will come back on notice with more information.

Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: Thank you. I ask that question particularly in the context of the family violence provisions. We know that it's important for women—particularly, as I said, newly arrived women, many of whom are isolated at home. I really do think we have to be a little bit more creative, not just in getting English messages across but in using that English potentially as a medium for other messaging et cetera. Just in passing, please provide me with an update of some of the work that's been done in the AUSCO space and how we are updating that and refreshing that as we go along—but I'm happy for you to take that on notice.

Answer:

- The Department is not pursuing a strategy of using public broadcasters in the delivery of AMEP as it is focusing on better use of technology and flexibility to remove accessibility barriers (including for women). This more flexible model has been tested in the response to COVID-19.

Flexible Delivery

- The AMEP adapted quickly to the challenges of COVID-19 to maintain continuity of support and English language tuition for students, including transitioning classes from face-to-face to online, phone and paper based delivery.
- The Department surveyed AMEP clients, teachers and providers on their experience in transitioning from face-to-face delivery to these alternative delivery modes in the period between April to June 2020.
- Service providers, teachers and students were all challenged by the extent and speed of change to delivery in response to COVID-19. Despite this, many positives were reported, such as increased innovative practices, knowledge sharing and flexible delivery.
- The student survey results indicated that delivery outside the classroom was beneficial for those with caring or employment responsibilities. There was a clear indication that learning English both at home and in the classroom was also preferred.
- The flexibility of face-to-face and remote learning beyond COVID-19 will afford students the opportunity to better fit English studies around their other commitments.

Program Reforms

- On 28 August 2020, the Acting Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs, the Hon Alan Tudge MP, announced major reforms that will be implemented to the AMEP to improve English language acquisition in Australia. These changes mean that more migrants will be able to access free English tuition, for longer, and until they reach a higher level of proficiency.
- The reforms include proposed amendments to legislation that will:
 - remove the cap that limits free English tuition to 510 hours, to provide unlimited hours of tuition;

- raise the AMEP eligibility threshold (and exit point for the program) from functional to vocational English; and
 - remove the time limits on enrolling, commencing and completing AMEP tuition (for those already in Australia as at 1 October 2020).
- Building on the reforms seen through the COVID-19 response, the future state of the AMEP will also include a greater use of technology, including harnessing online platforms that will enable study from home to supplement classroom-based learning.

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PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY SPOKEN QUESTION ON NOTICE

Senate Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade Reference Committee
Inquiry into the issues facing diaspora communities in Australia

15 October 2020

QoN Number: 05

Subject: Provisions of funding and employment outcomes

Asked by: Concetta Fierravanti-Wells

Question:

Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: My last question goes to employment, and to unemployment more than anything. At the time I was minister, details emerged in relation to a longitudinal study that we were doing which looked at about 75,000 people who had come to Australia over a period of about five years, I think, under the humanitarian program. It also included people who had sought asylum and then got a humanitarian visa. Two statistics struck me. One was the number of people who had at least university and high school qualifications. This goes to the point that Senator Abetz made earlier—and perhaps you could go and look at that evidence—and that goes to skilling. But the other issue that really troubled me was that the funding for settlement services was based on the premise of only about seven to nine percent of that cohort ever having employment. Can you assist the committee with where that statistic is at now, or, if you can't assist us today, could you take it on notice, particularly in light of the amount of money we've spent in settlement services and most especially in settlement/employment services? We've seen some of these settlement service providers make a lot of money. It's now become a major industry, but I'm concerned that that hasn't translated into more people getting employment.

Mr Johnson: Thank you. That's another question for Mr Wilden.

Mr Wilden: Apologies, but I don't have figures available at hand. But we will certainly put together some figures around settlement outcomes. But, in line with my earlier offer of answers, we might look back over the last, say, five years—as a starting point—and go back to the report you cited. As you may know, we've had a Commonwealth coordinator-general appointed who is looking at a lot of reforms. We are sort of in a period of analysis at the moment around where we go next, and one of the things we are finding is that the data is not overly reliable. So I'll preface my comments with that. Obviously, for the last 12 months COVID is impacting as well. We'll dig out as much data as we can in the settlement space for refugee humanitarian entrants that looks at historical targets of employment, be it full time, part time et cetera—anything we have that can help you see the pathway—to see if we are in fact getting better employment outcomes based on the investment in settlement.

Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: When the assessment was done in relation to the cohort of the 12,000 Syrians that were brought out as a consequence of the war in

Iraq, my understanding was that that \$840 million assessment was based on assumptions that only about seven, eight or nine per cent of that cohort—I think it was about seven per cent—would ever gain employment. So I'm interested in particular to understand if we've moved further than seven or eight per cent and what the employment outcomes have been for that cohort—as I said, especially given the amount of money that has been expended in this area.

Mr Wilden: Certainly, we'll provide that. I'll just note that we do see fairly regular patterns regardless of whether we are talking about the 12,000 additional places a few years ago or our normal refugee and humanitarian program. The 12-month, three-year five-year results—we do see much greater increases in employment over that five years. So will get a data set with as much information—

Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS: Which is why the longitudinal study was so useful and that's why I'm interested to know whether you have continued that longitudinal study. It was pretty valuable. The last question I would like you to take on notice also.

Answer:

What funding was provided for the 12k Syrians?

The Government provided \$827.4 million over four years in the 2015-16 MYEFO process to permanently resettle an additional 12,000 refugees who fled the conflict in Syria and Iraq. The breakdown of funding is as follows:

Expense (\$m)	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Department of Social Services	-	107.4	188.8	176.6	165.3
Department of Immigration and Border Protection	-	21.4	12.3	-	-
Department of Health	-	10.2	21.0	16.3	13.7
Department of Education and Training	-	10.0	34.5	30.0	18.5
Department of Human Services	-	4.5	6.2	4.9	4.5
Department of the Treasury	-	3.6	15.6	18.8	20.0
Australian Security Intelligence Organisation	-	0.7	0.6	-	-
Department of Employment	-	0.7	1.9	1.3	0.7
Australian Taxation Office	-	-	-	-	-
Total — Expense	-	158.5	281.0	247.8	222.5
<i>Related revenue (\$m)</i>					
Australian Taxation Office	-	2.9	18.5	27.0	32.7
Department of Immigration and Border Protection	-	0.1	0.4	0.5	0.5
Total — Revenue	-	3.0	18.9	27.5	33.2
<i>Related capital (\$m)</i>					
Australian Security Intelligence Organisation	-	0.1	-	-	-

What funding was provided for Settlement Services?

Around \$142 million of the total \$827.4 million was provided for settlement services for 12 000 Syrians over four years from 2015-2019.

What employment assumptions were included in the overall funding for the 12k Syrians?

We have referred this question to the Department of Social Services.

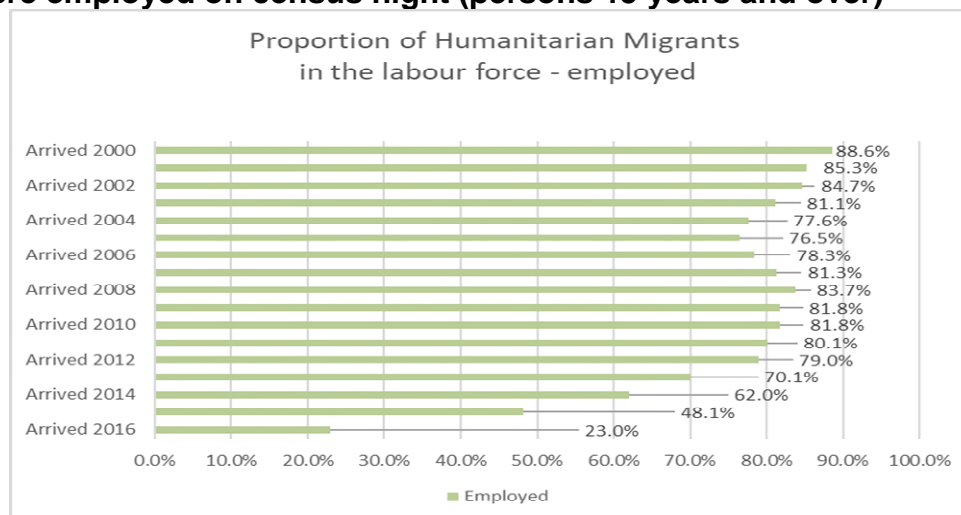
What are the employment outcomes for refugees and humanitarian migrants?

The Australian Bureau of Statistics information shows that humanitarian migrants' engagement in the labour force and employment outcomes significantly improve during their first 5 years in Australia. Refugee labour force participation and employment rates increase to levels comparable with, but under, the Australian average.

Evidence from the Australian Census and Migrant Integrated Dataset 2016 (ACMID) shows that, in their first year of arrival in Australia, 23 per cent of humanitarian migrants in the labour force were employed compared to 51.4 per cent of family migrants and 64.5 per cent of skilled migrants.

- For humanitarian migrants in the labour force who had lived in Australia for five years, employment rates increased to 80.1 per cent, compared to 89.8 per cent for family migrants and 93.3 per cent for skilled migrants.

From ACMID 2016: Proportion of Humanitarian migrants in the labour force who were employed on census night (persons 15 years and over)¹



Professor Shergold's Review into *Integration, Employment and Settlement Outcomes for Refugees and Humanitarian Entrants in Australia* (the Review) provided advice to the Government on how to improve employment and integration outcomes for refugees and humanitarian entrants.

- The Government accepted, fully or in part, all seven recommendations of the Review. The Government response can be found at: <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/reports-and-pubs/files/review-integration-employment-settlement-outcomes-refugees-humanitarian-entrants-government-response.pdf>

Have you continued the longitudinal study?

¹ The figure displays the proportion of employed humanitarian migrants compared to the total humanitarian migrant labour force – for graphic simplicity they do not show the unemployed migrants in the labour force. Migrants not in the labour force have not been considered.

The Department is aware of two longitudinal studies to which the Senator's question may refer.

1. The Continuous Survey of Australia's Migrants (CSAM) is a series of longitudinal surveys first run in 2009, with migrants surveyed on up to three occasions to capture changes in their labour market status and measure how they have integrated into the Australian labour force.
 - CSAM includes all provisional and permanent visa categories within the Migration Program (excludes Child visa migrants). This provides a pool of potential respondents, of around 70,000 primary applicant migrants, from which around 20,000 are randomly selected and invited to participate.
 - Humanitarian entrants are not included in the CSAM as they require a more specialised survey to assess how well their settlement objectives are met.
2. *Building a New Life in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Humanitarian Migrants* (BNLA) is a longitudinal study of the settlement experience of humanitarian arrivals in Australia, over five years, from 2013 until 2018.
 - The study cohort comprises approximately 2,400 individuals, who were granted a permanent humanitarian visa in the three to six months prior to commencement. Study participants live in large and small communities around Australia, across most states and territories, with most living in Melbourne and Sydney.
 - BNLA data is available to approved researchers from government, academic institutions and non-profit organisations. Information about research and publications using BNLA data is available on both FloSse Research and the Centre for Longitudinal Data research and publications page.
 - An extensive analysis of BNLA data was published in the Wave 3 report, providing a quick and easy reference for policy makers and service providers needing evidence to inform their work. It provides a detailed description of migration experiences, settlement experiences and socio-economic characteristics of a large group of humanitarian migrants. It also examines the association between variations in these characteristics and experiences with the settlement outcomes of respondents.
 - Most recently, the Wave 5 Update was released to the public on 2 July 2020. It summarises additional findings from waves 4 and 5. Due to the smaller size of the report, this update does not provide detailed commentary on or explanation of the data. It includes only updated tables and figures that incorporate data from waves 4 and 5.
 - The Department of Social Services is considering the future directions of the BNLA study.

Senator Abetz's question was "I'm just wondering what work is being done to actually break down some of these barriers (to recognition of overseas

qualifications). What can government do to assist in that regard, keeping in mind many of these bodies are in fact professional or state government bodies?)”

1. Home Affairs recognizes that skills recognition is an area recognised as presenting challenges for many migrants. The Coordinator-General for Migrant Services is working across all levels of government, and with industry and the community to drive better results for humanitarian entrants and other migrants in relation to labour market outcomes, English language acquisition and integration.

Australia’s skilled migration program contributes to Australia’s economic and workforce needs in skills areas where Australian workers are unavailable. The program requires prospective migrants to undergo an assessment of their skills, qualifications and/or work experience to ensure they meet the occupational standards needed for employment in Australia.

Questions relations to skills recognition should be directed at the Department of Education, Skills and Employment.

These assessments are conducted by Government approved assessing authorities, such as professional and government entities, who are responsible for setting assessment standards, including level of qualification and length of work experience.

To support potential migrants, the Australian Government also provides a quality assurance function across all assessing authorities to ensure they do not impose unreasonable barriers on skills assessment applicants.

State and territory governments also have key responsibilities in the area of skills recognition. For example, the NSW Government funds the Refugee Employment Support Program (RESP), a four-year initiative which includes supporting refugees and asylum seekers in gaining recognition of overseas skills and qualifications.

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PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY SPOKEN QUESTION ON NOTICE

Senate Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade Reference Committee
Inquiry into the issues facing diaspora communities in Australia

15 October 2020

QoN Number: 06

Subject: Youth Transition Support

Asked by: Concetta Fierravanti-Wells

Question:

During the time when the now Prime Minister was minister for social services, there was a program that he particularly sponsored himself, a youth-at-risk program. I would be interested to know what happened there. I think it was allocated about \$22 million or \$23 million in the budget at the time, and was given to four or five organisations. I would be most interested to know what evaluation was done. At the time, if my memory serves me correctly, a number of organisations simply had money given to them. There was no tender. Organisations were picked out. Could you go back to that program and identify the organisations that received the money. But I'm also interested to see what outcomes came from those programs and whether we did an analysis of all that program.

Mr Wilden: We'll take that on notice. We don't have the information on that particular element at the moment.

Answer:

The 2015-16 Federal Budget allocated \$22.1 million from 2015-16 to 2016-17 to pilot the Transition Support for Young Refugees and Other Vulnerable Migrants measure, as part of the Government's Youth Employment Strategy.

Youth Transition Support (YTS) services commenced 1 January 2016. These services work to build capability and resilience amongst young humanitarian entrants and other eligible migrants aged 15 to 25, to stay engaged in education and make successful transitions to employment.

YTS services comprise four components ('pillars') delivered holistically:

- Partnerships for Employment to improve work readiness.
- Strong Connections to Education to support ongoing engagement with education.
- Vocational Opportunities to help youth obtain and strengthen vocational skills.
- Sports Engagement to help youth build social connections and confidence through sporting programs.

YTS services are directed to permanent residents aged 15 to 25 years who have arrived in Australia in the last five years as:

- Humanitarian entrants
- Family stream migrants with low English proficiency, and
- Dependents of skilled migrants in rural and regional areas with low English proficiency.

YTS services are available to those who reside in the following Local Government Areas with identified participation and social cohesion issues:

- NSW: Bankstown, Canterbury, Fairfield, Liverpool, Auburn and Blacktown.
- VIC: Brimbank, Casey, Darebin, Greater Dandenong, Hume, Maribryong, Maroonah, Melbourne, Melton, Whitehorse, Wyndham and Hume.
- QLD: Brisbane and Logan.

In 2015, a non-competitive direct selection process was undertaken. Providers were identified on the basis of their history of engagement with refugee/migrant communities, their experience in working with young people and delivery of similar services in an efficient and timely manner. Significant research and analysis was undertaken to determine YTS service delivery locations.

Six service providers deliver YTS services:

- NSW – the Lebanese Muslim Association and the Community Migrant Resource Centre.
- VIC - Foundation House and the Brotherhood of St Laurence.
- QLD - Multicultural Australia and ACCESS Community Services.

The Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN), a settlement peak body, was funded from 2016 to 2018 to perform a support and advisory role for YTS providers and administer an independent evaluation of the pilot. MYAN collaborated with the Department and the six YTS service providers to support the development of improved practice, facilitated a Community of Practice (CoP) and co-ordinated engagement with the pilot evaluation process.

YTS services have been previously extended, with funding of \$49.591 currently committed over 2015-16 to 2020-21.

Over 13,000 young people have been assisted under Youth Transition Support services, since commencement to end June 2020.

The 2020-2021 Federal Budget recently provided an additional \$12.7 million to extend funding for the YTS and the Youth Hubs Trial to 30 June 2022, aligning the end date of these programs with other settlement programs.

The additional funding will only apply to current YTS and Youth Hubs service providers, with services continuing to operate in current target locations.

Evaluation activity

The YTS Pilot Period (January 2016 to June 2017) Evaluation Report was published in July 2018. The Interim evaluation indicated YTS services was generating good short-term outcomes and showing some early success in medium term employment outcomes.

The YTS Final Evaluation (January 2016 to December 2018), found the holistic four-pillar approach to client services has been effective in: improved education opportunities; improved employment prospects through provision of employability skills training; and increased opportunities in vocational and skills training to further increase employment and career opportunities and greater social interaction.

The evaluation found the scope of YTS services and support offered to assist migrant and refugee youth was appropriate, that the YTS model is unique, both nationally and internationally and that YTS has benefited the sector through improved coordination, collaboration and capacity development.

The evaluation also found that YTS services have been effective in assisting young migrants to improve their education opportunities, employability skills, career opportunities, vocational skills and positive social interactions.

The YTS has positively impacted on income support reliance, with the final evaluation finding that the number of clients receiving welfare benefits had decreased by 52 per cent, indicating clients are transitioning from welfare benefits into employment, education and vocational training.

Other findings from the final evaluation include improvements in policy and program settings and improvements to program administration such as the adoption of a Community Impact Model approach, application of communities of practice arrangements and encouraging stronger emphasis on pathways for further education and vocational training to assist young people entering the job market.

Both reports are publically available on the Department of Home Affairs website at <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/settling-in-australia/youth-transition-support-services>

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PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY SPOKEN QUESTION ON NOTICE

Senate Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade Reference Committee
Inquiry into the issues facing diaspora communities in Australia

15 October 2020

QoN Number: 07

Subject: Social Cohesion Funding

Asked by: Kimberley Kitching

Question:

CHAIR: I want to ask a few questions. I'm in the portfolio budget statements for Home Affairs. Under the social cohesion measures, it's \$21.5 million in 2020-21. Then in 2021-22 it drops to just under 9.5, and then in 2022-23 it's 9.5, and in 2023-24 it's about nine. Why is it dropping from 20-21 to 21-22 over the forwards?

Mr Johnson: We may need to take it on notice.

CHAIR: I'm happy for you to take it on notice.

Answer:

Funds have been made available in 2020-21 for the Department to develop a campaign to articulate the Australian values that keep us together as a nation, promote uptake of Australian citizenship among eligible migrants, and highlight the importance of English.