

Senate Select Committee on Temporary Migration

Temporary Migration QUESTION ON NOTICE Date of hearing: 30 June 2021

Outcome: Employment

Department of Education, Skills and Employment Question No. IQ21-000114

Senator Raff Ciccone on 30 June 2021, Proof Hansard page 19

Cost breakdowns

Question

CHAIR: How much money was set aside to set up the program? How much did it cost to implement this program?

Ms Kidd: There was \$15.4 million provided for this program in the 2020-21 budget.

CHAIR: Are you able to provide a breakdown of the costs—setting up the website, communications and advertising for the program? Are you able to provide the committee a breakdown of the costs?

Ms Kidd: We would have to provide the detail on notice, but the bulk of the funding is for reimbursement for jobseekers and visa holders.

CHAIR: I'm interested in the cost of setting up the program. How much has it cost the department to set this program up?

Ms Kidd: Within the department—in fact, within my area—we have a Harvest Trail section looks after the Harvest Trail services. They have taken that on as part of their ongoing responsibilities.

CHAIR: There were no additional administrative costs to set up the program?

Ms Kidd: I don't believe so.

CHAIR: Could you take that on notice please.

Ms Kidd: Yes.

CHAIR: Potentially quite a bit of money has been spent to get only 550 people to date. Are you allowed to claim through this program if you are also on a state government program?

Ms Kidd: You can't claim for the same thing through two different programs. If you were seeking reimbursement for your travel, you couldn't seek it twice.

CHAIR: It's either the state government program or the Commonwealth program.

Ms Kidd: Yes. If the state government program was providing, for example, travel costs to get to a site and our program was providing workboots, that could be acceptable.

CHAIR: I don't know how far you can go in breaking down the administrative costs for setting up this program. I don't know if you have it line by line, itemised, but can you provide a breakdown of the administrative costs in setting up this program as well as the previous program, on notice? I know we've renamed it AgMove.

Ms Kidd: Yes, certainly.

Answer

The \$15.4 million budget for AgMove 2020-21 initiative consists of:

- \$11.8 million - administrative funding for payments to providers (\$1.8 million in service fees) and reimbursement of relocation costs to job seekers;
- \$3.6 million – departmental funding for program administration, that included:
 - o \$2.5 million over two financial years for temporary contractors to support program's delivery, reporting, communication, assurance and evaluation activities as well as processing providers' reimbursement claims (the setting up of AgMove has been managed by the existing team with staffing costs absorbed by the department)
 - o \$0.5 million for IT system enhancements (this included system changes for both elements of the budget measure: relocation assistance for ongoing jobs and for short-term agricultural work); and
 - o \$0.6 million for communication activities, including websites updates, developing communication strategy and products and running targeted social media to promote AgMove.

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Senator Raff Ciccone on 30 June 2021, Proof Hansard page 20

Program Eligibility

Question

CHAIR: So once the provider says, 'Yes, they're an approved employee or an approved individual for the program,' you just take the service provider's word for it? Is that how it normally works with these types of programs?

Ms Kidd: They need to assess eligibility for the programs, regardless of our program. That's how it would work.

CHAIR: So you don't have to confirm their visa status, or is that done by the Department of Home Affairs?

Ms Kidd: I would need to check that. They would have to provide some documentary evidence around their visa status to be eligible.

Answer

Job seekers need to be registered in the Department's IT Systems before being referred to a harvest job by a Harvest Trail Services (HTS) provider.

When registering a job seeker, HTS providers are required to confirm if they are an Eligible Harvest Worker. To be eligible a person must be an Australian citizen or permanent resident or must hold a temporary work visa with general work rights, not restricted to an employer or type of work. To verify a job seeker's eligibility, HTS Providers must:

- sight valid photo ID (government issued documents) of the prospective worker and check it matches their appearance in-person, and
 - check that the prospective worker holds an eligible visa type on the [Visa Entitlement Verification Online \(VEVO\) service¹](https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/busi/visas-and-migration/visa-entitlement-verification-online-(vevo)), and confirm that the visa is current.
- Note. The registration form asks for the job seeker's consent for their visa to be checked.

¹ [https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/busi/visas-and-migration/visa-entitlement-verification-online-\(vevo\)](https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/busi/visas-and-migration/visa-entitlement-verification-online-(vevo))

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Department of Education, Skills and Employment Question No. IQ21-000116

Senator Raff Ciccone on 30 June 2021, Proof Hansard page 22

Accommodation complaints

Question

CHAIR: Have you had many cases where workers have complained about the quality of accommodation?

Ms McCormack: I don't have the exact number of explicit complaints on accommodation.

CHAIR: Are you able to take on notice—because I'm just mindful of time—the breakdown of complaints, broken down by subcategory, for the last four financial years?

Ms McCormack: Yes.

Answer

Accommodation Subcategory	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Cost	2	1	7	8
Quality	3	1	6	6
Maintenance/Repair	0	1	0	1
Occupancy	0	0	4	6
Total	5	3	17	21

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Senator Raff Ciccone on 30 June 2021, Proof Hansard page 23

Stakeholder feedback

Question

CHAIR: Have there been members of nation-states who have come to your department expressing concern about the implementation of an agriculture visa? Have Pacific Island nations, specifically, raised any concerns with your department?

Ms Kidd: Not that I'm aware of. I could take that on notice.

Answer

No.