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17 MAR 2009

Submission No 1290

BY: MIG

Bridging visas

- What are the reasons for the declining number of people released from immigration detention on bridging visas (submission 129d, p 7, <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/mig/detention/subs/sub129d.pdf>)?

DIAC Response

In analysing the information provided in response to question seven (submission 129d, p.7) to respond to the committee's question, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship identified errors in the way that the reports distinguished between substantive and Bridging visas. These errors have now been corrected and the revised figures are as follows.

	Number of Releases					
	2005-06		2006-07		2007-08	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Removal	5664	84	4352	87	3845	87
Substantive Visa Grant	244	4	260	5	279	6
Bridging Visa Grant	823	12	390	8	280	6
Visa Type Not Stated	0	0	1	0	17	1
Total	6731		5003		4421	

The reduction in the number of people in detention released on Bridging visas (as a proportion of the total numbers being released) is as a consequence of a:

- three percent increase in removals between 2005-06 and 2006-07 (maintained in 2007-08);
- two percent increase in the number of substantive visas granted between 2005-06 and 2007-08; and
- overall reduction in the number of people being detained rather than being issued with a Bridging visa at the time of their location by the Department.

This reflects the Department's:

- efforts to resolve a client's status while they remain in the community without resorting to their detention; and
- fewer people who may be eligible for a Bridging visa entering detention as a consequence.

- **Of the #71 people released from detention on bridging visas in 2007-08, do you have data available on how many had work rights and/or access to Medicare and Centrelink benefits?**

DIAC Response

In its previous response to Question 7 (forwarded on 1 October 2008), the Department of Immigration and Citizenship provided incorrect statistics on the number of people released from detention during the last three financial years. Revised statistics are provided in the table above. There were 280 people released from detention on Bridging visas in 2007-8.

Departmental systems are unable to easily provide statistical reports which identify the number of people released from detention on Bridging visas who were granted work rights and, as a consequence, access to Medicare benefits. To do so would have significant time and resource implications for the Department.

Access to work rights will depend on factors such as whether the person is an applicant for a permanent visa, if they held work rights with their previous visa or whether they had a compelling need to work.

The Return Pending Bridging visa is the only Bridging visa that confers access to social security benefits provided by Centrelink. There were four Return Pending Bridging visas granted to detainees in 2007-08.

- **In the last financial year, how many clients in immigration detention lodged an application for a bridging visa (presumably only BVE and F would apply, as a person cannot apply for a RPBV?)?**

DIAC Response

Department systems are unable easily to provide statistical reports which identify whether BV applicants were in immigration detention at the time of application.