

**Joint Standing Committee on Migration****Chair: Ms Vamvakinou MP****Deputy Chair: Mrs Louise Markus MP**

Language skills and work readiness under Australia's skilled migration program

Almost 30,000 professionals entered Australia from 2009 to 2010 under the Government's Skilled Migration Program. All were considered to have skills of high value to the Australian economy, and more than a third spoke English as their first language.

On Wednesday 6 July 2011, the Joint Committee on Migration will hold a public hearing with the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations' (DEEWR) Population and Migration Policy Branch to discuss the new requirements for higher language proficiency under the skilled migration selection process.

Under recent reforms, applicants must pass tougher written English tests in addition to holding high formal qualifications. Committee chair Ms Maria Vamvakinou said: "There is no doubt that English language proficiency enhances successful settlement, however it is also important that quality skilled visa applicants are not excluded because they lack English language excellence before entering the country."

Referring to DEEWR's submission, Ms Vamvakinou also observed: "Once skilled migrants gain a visa it is important to ensure their skills are utilised – at present only half of skilled graduate entrants work in a skilled occupation. This suggests targeted job matching services could better assist this group."

"The Committee will also discuss the potential for recognition of overseas and prior learning measures to assist the large percentage of migrants not working, though not officially unemployed, to gain employment and improve their English skills," she said.

The hearing will commence at **10.30 am in Committee Room 1R4**, Parliament House, Canberra and will be audio broadcast on:

<http://webcast.aph.gov.au/livebroadcasting/>

Further information about the inquiry can be obtained from the Committee's website www.aph.gov.au/mig or from the Secretariat on (02) 6277 4560.

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