

Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE Budget Estimates 2017 - 2018

Outcome 2 - Workplace Relations and Economic Strategy

Department of Employment Question No. EMSQ17-004067

Senator Cameron asked on 29 May 2017 on proof Hansard page 127

Question

Seasonal Worker Programme - instances of relatives coming to Australia following an incident

Senator CAMERON: You indicated when someone is seriously injured—is there a process where you can bring a relative to assist or visit them?

Ms Durbin: In general, that is done through the approved employer. How the program works is the department grants approved employer status to an employer, and we also go through a number of checks when that approved employer wants to bring a worker to Australia. We approve the intake of a certain number of workers to do a certain range of occupations that are eligible under the program. The approved employer then works directly with the labour-sending unit who selects the workers and applies to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection for the visas. When there is, unfortunately, an incident, it is generally the employer who is able to contact the direct relatives of the worker who is involved. Normally, that is done through the employer, rather than through the department, but, obviously, one of the first things we check is everybody who needs to know.

Senator CAMERON: Will there be any funding available for a close relative, if someone was seriously injured that could not be moved, to come to Australia?

Ms Durbin: I can provide you assurances that, in a number of instances, it is the approved employer who has paid for family members, both those who are in Australia to fly to a location but also overseas relatives to fly to Australia to be—

Senator CAMERON: Okay, can you provide details of where this has happened.

Ms Durbin: Where we are aware of it, yes, certainly.

Answer

The Department of Employment is aware of the following examples where an employer has paid for the travel of family members of workers under the Seasonal Worker Programme in the period from 1 July 2016.

- Return international airfares for the wife and son of a worker who died in December 2016.
- Flight change fees for an existing international flight for the nephew of a worker who died in April 2017.
- Return international airfares for the father and brother of a worker who died in May 2017.