

## Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment

### QUESTIONS ON NOTICE Supplementary Budget Estimates 2016 - 2017

#### Outcome 2 - Workplace Relations and Economic Strategy

Department of Employment Question No. EMSQ16-001070

Senator Marshall provided in writing.

#### Question

##### Worker Exploitation

- What will be the department's role in the Migrant Workers Taskforce, which is another taskforce, and how will it differ from the Ministerial Working Group on Vulnerable Visa workers?
- The brief for the taskforce is to identify and address the systemic causes of migrant worker exploitation how will this be possible for a taskforce which is only set to meet four times a year?
- This space is crowded. Since 2014 Senator Cash has created a reconstituted Ministerial Advisory Council on Skilled Migration, Operation Cadena, a Ministerial Working Group on Vulnerable Visa workers and a new Fair Work Ombudsman Migrant Worker Strategy and Engagement Division.
- Can you cite one example of how these taskforces have stopped a worker being exploited?
- Has the Minister taken a worker exploitation package to the Cabinet since last time we were here? If so, has there been any further action or was the proposal knocked off?

#### Answer

*What will be the department's role in the Migrant Workers' Taskforce, which is another taskforce, and how will it differ from the Ministerial Working Group on Vulnerable Visa workers?*

The Department of Employment supports the Migrant Workers' Taskforce through the provision of Secretariat services, as well as policy coordination and advice. The Migrant Workers' Taskforce will progress practical measures to protect vulnerable migrant workers. It builds on the work undertaken by the Ministerial Working Group on Protecting Vulnerable Workers.

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Under its Terms of Reference, the Migrant Workers' Taskforce is to meet no less than four times per year, unless otherwise agreed by the Taskforce members. Members of the Taskforce will progress agreed activities between meetings. The Taskforce builds on existing Government actions to prevent and address exploitation of vulnerable workers.

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The exploitation of migrant workers cuts across jurisdictions, intersecting with migration, corporations and taxation laws. It requires a multi-faceted, whole-of-government approach to both redress and prevent exploitation. Each of the initiatives established by the Government is making an important contribution to preventing and addressing migrant worker exploitation.

Taskforce Cadena for instance, has completed 11 operations, resulting in the arrest of three people, the detention of 95 unlawful non-citizens and the execution of 31 warrants (as at 29 September 2016). Some of these matters are ongoing with Australian Border Force investigators preparing briefs of evidence for consideration by the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions.

Since July 2012, the Fair Work Ombudsman has dealt with over 8,000 requests for assistance from visa workers and recovered more than \$7 million in outstanding wages and entitlements.

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Successive governments have respected the conventions of cabinet confidentiality.