

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING : 23 February 2015

IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

(AE15/097) - 457 Visa's - Programme 1.2 Visa and Citizenship (Administered)

Senator Xenophon, Nick (L&CA) written:

the Department released the proposal paper Simplification of the skilled migration and temporary activity visa programmes - December 2014.

I understand the paper proposed a new temporary-entry permit to allow overseas workers to stay in Australia for a year without a 457 visa.

This visa would allow for entry into Australia for up to 12 months to complete specialised work which may include intra company transfers and foreign correspondents. This visa could be granted for up to 12 months, depending on the work or activity to be undertaken.

1. What does the Department define as “specialised work”? What eligibility requirements would have to be met by applicants?
2. Would there be any requirement for employers to demonstrate they have looked for local workers, such as required under a 457 visa? If not, why not?
3. How does the Department respond to claims that this proposal, along with proposals to abolish the requirement for language and skills tests for temporary overseas workers would worsen unemployment levels in Australia which are currently at a 10-year-high?
4. What research has been undertaken by the Department on the potential impacts of such a visa on Australian unemployment levels?
5. How does the Department plan to monitor potential impacts of Australian employment?
6. I refer to the comments by CFMEU national secretary Michael O'Connor in the media that, “The impact on young people will be particularly harsh. Youth unemployment is at crisis levels, yet the majority of 457 visa approvals are for people under 30.”
 - a. Can the Department advise of what percentage of 457 visa approvals (the sponsored applicant) are aged under 30 years old in the years 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014 and 2015 to date?
 - b. Mr O'Connor was also quoted as saying that one in five workers on 457 visas already were being paid below-standard wages. Does the Department consider that the proposed relaxation of requirements could undermine Australian wages and conditions and lead to further exploitation of foreign workers?
7. What proposed safeguards are in place to ensure foreign workers are not exploited?

Answer:

1-5) The Department is still consulting on the proposal. The policies for the proposed visas are under development.

6a) Subclass 457 comparison with previous years primary visa granted in 2014-15 to 28 February 2015 by age at visa grant

Source: Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2015 (BE8180.01)

Age at visa grant	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15 to 28/02/15
% Less than 30 years old	40.1%	40.9%	41.0%	44.6%	45.1%	43.2%

6b) No. The claim that one in five workers on 457 visas were being paid below-standard wages is incorrect.

7) All foreign workers employed in Australia are provided the same safeguards under the Fair Work Act as Australian workers. In addition, employers of 457 visa holders are required to provide worker protection outcomes, including that these workers are not paid less than the market rate salary.