

## QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

**ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING : 27 February 2017**

IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

**(AE17/077) - Northline labour agreements - Programme 2.3: Visas**

Senator Pratt, Louise (L&CA 124) asked:

Ms Dacey: One of the things about labour agreements is that it is one of the avenues available to employers to bring in semiskilled workers. That is the judgement value we get into in assessing—or if they are seeking some sort of other concession. That is why they exist under the 457 program. But what is unskilled, what is semiskilled, what is skilled—that is the assessment part of the application.

Senator PRATT: 'Unskilled' would have to be someone who comes to the country and then does a course that is a couple of days long, surely.

Ms Dacey: I do not know the detail of that, and that would be something that the decision maker—

Senator PRATT: Perhaps you could take that question on notice, but also the nature of the previous labour agreements sought by Northline, because this is the third agreement they have sought. And can you confirm how many overseas workers Northline has brought in to date in all of their agreements. Can you confirm whether Northline are training workers once they arrive in Australia. Can you confirm the salaries or rates that these drivers are on and if there have been any complaints or investigations regarding the company's practice in importing workers.

Ms Dacey: Yes.

*Answer:*

As at 16 March 2017, Departmental records indicate that only one labour agreement has been executed with Northline Pty Ltd. 16 employees were granted primary Temporary Work (Skilled) visas (subclass 457) under this three year agreement, which expires on 9 April 2017.

Under this agreement, Northline Pty Ltd were required to:

- pay overseas workers the Temporary Skilled Migration Income Threshold (TSMIT - currently set at \$53,900) or the market salary rate if higher; and
- only nominate overseas employees with an AQF Certificate III or higher and three years recent experience in the occupation. **Note:** The skills of individual workers nominated by Northline Pty Ltd was subsequently assessed at the visa application stage to ensure that these requirements were met.

The Department sought additional information from Northline Pty Ltd regarding any training provided to subclass 457 visa holders that they currently employ. They have advised that all subclass 457 visa holders are experienced forklift officers who are tested for competency prior to an offer of employment being made. As their international forklift licenses are not valid in Australia, they are, however, required to obtain an appropriate Australian licence on arrival.

In addition, Northline organises training for newly arrived subclass 457 workers with formal Registered Training Organisations to ensure compliance with the Australian Work Health and Safety Regulations, as well as induction training.

The Department can confirm that Northline Pty Ltd has recently been monitored by the Department's Sponsor Monitoring Unit, with no evidence of non-compliance with sponsorship obligations identified.