

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING : 22 May 2017

IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

(BE17/296) - Distinguished Talent Visa - Waiting list and cap - Programme 2.3: Visas

Senator Kakoschke-Moore, Skye (L&CA) written:

Distinguished Talent Visa

During estimates I was advised that migrants who have previously used 457 visas to enter the country for elite dance and music positions should apply for a Distinguished Talent Visa.

- Is the Department aware of how many people are awaiting acceptance for the Distinguished Talent Visa as the cap has now been reached?
- Was this issue of the 200 person cap considered when a decision was made to remove elite artists from the 457 visa list?
- Was the Department of Education and Training consulted about this change?
- Has the Department considered how this may affect the arts in Australia?

Answer:

The Distinguished Talent visa is designed to attract people with outstanding achievements in academia, sports, professions, and the arts. Distinguished professionals can apply for this visa if they have an internationally recognised record of exceptional and outstanding achievement in their field. The visa allows holders to live in Australia permanently.

Applicants would be distinguished individuals with special or unique talents of benefit to Australia. They would be considered to be at the “top echelons” of their field and internationally recognised.

As at 31 May 2017, there were 115 applications for Distinguished Talent visas awaiting finalisation before the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP). This equates to 235 persons (including primary and secondary applicants). The annual planning level for Distinguished Talent visas for 2017-18 is 200 places.

Generally, applications for Distinguished Talent are allocated and processed in order of lodgement (unless compelling or compassionate circumstances apply). Applications not finalised in the year of lodgement carry over to the next programme year.

Updates to the occupation lists for skilled migration were made on 18 April 2017 to better reflect Australian labour market needs and support the Australian economy. The impact of these changes on the Migration Programme and other visa programmes

such as the Distinguished Talent visa were among a range of factors considered when adjusting the composition of the occupation lists.

The Department of Education and Training (DET) was consulted. DET provided feedback on the reforms to Australia's temporary and permanent employer sponsored skilled migration programmes through inter-departmental meetings held on 30 January, 15 February, 23 February, and separate Cabinet-related consultation processes between 1 and 7 March 2017.

The DIBP recognises that an innovative cultural and artistic sector is essential to the benefit of all Australians, and that there is an important interplay between the local and international workforce in elite performing arts employment. The occupation lists for skilled migration are intended to be dynamic and updated regularly to reflect changing labour market conditions. DIBP has consulted representatives from arts industry peak bodies about the impact of the announcement.