

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES – 20 OCTOBER 2014

IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

(SE14/436) PROGRAMME – 1.2: Visa and Citizenship

Senator Carr (Written) asked:

Designated Area Migration Agreements (DAMA)

- a) Can the Department please provide a status update on the pilot project being finalised in the Northern Territory?
- b) What are the details of this pilot project?
- c) When will it commence?
- d) How long will it go for?
- e) What type of businesses in the NT will benefit from this agreement?
- f) What is the timeline for implementation of this program nation-wide?
- g) What is the Government doing in the mean-time to attract workers to regional Australia to fill employment gaps?

Answer:

(a) & (b) The Northern Territory DAMA Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Department of Immigration and Border Protection and the Northern Territory of Australia (NT) was signed on 10 February 2014. This preliminary one-year arrangement covers the NT and allows for up to 500 overseas workers across the following 16 occupations:

Occupation
Retail Manager (General)
Chef
Cook
Child Care Worker
Aged or Disabled Carer
Bar Attendant Supervisor
Hotel Service Manager
Waiter Supervisor
Tour Guide
Office Manager
General Clerk
Motor Vehicle Parts Interpreter
Retail Supervisor
Earthmoving Plant Operator (General)
Truck Driver (General)
Storeperson

Following the signing of the NT DAMA MOU, the Department and the NT government worked to further develop and finalise the terms of conditions for implementing the pilot arrangement. This included detailed consideration of concessions to the standard subclass 457 visa programmes, requested occupations and skills assessment procedures.

As at 16 January 2015, the NT government has submitted endorsements to the department for eight NT employers to enter into labour agreements with the Commonwealth in order to sponsor overseas workers under the DAMA. The department is currently considering these requests.

Both the NT government and the department are working closely together to transition to a longer term, three-year deed of agreement, covering a wider range of occupations that have been identified by the NT government as in demand.

(c) The NT DAMA MOU commenced on 10 February 2014.

(d) The DAMA MOU is for a period of twelve months. The NT government has requested an extension to the MOU to finalise some outstanding arrangements. Both the Department and NT government are working to finalise a three year DAMA deed of agreement, which is expected to be in place in early 2015.

(e) Employers in areas experiencing skills and labour shortages will benefit from the DAMA programme by being able to supplement their workforce with skilled and semi-skilled overseas workers.

(f) The DAMA programme submission guidelines were publicly released in August 2014 and are available on the department's website. Access to the programme is already able to be requested by entities nation-wide such as: state or territory governments or statutory authorities; regional authorities; or local councils.

(g) This is a matter for the Department of Employment.