

## QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

**SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING : 17 October 2016**

IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

**(SE16/161) - 416 Visas - Programme 2.3: Visas**

Senator Siewert, Rachel (L&CA) written:

Is the Government aware of any disability services organisations bringing young people into Australia to have a 'cultural exchange' experience on section 416 visas, but the young people are then being engaged to work in disability services for very low wages?

If yes, what is the Government doing to stop the use of these visas for labour?

If no, will the Government investigate this and the affect it is having on the level of care provided through the NDIS? "

*Answer:*

The Department is aware of one not-for-profit organisation that has been using the Special Program (subclass 416) visa since 2000 to bring healthcare graduates to Australia as volunteers to assist in residential disability care. As these workers are volunteers, they receive an allowance, accommodation and meals.

In August 2016, the Department identified that the organisation was utilising the volunteers to deliver disability health services. The Department declined to renew the organisation's Special Program Agreement for the standard three year period. Instead, approval for a further one year period was granted to allow program continuity for the organisation pending an assessment of whether they should continue to have concessional access under Special Program arrangements.

The Department met with representatives of the organisation in September 2016 to discuss their future use of the Special Program.

Matters relating to the level of care provided through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) should be referred to the relevant portfolio.