

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

ADDITIONAL BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 19 FEBRUARY 2008

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(10) Output 1.1: Migration and Temporary Entry

Senators Ellison and Fisher (L&CA 30 and 51) asked:

When is the new Subclass 457 External Reference Group due to meet, what are the terms of reference and what is the reporting date? Will both the interim and the final report be made public?

Answer:

The External Reference Group held its first meeting on Wednesday, 27 February 2008 and met on Wednesday, 12 March 2008.

The Terms of Reference are included below.

The Minister is yet to determine whether the interim and/or final reports will be made public.

Visa subclass 457 - External Reference Group

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Concerns have been raised by the States and the resources, construction and tourism industries regarding their ability to rapidly start up new and significant projects due to skilled workforce shortages.
2. The External Reference Group will examine how selected skilled migration measures can contribute to the alleviation of these shortages. Major infrastructure, construction, tourism and resource sectors will be the focus of the Reference Group.
3. To give effect to this, the group will provide specific advice on:
 - a. ways to ensure the temporary work visa system (subclass 457) operates as effectively as possible in contributing to the supply of skilled labour;
 - b. the current skilled labour supply situation for each of the identified sectors;
 - c. current and anticipated future employment trends; and
 - d. need for overseas recruitment, including specific occupations in the identified sectors.

4. The Reference Group should be mindful that any development, priorities or initiatives complement broader labour market skills strategies.
5. At the discretion of the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, members will be pre-eminent experts in the identified sectors.
6. The Reference Group will provide an Interim Report to the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship by 14 March 2008.
7. The Reference Group will provide a Final Report back to the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship by April 2008.