

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

ADDITIONAL BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 24 FEBRUARY 2009

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(25) Output 2.1: Settlement Services

Senator Fierravanti-Wells (L&CA 77) asked:

On that point, does that mean that you have some statistics? I would be interested to see statistics going back over the last three, four or five years regarding full-time and part-time employment statistics for new arrivals. We have seen some statistics around about the need for having English and how, if people have English, it makes it easier for people to get into jobs more easily. Do you have some updated statistics in relation to that?

Answer:

English proficiency is an important determinant of successful settlement and integration. It affects migrants' ability to engage with their local community, access services and find rewarding employment. Data from DIAC's Settlement Database (SDB) indicates that of the approximately 557 000 settlers who arrived between the period 1 January 2004 to 31 December 2008, roughly 260 000 possessed 'very good' English proficiency, 22 000 possessed 'good' English, and 66 000 possessed 'poor' English. The English proficiency of the remaining 209 000 settlers was either nil, not stated or not recorded.

Data on the relationship between English language proficiency and employment is available from a 2004 report commissioned by DIAC, the *Changing Labour Force Experience of New Migrants* (National Institute of Labour Studies 2004). This report analysed data across two cohorts of the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia (LSIA) who arrived in Australia between 1993-95 and 1999-2000. Findings included:

- Migrants with good English language had a much higher rate of employment than those who did not.
- Among respondents who were employed, those who did not speak English well had earnings that were half, or less than half, those of the fluent English speakers.
- Fluent English speakers had superior employment outcomes regardless of what visa they held (excluding the Humanitarian group, in which there were very few with good English).

The report is available on the DIAC website (<http://www.immi.gov.au>).