

## QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

### ADDITIONAL BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 21 FEBRUARY 2011

#### IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

#### **(134) Program 3.1: Border Management**

Senator Trood (L&CA 39) asked:

Why were there no consultations prior to the new criteria and new rules were established by the BMG?

*Answer:*

In June 2010, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) implemented eligibility changes for Australia's APEC Business Travel Card (ABTC) to maintain the goodwill of other APEC members participating in the scheme. Australia relies heavily on this goodwill to pursue more significant and far-reaching trade and investment-related initiatives within APEC.

The purpose of the amendments was to counter any perception, among member economies of the APEC Business Mobility Group (BMG), that Australia was either using the scheme for its own self-interest or did not respect the approach taken more broadly by other APEC members, mindful that each ABTC application creates significant work for all participating economies. Australian cardholders, at the time, represented 30 per cent of all cardholders in the ABTC scheme.

Subsequent to this, the Department has been giving further consideration to the eligibility requirements and commenced business consultations in March 2011 with a number of peak business bodies and business councils.