

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING: 13 FEBRUARY 2012

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(AE12/159) Program 1.1: Enterprise Migration Agreements

Senator Cash (L&CA 35) asked:

In relation to the feedback that has been received on the English-language requirements; provide the committee with the concerns that have been raised by industry.

Answer:

The English language requirement under an EMA is commensurate with that of the Subclass 457 program. Applicants are required to have an IELTS score of 5 across all 4 test components, including reading, writing, listening and speaking, except where an exemption applies or a higher standard is applicable for registration or licensing purposes.

Some stakeholders raised concerns that applicants, particularly those in semi-skilled occupations, may not be able to achieve an IELTS score of 5 across all components. These stakeholders argued that a lower English threshold would widen the potential pool of overseas workers that can be sponsored under an EMA.

Conversely, there was also strong support for the current 457 visa English requirement from other stakeholders. They argue that a higher level of English would reduce the vulnerability of workers (particularly those whom English is not their first language) to exploitation and enable them to adequately adhere to occupational health and safety risks requirements.