

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING: 13 FEBRUARY 2012

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(AE12/0176) Program 1.1: Visa and Migration

Senator Cash asked:

Are there some countries that currently receive ETAs that have developed a high risk profile (eg Malaysia)? How can the Department reassure the Australian people that people of high risk of overstaying or breaching their visas or of having an adverse security profile are not coming in on ETAs from these high risk countries?

Answer:

The assessment of risk is more complex than nationality, other factors such as age, gender and regional issues are also used to guide risk treatments. The overall visa non-compliance among all ETA holders is extremely low - approximately 0.5 per cent of all ETA arrivals compared to approximately one per cent for other visas (excluding New Zealand citizens) in 2011.

The visa process is an important component of our border control regime but should not be viewed in isolation. The Department manages risk at a number of points in the traveller pathway, including for ETA holders. All ETA applications are screened against Australia's Movement Alerts List. Persons on the list who may represent a risk of non-compliance, including those with an adverse security profile, are prevented from obtaining an ETA through airlines, travel agents or the ETA website and are referred to the nearest Australian immigration office for assessment by a visa processing officer.

Australia has in place a network of Airline Liaison Officers (ALOs) that assist screening of travellers to detect improperly documented travellers. These ALOs operate at overseas airports which are last ports of embarkation to Australia, including Kuala Lumpur.

Persons who are considered to present a higher risk of immigration non-compliance may be subject to additional checks by immigration border staff upon arrival in Australia.