

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 24 MAY 2011

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(BE11/0120) Program 1.1: Visa and Migration

Senator Cash asked:

Why the specific reference to a “wide variety of occupations?” What if there is more demand for skilled workers in a particular occupation? Will there be quotas or limits imposed to ensure the places are allocated across a wide variety of occupations? What exactly does the Department consider to be a “wide variety” of occupations? 10? 20? 100?

Answer:

The Skilled Migration Selection Model, otherwise known as SkillSelect, applies to independent skilled migration as well as other points tested visas.

The Independent category is targeted to address medium to long term skill needs as identified by the independent body, Skills Australia. In particular, Skills Australia advises the Government on the occupations which are eligible for independent and family sponsored skilled migration, as set out in the Skilled Occupation List (SOL). All of the 192 occupations on the SOL are weighted equally: a relatively even distribution of visa grants by SOL occupation is optimal.

However, applications in the Independent category have been dominated by applications from around half a dozen occupation groups. This creates a distortion in the skill profile of potential migrants – concentrating skills in a handful of occupations.

The employer sponsored visa categories (temporary and permanent) are demand driven, so that excess demand for a particular skill set can be met by sponsoring a prospective migrant. The employer sponsored program will not be subject to any occupation ceiling.

The introduction of an occupation ceiling will help distribute migration program places to migrants with a wide variety of occupations set out on the SOL.