

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 24 MAY 2011

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(BE11/0721) Program 5.1: AMEP / Settlement Services for Migrants and Refugees

Senator Michaelia Cash (Written) asked:

The Settlement Outcomes of New Arrivals Report identified that 80% of households are dependent on some form of Centrelink payments and this decreases very slowly over time. What strategies are in place to address this situation and improve the financial security of these entrants?

Answer:

The recently released *Settlement Outcomes of New Arrivals* (Australian Survey Research Group) report identifies that 85.5 per cent of humanitarian households are in receipt of Centrelink payments. Centrelink payments as captured by the report includes a wide range of payments, including those such as unemployment benefits, Youth Allowance, Austudy, child care rebates etc. The survey question in the report did not ask respondents to specify which benefits their household was in receipt of.

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship assists refugees and humanitarian entrants during their early settlement period with a range of support services to help them become contributing members of the community as soon as possible. These services focus on building self-reliance, developing English language skills and fostering connections with mainstream services within the first five years of arrival.

One such program is the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP). The AMEP supports the economic and social participation of eligible migrants, including humanitarian entrants, through the provision of settlement focused English language training. The AMEP is available to eligible migrants, from the humanitarian, family and skilled visa streams. (Further details on the program can be found in responses to QONs BE11/ 0725, BE11/0728, BE11/0729).

Additional tuition is available to assist AMEP clients to gain familiarity with Australian workplace culture and practices through the Settlement Language Pathways to Employment and Training (SLPET) program. By offering a combination of vocational-specific English courses, work experience and mentoring, the program helps AMEP clients make the transition into the workforce or vocational training.

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship also works closely with the Department of Education, Employment, and Workplace Relations and Centrelink on improving the early participation in the labour market by vulnerable new arrivals.

Unemployed migrants and refugees will also benefit from the suite of measures announced by the Australian Government in a major workforce participation package, as part of the 2011-12 Federal Budget. These measures, under the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, are aimed at getting more Australian citizens and residents into work.

Financial management is a key component of the Humanitarian Settlement Scheme orientation curriculum.