

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 27-28 May 2013

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(BE13/0470) PROGRAM – 4.3: Offshore Asylum Seeker Management

Senator Cash (Written) asked:

How does the department see the new restrictions in relation to the sponsorship of family members by IMA's working? What is the cost of an application for a partner and child visa under the family reunion program as opposed to the refugee and humanitarian program? Are there any differences in the level of welfare and other support between family reunion through the humanitarian program and through the family reunion program? What are they?

Answer:

The changes to family reunion arrangements for holders of Protection visas and Refugee and Humanitarian visas are key parts of the Government's response to the recommendations of the Expert Panel on Asylum Seekers.

The changes are still in the early stages of implementation. However, we expect to see a reduction in the backlog of family reunion applications under the Special Humanitarian Program as decision-makers work through them over the coming months and more clients choose the Family Stream option.

Costs and support

There is no visa application charge for concessionary family reunion under the Special Humanitarian Program, and the Australian Government pays for medical examinations and other public interest checks if required. These entrants have access to Humanitarian Settlement Services.

The visa application charge for Family Stream visas is currently \$2680 per family. From 1 July 2013 applicants will pay a base charge plus a charge for each additional applicant. For a Partner visa application, the charge will be \$2680 plus \$670 for each dependent under 18 and \$1340 for each dependent over 18.

The sponsor must also pay for the family's medical examinations. Family Stream visa holders do not have access to Humanitarian Settlement Services.

Both cohorts are entitled to Medicare and Centrelink subject to normal eligibility requirements.