

IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS

Health assessments, health undertakings and medical reviews

Function: Labour and Employment Affairs

Financial Implications (\$m)

1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01
2.3	1.5	1.6	1.6

Explanation

This initiative is to meet:

- the increasing costs of assessing the results of medical and radiological examinations required of all people seeking to migrate permanently to Australia or to reside here on a long-term temporary basis;
- the costs of the Health Undertaking Service which provides information to State health services in respect of certain migrants who, as a condition of migration to Australia, undertake to contact such services;
- the costs of review of medical grounds on which an applicant for migration has been rejected where an applicant has appealed that decision; and
- the costs of developing guidelines for the assessment of a number of medical conditions which are taken into account in determining applications for migration to Australia.

See related revenue measure titled: 'Cost recovery for health assessments, health undertakings and medical reviews' (see Part II).

IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS

Enhanced services for business entrants

Function: Labour and Employment Affairs

Financial Implications (\$m)

1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01
0.8	0.8	0.9	1.0

Explanation

This initiative will see the enhancement of services provided to business clients for permanent or temporary entry, through the operation of four regional business units, that will improve the standards of service delivery by the provision of services such as:

- an inquiry hotline, as well as a facility that will enable clients to lodge forms electronically;
- establishing dedicated counter facilities to allow clients improved face to face contact with Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) staff;

- the provision to clients of a dedicated contact person who will deal with all matters on a one-to-one basis, thus providing consistent and professional advice; and
- regular seminars and site visits by DIMA staff enabling them to gain a sound understanding of the needs of business clients, as well as establishing and maintaining a level of professional rapport between key business clients and the Commonwealth.

Access by the Australian community to overseas business and labour market skills will be assisted by this initiative. It will also strengthen the Commonwealth's capacity to assess the bona fides of prospective business entrants.

IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS

Merging of the Migration Internal Review Office and the Immigration Review Tribunal

Function: Labour and Employment Affairs

Financial Implications (\$m)

1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01
1.3	0.7	-0.5	-1.3

Explanation

A number of steps will be taken to improve the efficiency with which review of immigration decisions is undertaken, thereby offering a better service to clients while reducing the potential abuse of the system. These include:

- removing one tier of review by merging the Migration Internal Review Office (MIRO) with the Immigration Review Tribunal (IRT). MIRO currently provides initial departmental review of appealed migration decisions while the IRT provides independent external review of MIRO decisions and other matters. The resulting body will form the Migration Review Tribunal (MRT);
- providing principal members of the IRT and the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) with clear authority to apply efficient processing practices and give directions on the operations of the Tribunals and the conduct of reviews; and
- legislative measures to prevent unnecessary delay in Tribunal hearings and to allow members discretion over whether to provide a personal hearing to appellants.

Costs incurred in 1997-98 and 1998-99 largely reflect expected voluntary redundancies from the merger and the paying out of leases from the centralisation of review to Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra.

See related revenue measure titled: 'Merging of the Migration Internal Review Office and Immigration Review Tribunal' (see Part II).

IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS

Extension of the Migration Agents Registration Scheme

Function: Labour and Employment Affairs

Financial Implications (\$m)

1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01
0.6	0.0	0.0	0.0

Explanation

The current scheme was due to terminate in September 1997 but will be extended for 6 months to March 1998 to assist the migration advice industry to move to voluntary self-regulation through a transitional period of statutory self-regulation. From 22 March 1998, the Migration Institute of Australia will take over responsibility for regulating the industry through statutory powers delegated by the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs. This new scheme will be reviewed within two years of operation. The move to self-regulation follows a review of the Migration Agents Registration Scheme which found that the scheme had met its objectives.

See related revenue measure titled: 'Extension of the Migration Agents Registration Scheme' (see Part II).

IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS

Increased efficiency dividend on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs portfolio running costs

Function: Labour and Employment Affairs

Financial Implications (\$m)

1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01
-3.4	-3.5	-3.6	-3.6

Explanation

Currently most budget-funded agencies pay an efficiency dividend of 1 per cent a year (ongoing) of their total running costs, unless specifically exempted by Cabinet.

This measure recognises that the Immigration and Multicultural Affairs portfolio is making efficiency gains including through improved border management and passenger processing systems.

This measure applies a one-off additional 1 per cent efficiency dividend to the base running costs of the Immigration and Multicultural Affairs portfolio in 1997-98. This reduction rolls through to also reduce the base running costs of the forward estimates.