

IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS

Enhancement of visa processing and border monitoring

Financial Implications (\$m)

1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
19.4	11.8	10.1	10.3

Explanation

The objective of this measure is to enable more rigorous screening of overseas visitors prior to their entry into Australia. It is aimed at reducing the number of persons arriving at Australian airports illegally, and at enhancing the integrity of Australia's borders while assisting the entry of bona fide travellers. Under this measure there will be:

- more rigorous screening of visa applicants from high risk countries by additional Australian-based and locally engaged staff;
- increased interdiction work offshore by additional overseas compliance officers and airline liaison officers;
- training of travel agents and airline staff by Electronic Travel Authority liaison managers;
- increased vigilance by airport-based staff and enhanced screening arrangements to increase the identification and removal of people seeking to circumvent entry procedures to Australia; and
- improved coastal surveillance and detection capability in the Torres Strait.

Enhancements will also be made to the Movement Alert List, the central character-checking tool for detecting those individuals with questionable character, debts owing to the Commonwealth or criminal convictions prior to progressing their application for a visa. Under the measure, the Movement Alert List platform will be upgraded to accommodate recently expanded name search facilities. This will allow more rigorous name searches to be undertaken without compromising the smooth clearance of genuine passengers through Australia's airports.

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Redevelopment of the Villawood Detention Centre

Financial Implications (\$m)

1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
nfp	nfp	nfp	nfp

Explanation

This measure enables the redevelopment and expansion of the Villawood facility by mid-1999. The redevelopment will ensure that detainees are accommodated in a secure and appropriate facility.

The Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) is negotiating details of a 'build, own and operate' agreement under which its detention services provider will finance the construction and maintenance of the redeveloped facility. DIMA will pay an annual charge for the use of the facility. The funding for this measure is commercially sensitive and not for publication, as negotiations with the service provider will not be finalised until after the Budget.

Further Information

The Villawood Immigration Detention Centre in Sydney is a holding facility for unlawful non-citizens in Australia. Former migrant on-arrival accommodation on the adjacent Westbridge site is currently also being used for detention. The proposed redevelopment will free up the Westbridge site from June 1999 for other uses or disposal, while maintaining the existing detention capacity in Sydney.

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Modification to selection procedures for the 1998-99 Migration Programme

Financial Implications (\$m)

1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
1.5	1.1	0.6	0.6

Explanation

This measure maintains the size of the Migration (non-Humanitarian) Programme at 68,000 places in 1998-99. It continues the focus on skilled entry, with modifications to selection procedures expected to:

- enhance the employability of skilled migrants;
- increase parent migration, while minimising the associated costs to the taxpayer; and

- improve the economic benefits of the Programme to Australia.

The modifications to selection procedures will result in minor net additional administrative expenses. These will be partially offset by reductions in the Adult Migrant English Programme resulting from a slight reduction in the overall size of the family migration stream. The measure also provides for continued funding of the Business Advisory Panel.

Further Information

See also related revenue measure titled *1998-99 Migration Programme - visa application charges*.

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Strengthening of visa cancellation and refusal powers

Financial Implications (\$m)

1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
2.5	0.8	0.7	0.7

Explanations

This measure will strengthen the visa cancellation and refusal powers on character grounds of the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs and his delegates. Non-citizens would be deemed to be not of good character if they have committed a crime for which they have been sentenced to prison for 12 months or more. In addition, the onus of proof will now rest with the visa applicant, or visa holder, to satisfy the Minister that they are of good character.

Funding of \$4.7 million between 1998-99 and 2001-02 is provided to allow for increases in administrative costs and the potential for additional appeals.

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Changes to offshore English language testing arrangements

Financial Implications (\$m)

1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
-0.6	-0.7	-0.7	-0.8

Explanation

The measure will discontinue use of the Australian Assessment of Communicative English Skills (ACCESS) test. Use of the test is currently subsidised by the Government.

Applicants for migration whose English language ability requires assessment will be able to be tested under the General Training Module of the International English Language Test (IELTS). IELTS meets migration requirements and is more widely available. The fee to sit the test is the same as for the ACCESS test and does not require subsidy.

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Closure of loan funds operated by the International Organization for Migration

Financial Implications (\$m)

1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
-1.9	-0.1	0.0	0.0

Explanation

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) administered loan funds were set up in the early 1990s to assist East European migrants who did not have access to hard currency and humanitarian arrivals from South East Asia under camp clearance programmes. IOM arranged for travel to Australia, with the beneficiaries required to repay the travel costs within thirty months of arrival. The rationales for these loan funds no longer exist, as hard currency restrictions have eased in East European countries and the camp clearance programs have finished. The loan funds will be closed with funds returning to the budget.