

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:4132  
ANSWERED ON:21.04.2010  
REFORMING MIGRATION POLICY AUSTRALIA  
Reddy Shri Modugula Venugopala

**Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:**

- (a) the number of Indians including students residing in Australia;
- (b) whether the Australian Government has decided recently to reform its migration policy;
- (c) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor and its adverse impact on the Indian nationals seeking migrant to that country;
- (d) the issues pending with the Australian Government in this regard; and
- (e) the efforts made by the Government to resolve the pending issues?

**Answer**

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI S.M. KRISHNA)

(a): According to the 2006 census, there were 234,000 persons of Indian descent in Australia. This number is estimated to have gone up to above 300,000 currently. Besides that there are over 90,000 Indian students in Australia.

(b) & (c): On 08 February 2010, the Australian Government announced an overhaul of its general skilled migration programme. Major reforms of the programme are as follows:

(I) All offshore General Skilled Migration applications lodged before 01-09-2007 will be withdrawn. It will affect about 20,000 people (including 2400 from India) who will get refund of their visa application charges, costing about A\$ 14 million.

(II) The wide ranging Migration Occupations in Demand List (MODL) stands revoked with immediate effect. In its place, a new and more targeted Skilled Occupations List (SOL) will be developed and reviewed annually. The Critical Skills List introduced in the beginning of 2009 will also be phased out.

(III) The points test used to assess migrants will be reviewed to ensure it selects the best and brightest.

(IV) Certain occupations may be capped to ensure skill needs are met across the board.

(V) Individual state and territory migration plans will be developed so that they can prioritise skilled migrants of their choice.

The new arrangements will give first priority to skilled migrants who are sponsored by an Australian employer. It is going to affect international students who have come to Australia with the hope of getting permanent residency based on MODL. According to new rules, those international students who hold a vocational, higher education or postgraduate student visa will still be able to apply for a permanent residence visa if their occupation is on the new Skilled Occupations List. If their occupation is not on the new SOL, they will have until 31-12-2012 to apply for a temporary skilled graduate visa on completion of their studies which will enable them to spend up to 18 months in Australia to acquire work experience and seek sponsorship from an employer.

The changes in migration policy are going to impact all foreign nationals seeking migration to Australia.

(d) & (e): The composition of the new Skilled Occupation List (SOL) is still not known. Besides, there is uncertainty regarding the requirement of employer sponsorship. The matter has been taken up with the Australian authorities urging them that there should be flexibility in their policies to deal with the applicants who came to Australia before 08-02-2010 and the students affected by the college closures in view of the special circumstances.