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## NEWS REPORT

<b>Headline</b>	<b>Overseas-born spouses deported from Australia</b>
<b>Reported in</b>	<i>Herald Sun</i>
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Hundreds of overseas-born spouses are being deported each year after failing Green Card-style intimacy tests.

Authorities have intensified efforts to expose sham marriages amid a surge in spouse visa applications.

The Immigration Department said a special unit would assess whether relationships were genuine.

Like the 1990 movie starring Andie MacDowell and Gerard Depardieu, suspect couples are split up and interviewed separately about their lives together.

"We might ask them for the floor plan of the house they're supposed to live in together," department spokesman Sandi Logan said.

"Or we might ask what they did on birthdays together for the last couple of years. Or what they gave each other for Christmas or Ramadan."

About 40,000 visas were issued to married and de facto spouses in 2007-08, up from 26,000 a decade ago. The Department of Immigration and Citizenship's Bona Fides Unit investigated more than 1150 couples that year over "irregularities".

About 220 partner visas were cancelled after holes emerged in couples' stories. Another 3146 visa applications were rejected outright.

Mr Logan said a two-stage visa process was used to deter rorters.

Partner visas are first issued for two years. Couples must prove their relationship is genuine and ongoing for permanent residency to be granted after a temporary visa expires.

Less than 10 per cent of spouses who had visas revoked progressed to permanent status. The UK still supplies the lion's share of foreign brides and grooms. China and India are not far behind, followed by the Philippines, Vietnam, the US and Thailand.

Almost 70 per cent of Australian spouse visas are granted offshore but some unions, particularly from India, are the result of arranged marriages.

Indian and Pakistani newspapers are filled with ads seeking brides for expat men, including those from Australia.

New same-sex equality laws mean gay and lesbian partners of Australian citizens are also eligible for visas.

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