

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 19 November 2013

IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

(SE13/0039) PROGRAMME – 3.1: Border Management

Senator Carr (L&CA 80) asked:

Senator KIM CARR: I will rephrase the question. I refer you to the Sydney Morning Herald of 15 November, where it was claimed that immigration officials forced 12- and 14-year-olds—unaccompanied Sri Lankan children—onto a plane to return home. And I would ask you, was that report correct? Mr Bowles: That was part of one of our screening exercises where the people from that particular vessel did not engage our obligations and they were returned to Sri Lanka. For any unaccompanied minors who are sent back there are a whole range of things put in place at the Sri Lankan end to deal with this. It is consistent with what we have been doing since about October 2012. [...] Senator KIM CARR: They were subjected to an enhanced screening process. Were they advised of their rights to seek asylum? Ms Larkins: I do not have that. Senator KIM CARR: Could you take that on notice, please? Ms Larkins: Certainly.

Answer:

In relation to question 1, no, the report in the Sydney Morning Herald was not correct.

In relation to question 2, no, the unaccompanied Sri Lankan minors were not advised of their rights to seek asylum. Australian law does not contain a right to seek asylum, and therefore, departmental practice does not involve advising unauthorised arrivals that they have such a right.