

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON AUSTRALIA'S IMMIGRATION DETENTION NETWORK

Q189

Question: Does the department have a response to the concerns raised in the Refugee Council's submission as to the substandard medical care and welfare for pregnant women currently held in detention?

Answer: The Refugee Council of Australia's (RCOA) submission cites two examples to support its concern that there have been 'instances of pregnant asylum seekers being treated in a manner which contravenes the principle that the inherent dignity of a person in immigration detention must be upheld'.

The department takes seriously the issues raised by RCOA in its submission to the JSC. If RCOA wishes to provide details of the clients involved each case will be followed up individually.

Provision of appropriate clothing

The department relies on Serco to provide or manage a range of detention services at each facility, and facilitate and encourage people in detention to access these services. All service delivery decisions taken by Serco take into account individual needs including clients who are pregnant.

Both the Immigration Detention Centre Contract and the Immigration Residential Housing/Immigration Transit Accommodation Contract make provision for sufficient supply of new clothing and new footwear to meet the ongoing needs of people in detention.

It is unfortunate that it appears from the RCOA submission that Complaints Management System (CMS) may not have worked effectively in this instance. In accordance with the contract Serco develops and manages a CMS through which people in detention are able to lodge a formal complaint on matters relevant to their detention including issues they may have with the level of services received. The CMS includes timeframes for acknowledgement, feedback on progress and resolution of complaints. People in detention are advised of the process during their induction. In addition Serco displays material in appropriate languages advising people in detention of their right to complain and how to contact agencies such as the Australian Human Rights Commission, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Commonwealth and Immigration Ombudsman.

Provision of medical information by the Health Services Provider to the department

The Health Services Provider (HSP) will disclose information about a person's health or medical history to departmental staff if there is a need for such staff to know.

A person's medical history or current presentation will be raised by the HSP to the department to recommend, for example, an alternative placement of the client within the detention network. The HSP will provide such information at client placement meetings which are held at detention facilities.

Departmental staff are able to request health information from the HSP to help inform placement decisions or client care arrangements.