

Question on notice no. 232

Portfolio question number: AE21-232

2020-21 Additional estimates

Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee, Home Affairs Portfolio

Senator the Hon Kristina Keneally: asked the Australian Border Force on 22 March 2021—

Senator KENEALLY: In relation to the family that is currently in immigration detention on Christmas Island?and I will refer to them as 'the Biloela family' for shorthand—is there an update on the cost to the government of keeping this family on Christmas Island? If it could be broken down into legal fees, transport, accommodation and the like, that would be useful.

Mr Outram: I can't give you the detailed breakdown, but I've got an estimated cost. Between 30 August 2019 and 31 August 2020, it was \$3.6 million. But I'll take on notice the breakdown of the costs and bring it up to date for you.

Senator KENEALLY: So that is costs incurred by Australian Border Force?

Mr Outram: And possibly the Department of Home Affairs. I'll take it on notice. We'll break it down and come back to you. We've got contracts with service providers that are already paid for, so it's not as simple as just a direct cost to the Border Force.

Senator KENEALLY: Sure, and I can appreciate that. I am looking particularly to understand the cost since they've been moved to Christmas Island, and that would include the legal fees, the transport costs, the accommodation and the detention costs, and there may be other costs associated with schooling—I do not know. So I'm seeking to understand a sort of whole-of-government figure.

Mr Outram: Yes. I mean obviously the accommodation is something that we already manage?

Senator KENEALLY: But there would be costs.

Mr Outram: There would be costs. Serco?

Senator KENEALLY: Yes. Food, health care, cleaning?

Mr Outram: There would be costs out of the contract that would absorb—there would be transportation, I suppose, on the island. We have to move them around on the island.

Senator KENEALLY: How many staff are required to detain the family on the island?

Mr Outram: I might see if Deputy Commissioner Saunders can assist me with a more detailed—I don't have that level of detail. I'll have to take that on notice. We do have a footprint there who are dedicated to the family. They're not part of the same group of staff who are working at North West Point.

Senator KENEALLY: Yes, I understand that. The staff that are, for lack of a better word, detaining the family on Christmas Island—are they Serco guards, ABF officers or AFP officers?

Mr Outram: It's a combination of Serco and ABF. I believe there may be some clinical staff as well. I'll come back to you, again, with the exact?

Answer —

Please see the attached answer.

**SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES
22 MARCH 2021**

**Home Affairs Portfolio
Australian Border Force**

Program 1.3: Onshore Compliance and Detention

AE21-232 - Biloela Family - Costs

Senator Kristina Keneally asked:

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Answer:

The total cost to detain the family on Christmas Island from 31 August 2019 to 31 January 2021 is estimated at \$6.7 million. This includes the administered cost of detention (based on the average cost per person, per day), security, escort and travel costs, legal and litigation costs and costs of dealing with asylum seeker claims and medical expenses.

The total of \$6.7 million can be broken down into the following categories:

- Held Detention costs (estimated using the average daily cost of held detention per person for the relevant period which includes the detention services contract which covers food, cleaning, schooling costs etc) - \$2.3 million;
- Travel and Transfer cost (including costs for removal to CI, travel security and medical transfer costs) - \$1.2 million;
- Medical and associated costs - \$0.1 million;
- Asylum claims, legal costs and Translating and Interpreting Services - \$1.0 million;
- Costs associated with staffing effort on Christmas Island - \$2.1 million

There are a total number of 17 staff engaged at Phosphate Hill APOD for the family, breakdown includes:

- 11 Facilities and Detainee Service Provider staff,
- five (5) Detention Health Service Provider staff
 - A General Practitioner
 - A Clinical team leader
 - A Registered Nurse
 - A Mental Health Nurse
 - A Screening Nurse; and
- one (1) ABF Officer.