

## QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

### ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING : 8 February 2016

#### IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

##### **(AE16/010) - Conversation with UNHCR - Third Country Resettlement - Programme 1.6: Regional Cooperation**

Senator Carr, Kim (L&CA 32) asked:

Senator KIM CARR: When was the last time there was a conversation with the UNHCR about finding third-country resettlement options for people who are on Nauru?

Mr Pezzullo: Those discussions are ongoing. We have senior representatives in Geneva. We are asked. On occasions, we proffer. We are asked about things like: 'With the High Court decision known as M68, what does that portend?' Our officers have a positive, constructive and open engagement with UNHCR. Obviously, they operate—

Senator KIM CARR: Can you tell me the date at which these conversations last took place?

Mr Pezzullo: I will take it on notice. We have diplomatic representatives in Geneva who are accredited to the UNHCR. They are not doing their job if they do not have daily discussions—

Senator KIM CARR: Daily, you say?

Mr Pezzullo: They are not doing their job if they are not in constant discussions, but I will look at the precise question you have asked me on notice. I will parse it down to exactly what you have asked and take it on notice.

*Answer:*

The Department has multiple engagement points with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), both in Australia and overseas. Geneva Post leads engagement on governance and policy at UNHCR headquarters and meets with UNHCR representatives, on average, on a weekly basis. Other Posts work with UNHCR at an operational level to deliver the Humanitarian Programme. Major humanitarian and refugee processing posts engage with UNHCR, on average, on a weekly or more frequent basis. In the Department's headquarters, various business areas engage with UNHCR both on a systematic and ad hoc basis to progress portfolio objectives; for example, humanitarian policy and programmes, and biometric and data sharing.

Engagement with UNHCR takes place in relation to Australia's domestic asylum measures and a range of international protection responses, including resettlement and measures to address asylum populations, particularly in the region. Most recently, the Department engaged with UNHCR on third country resettlement as part of the Nauru Joint Agency Committee on 20 November 2015 and at a meeting with regional representatives of UNHCR on 1 February 2016.