

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING : 26 May 2015

IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

(BE15/115) - Mr. Burnside Letter Campaign - Programme 1.3: Compliance and Detention

Senator Bilyk, Catryna (L&CA 7) asked:

Senator BILYK: My notes do say the question was how many reply letters were sent back by recipients using the stamped, self-addressed envelopes, and the answer I have written down is none.

Senator Cash: That is fine.

Senator BILYK: So we will check the Hansard.

Senator Cash: The officer is able to correct her evidence if you are putting something to the officer that the officer believes is not correct.

Senator KIM CARR: The issue here is not necessarily if the officer's memory is correct or our hearing is correct, it is how you know?

Ms Briscoe: Could I just clarify? My answer was in response to letters being returned with an Australian stamp. I do not think any could have been returned from Nauru with an Australian stamp. You pointed out that some may have been given Nauruan stamps. I am not aware of that and was not able to comment on that.

Senator BILYK: Okay.

Mr Pezzullo: But we did take it on notice.

Senator Cash: Take it on notice.

Senator BILYK: Yes, sure. No, I am happy for it to be taken on notice and then I will ask at the next estimates. You have taken on notice how many letters were sent to transferees. You said about 4,000. Can you break it down as to which detention centres they were actually sent to? I think there was more than just the ones sent to Nauru, if my memory serves me correct. I think that there was around 2,000 sent to Nauru. As I said, he was advised that the letters were being distributed to transferees on 25 June. I am wondering why it took until 22 December for around 2,000 letters to be returned unopened?

Answer:

Please note that all figures listed below are approximate.

It is difficult to differentiate between letters sent by Mr Burnside and other senders as:

- mail does not always contain sender details and as such sender details are not recorded on the property, mail and parcel register;
- mail addressed to individual transferees is delivered unopened to transferees; or
- not all letters received identified that they were sent from Mr Burnside himself as Mr Burnside also sent letters written by other members of the Australian community.

An estimated total of 3350 letters, identified as being sent by Mr Burnside, were received at the Regional Processing Centres. Of these:

- 1750 letters were sent to the Manus Regional Processing Centre (RPC).
- 1600 letters were sent to the Nauru RPC.

Of the 1750 letters sent to the Manus RPC, identified as being sent by Mr Burnside, there were 349 that were unable to be delivered and as such needed to be returned to the sender. This included:

- 237 letters in April 2014
- 70 letters in October 2014
- 38 letters in November 2014
- 3 letters in December 2014
- 1 letters in December 2014

These 349 letters were provided to Papua New Guinea Immigration & Citizenship Service Authority (PNG ICOSA), as the centre manager.

Transfield Services confirmed that an estimated 1525 of the 1600 letters sent to the Nauru RPC, identified as being sent by Mr Burnside, were returned to the sender via the Nauruan Postal Service. This included approximately 1425 on 15 September 2014 and 100 on 6 January 2015.

The Nauruan Postal Service and PNG ISCA took custody of the letters at the point of handover from Transfield Services.