

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING : 25 May 2015

IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

(BE15/163) - Sri Lanka turn back arrangements - Programme 2.1: Citizenship

Senator Hanson-Young, Sarah (L&CA) written:

- Please provide details of the agreement in place with Sri Lanka to facilitate turn backs to that country. What payment has Australia made to Sri Lanka to facilitate this policy?
- Please provide details of how the policy of turn backs to Sri Lanka is intended to operate. How are claims for asylum heard? What questions are asked? Who conducts this assessment? How and when are they handed back to Sri Lanka?
- Is any follow up monitoring by Australia or reporting by Sri Lanka required to ensure the safety of Sri Lankans intercepted by Australia and handed back to Sri Lanka?

Answer:

Australia and Sri Lanka work in close cooperation to disrupt people smuggling ventures departing Sri Lanka. Vessels are returned with the full cooperation of the Sri Lankan Government.

The policy of the Government is to safely remove vessels that are attempting to illegally enter Australian waters. Australia may work with a country of departure or the flag state of the vessel, such as Sri Lanka, in order to see the safe return of passengers and crew.

Persons seeking to arrive in Australia illegally by boat may be subject to an assessment to determine whether individuals engage Australia's *non-refoulement* obligations. Interviews are conducted by trained experts from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, supported by qualified and independent interpreters.

Procedures and timelines are determined by taking into account the circumstances and safety considerations in each instance.

It is not general international practice for countries returning failed asylum seekers to their country of origin to monitor those individuals after their arrival.