

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
BUDGET ESTIMATES 2017

Australian Federal Police

Question No. BE17-167

Senator Pratt asked the following question on 05 June 2017:

- 1) In response to Ms Hawkins evidence before estimates last week, p 83) what methods do authorities exercise to encourage victim participation? In other words, what techniques to police employ to build trust with potential victims?
- 2) Do authorities engage civil society where victims are reluctant to cooperate? If so, provide examples.
- 3) Over 50% of referrals to AFP come from immigration officials. In such circumstances, where do victim interviews typically take place? (i.e. immigration detention? Police stations? Or in more victim-friendly places?)
- 4) Where suspected victims are reluctant to cooperate, do authorities provide access to independent legal advice to apprise them of their rights? Or is it standard practice for authorities to apprise potential victims themselves?

The response to the honourable Senator's question is as follows:

The AFP has dedicated community engagement strategies in relation to raising awareness in the community around the issue of human trafficking. This is aimed at ensuring reluctant victims are able to access accurate information that provides reassurance and confidence in the response they can expect, if they choose to report the crime.

When a suspected victim of human trafficking is identified the AFP makes immediate contact with the Red Cross so that the victim is referred to the Support for Trafficking Person Program (STPP). The STPP seeks to provide clients with the opportunity to recover from their trafficking experience. This also provides time for the victim to understand their options and make decisions about their future. Clients are further provided assistance that allows them to be in the best possible state of physical and mental health that then maximises their ability to participate effectively in the criminal justice process, should they agree to do so.

Clients are provided an initial 45 days as a reflection period, and a further 45 days can be offered in circumstances where clients are willing but unable to assist due to trauma or ill health.

Assessments and interviews with suspected victims of trafficking take place in a number of locations including Police Stations, Immigration Centres, residential homes and schools. At all times during the assessment or interview the victim's welfare is paramount and decisions made regarding the location of the assessment is inclusive of the wishes of the victim.

It is not the role of either AFP or STPP case workers to provide legal advice to clients. STPP workers can, however, assist clients to seek legal advice regarding their visa options and work rights. A number of non-government organisations are able to assist victims with obtaining legal advice to inform the victims to apprise them of their rights.