

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING : 22 May 2017

IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

(BE17/044) - Traditional Visitor Permit issuing - Programme 1.1: Border Enforcement

Senator Watt, Murray (L&CA 104) asked:

Senator WATT: What exactly is a traditional visitor permit? What sort of entry does that permit?

Mr Outram: People who reside in the area that is covered by the treaty—in the villages in the southern part of Papua New Guinea—and of course within the Torres Strait. Those are the people who are entitled to undertake certain activities within the treaty zone, and, of course, travel within the zone area is part of that. So our border monitoring officers are very important from that point of view, because we can therefore very quickly spot people who are entitled in traditional fishing rights and those sorts of things and those who are not, and people who should be there and people who should not.

Senator WATT: So it is essentially people who are resident in Papua New Guinea entering Australian territory, in the form of the Torres Strait Islands?

Mr Outram: Indeed.

Senator WATT: There is obviously a particular permit that they can be granted.

Mr Outram: That is as I understand it.

Senator WATT: Is that issued on an annual basis? When someone gets one does it last for a period of time?

Mr Outram: I would have to take that on notice.

Answer:

The Traditional Visitor Permit is an administrative tool introduced by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade manage the legitimate free movement of persons recognised as Traditional Inhabitants under the Torres Strait Treaty between Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Australia.

One Permit may cover the movement of up to ten individuals included in one passage and allows entry for up to three weeks. The Government of PNG has appointed and placed a PNG Immigration and Citizenship Services Authority Officer at Daru Island to coordinate all movement requests from recognised traditional inhabitants of the thirteen PNG Treaty villages wishing to travel to the Torres Strait Islands in the Protected Zone.

The Visitor Permit is not issued on an annual basis. A new permit is required for every entry stating the length of stay requested and approved.