

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES – 20 OCTOBER 2014

IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

(SE14/021) PROGRAMME – Internal Product

Senator O’Sullivan (L&CA 53) asked:

Senator O’SULLIVAN: Where I am actually headed, ultimately, talking about the whole-of-government response—and you may be able to take this on notice and access it as a partner in the whole of government—is what the cost of this was was from go to whoa: the recovery, repatriation of families and all the investigations that might have needed to occur overseas to identify the victims, to notify their families and so on. I have to imagine that it is ginormous and that is the figure that I am looking for. My questions are directed—

[...]

Senator O’SULLIVAN: To capture it, I am looking for a whole-of-government cost of a whole-of-government response, specifically with respect to the deaths on the high seas.

Mr Pezzullo: To be clear, we will take that on notice, liaising with other agencies as best we can and noting that only certain elements of the matter that you raise fall within this portfolio, on both the Customs and Border Protection side and the departmental side. We will have discussions with other agencies and, if they wish to contribute something to an answer, I am sure that they will.

Answer:

Responding to safety of life at sea situations, including where deaths at sea may occur, is funded as part of costs for maritime operations across a number of government agencies. The allocation of time and associated costs for responding to specific incidents, such as deaths at sea, are not individually measured or funded.

It is standard international practice that the families of illegal maritime arrivals who die at sea are responsible for their relative’s remains.

Where the family is not in a position to claim the body or repatriate the remains, the Australian Government makes appropriate funeral arrangements within Australia.

Breakdowns of these costs are not available.