

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING : 17 October 2016

IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

(SE16/031) - Departmental officers in the United states - Internal Product (DIBP)

Senator Carr, Kim (L&CA 87) asked:

Ms Noble: One of my colleagues has just confirmed that we have no officers in Central America.

Senator KIM CARR: Right, thank you. But you said there are officers from the department in the embassy in Washington?

Ms Noble: Yes.

Senator KIM CARR: Do you have any other officers in the United States?

Ms Noble: I would have to take that on notice.

Senator KIM CARR: Thank you. When did you start to negotiate this agreement?

Ms Noble: I would have to take that on notice as well. I could not tell you the exact date that we started the negotiation. It was this year.

Senator KIM CARR: How late this year? Was it before the election?

Ms Noble: I will have to take that on notice and get back to you.

Senator KIM CARR: So are you saying you think it possibly was early in the year?

Ms Noble: I really do not know. I will have to take that on notice. It was sometime this year, from my recollection.

Senator KIM CARR: Sometime? This is October. You cannot recall roughly when you started the conversations with the department of prime minister on this issue?

Ms Noble: No, I cannot recall that off the top of my head. I can take that on notice and get back to you.

Senator KIM CARR: Who initiated the negotiations?

Ms Noble: Do you mean 'who' as in the Australian government or the US government?

Senator KIM CARR: Who asked you to do it? Did you come up with it? Was it a departmental initiative? Was it an initiative of PM&C? Was it an initiative of DFAT?

Ms Noble: I will have to take that on notice. I cannot remember whose idea it was in the beginning. I would have to go back and create a chronology of who first thought of it.

Answer:

In relation to the number of Department of Immigration and Border Protection officers located in Central America and the United States, see the response to SE16/030.

On 13 January 2016, US Secretary of State John announced that:

- a) President Obama would host a refugee summit on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly in New York (held in September); and
- b) the US would work with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to set up processing centres in Central America to screen migrants fleeing violence in the region, and facilitate resettlement of persons eligible for refugee status in the US and other third countries.

On 19 March 2016, the US requested that Australia consider resettling Central American refugees under the auspices of the arrangement.