

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING : 17 October 2016

IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

(SE16/085) - ANAO recommendations - Programme 1.4: IMA Onshore Management

Senator McKim, Nick (L&CA) written:

Can the Department explain what it is doing to implement the ANAO recommendations in relation to health services in detention, and in particular:

- To address the failure of the department to ensure that people at 'high imminent risk' of self-harm or suicide are not detained, and that their situation is reviewed every 24 hours?
- The failure of the Department to adequately fund nursing services?

Answer:

In response to the ANAO recommendations, the Department has initiated a broad review of health services, including the Psychological Support Program (PSP). The PSP is the department's principal mechanism to ensure the safety and wellbeing of people who are accommodated in immigration detention. The review will cover its operational impacts, reporting and monitoring requirements and any gaps in current policy. This review will commence in November 2016, with expected completion in 2017.

People assessed as at High imminent risk of suicide or self-harm are referred for mental health assessment and consideration for transfer to an external health service (such as hospital). This assessment is done under the above mentioned PSP, which is designed to ensure detainees are provided with 'supportive monitoring and engagement', to keep them safe while their immigration status is resolved. The PSP risk level attributed to a detainee who is in immigration detention does not trigger their release from immigration detention.

The Department does not agree with the claim that it fails to adequately fund nursing services.

The Department supports International Health and Medical Services (IHMS) in ensuring detainees receive timely access to quality, clinically indicated health care that reflects the prevailing community standards in Australia.

The Department's contract with IHMS includes pre-approved staffing levels for all health care professionals specified under the contract, including nurses. Furthermore, the contract with IHMS has a range of triggers that allow IHMS to submit requests for additional service requests. Currently, the Department is supporting a series of additional service requests to enable those detainees who require access to certain medications out of hours and on weekends.