

## QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

### SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING : 17 October 2016

#### IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

#### **(SE16/129) - Syria resettlement - Programme 2.4: Refugee and Humanitarian Assistance**

Senator Carr, Kim (L&CA) written:

In relation to the one off resettlement of 12,000 Syrian or Iraqi refugees:

What is the current status of the resettlement of 12,000 Syrian Refugees?

As of 2 September, 6678 visas have been issued and 3532 of these people have settled in Australia. Are these figures correct as of today?

When will the remaining refugees arrive in Australia?

How long does the Department estimate it will take for the remaining refugees to arrive in Australia?

Why has processing taken so long given the urgency stated by the Government?

The Government has been criticised for not acting fast enough to resettle Syrian refugees, what steps are being taken to increase resettlement?

Given the slow processing times and criticism, has the Department allocated additional resources/staffing to handle the increased intake?

Have extra staff been reassigned from within DIBP or employed to assist with the intake since the last estimates?

How many additional staff and at what cost?

What is the classification of the extra staff?

What background, security and integrity checks have occur for those staff?

When conducting security assessments do you share and use security data held by our allies?

Is it regular that you would rely on their information to form an assessment on an individual seeking asylum?

What is the average timeframe for the Department to assess and grant a visa for this cohort?

The United States has already processed and seen their 10,000 Syrian refugees set foot in America, why has Australia been unable to meet a similar timeframe?

What is the difference in the assessment process?

What work is being done with state and territory governments regarding resettlement of Syrian and Iraqi refugees?

*Answer:*

*What is the current status of the resettlement of 12,000 Syrian Refugees?*

*As at 2 September, 6678 visas have been issued and 3532 of these people have settled in Australia. Are these figures correct as at today?*

Yes, the figures are correct as at 2 September 2016.

Regular updates of visa grants and arrivals are available on the Department's website.

*When will the remaining refugees arrive in Australia? How long does the Department estimate it will take for the remaining refugees to arrive in Australia?*

There is a steady flow of grants and arrivals every month and this will continue until all 12,000 places are filled. The time taken for Humanitarian Programme entrants to arrive in Australia after the grant of a visa depends on their individual circumstances.

*Why has processing taken so long given the urgency stated by the Government?*

*The Government has been criticised for not acting fast enough to resettle refugees, what steps are being taken to increase resettlement?*

*Given the slow processing times and criticism, has the Department allocated additional resources/staffing to handle the increased intake?*

*Have extra staff been reassigned from within DIBP or employed to assist with the intake since the last estimates? How many additional staff and at what cost? What is the classification of the extra staff? What background, security and integrity checks have occur for these staff?*

Australia is using established and proven processes for effective delivery of our refugee and humanitarian program. Protection of the Australian community is paramount and visa processing includes comprehensive health, character and security checks.

The Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) has staff in the Middle East region, experienced in processing applications under the Humanitarian Programme.

- The Department's Refugee and Humanitarian Programme Branch which administers the Syria/Iraq initiative has a dedicated, specialised team that focuses on facilitating processing.
- Additional staff have been mobilised overseas including experienced departmental staff undertaking short term missions (STMs) of around 12 weeks.
- Additional locally engaged staff overseas have also been brought on to provide administrative support for the Syria/Iraq Initiative.
- All additional staff have the requisite security clearances for their roles.
- These additional overseas positions are funded from the \$33.8 million over two years allocated to DIBP to process the additional 12,000 Humanitarian Programme places.

*When conducting security assessments do you share and use security data held by our allies? Is it regular that you would rely on their information to form an assessment on an individual seeking asylum?*

DIBP works closely with relevant Australian agencies and international partners in conducting security checks, including biometric data such as facial images and fingerprints.

*What is the average timeframe for the Department to assess and grant a visa for this cohort?*

Processing times vary considerably according to the circumstances of individual applicants.

*The United States has already processed and seen their 10,000 Syrians set foot in America, why has Australia been unable to meet a similar timeframe? What is the difference in the assessment process?*

It is not feasible to compare processing arrangements between countries. Each country has different priorities and processing arrangements.

*What work is being done with state and territory governments regarding resettlement of Syrian and Iraqi refugees?*

The Department of Social Services is responsible for providing settlement support and assistance to people who come to Australia through Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Programme. Each state and territory has in place a Settlement Planning and Outcomes Committee made up of relevant state and federal government representatives and other locally identified key stakeholders. The role of these committees is to provide advice drawing on local knowledge to assist in planning for the settlement of refugees, humanitarian entrants and other migrants.