

Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace Relations

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE Budget Estimates 2011-2012

Agency - Comcare

DEEWR Question No. EW0298_12

Senator Abetz asked on 30/05/2011, Hansard page 95.

Question

Visits To Detention Centres

Senator ABETZ: Right, let's get to the nub: Villawood Detention Centre. When was the first time you visited that? Or have you visited that centre on a number of occasions? Mr O'Connor: My understanding is that the Villawood centre and other immigration detention facilities have been visited on occasions before. I will take on notice when the first visit would have been. Certainly it is a facility that we are familiar with, as are our colleagues at WorkCover NSW, the work health and safety regulator that also has jurisdiction over that site. Senator ABETZ: All right. If you could possibly take on notice for us, if it is not too much work, for all the detention centres in Australia, what visits have been undertaken over the past five years and what recommendations, if any, have come from that.

Answer

Comcare has provided the following response.

Comcare first visited an immigration detention centre in February 2011 when it visited the Christmas Island centre. No formal recommendations arose as part of the visit.

As a consequence of that visit and our monitoring of work health and safety issues, a Comcare investigator commenced an investigation under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1991* involving seven detention centres. The centres were visited in March and April 2011:

- Inverbrackie, South Australia
- Christmas Island, Western Australia [revisited]
- Curtin, Western Australia
- Darwin, Northern Territory
- Maribyrnong, Victoria
- Villawood, New South Wales
- Scherger, Queensland

Further separate investigations were commenced at the Curtin and Scherger centres.

As Comcare advised the Senate Committee on 1 June 2011, a Comcare investigator issued an Improvement Notice to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) on 1 April 2011 following an inspection of the Villawood centre.

The final investigation report concerning the seven detention centres includes recommendations for improvement in the areas of reporting of notifiable incidents, risk management, staff training, critical incident management and diversity.