

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING: 13 February 2006

IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

(24) Output 1.3: Enforcement of Immigration Law

Senator Nettle (L&C 31) asked:

Does the department have records of other West Papuan asylum seekers that have been intercepted at sea in the last few years? Is the department aware of any or is this the only group?

Answer:

In 1996 and 1998 two vessels carrying Indonesian nationals, who were previously from the Indonesian Province of Papua, arrived at Australian territory in the Torres Strait from Daru, PNG. On 25 September 1996, Suspected Illegal Entry Vessel (SIEV) KERRIA carrying 11 adults and 10 children arrived at Tudu Island. On 4 January 1998 SIEV ZOSTERA carrying 20 adults and 10 children also arrived at Tudu Island.

Persons onboard these vessels sought Australia's protection. However, interviews established that although they were Indonesian nationals, they had crossed into PNG from Indonesia some time before, and had permissive residency in PNG. They were returned to PNG.