

## QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

**ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING: 13 February 2006**

### IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

#### **(89) Output 2.1: Settlement Services**

Senator Hurley asked:

DIMA annual report 2004-2005 p.179 states that, a number of recommendations have been implemented to enhance the program's effectiveness (AUSCO).

- Which recommendations have been implemented to enhance the program's effectiveness?
- Who proposed these recommendations?
- When was it proposed?
- How effective are implementations?

*Answer:*

In early 2004, DIMA commissioned the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) to conduct an evaluation of the Australian Cultural Orientation (AUSCO) Program. The RCOA report stated that the program was having a significant and positive impact on the settlement of humanitarian entrants in Australia. The report made 28 recommendations about the way services could be improved. Eighteen of these recommendations have been implemented so far.

An internal audit of the AUSCO program in Nairobi, Kakuma, Cairo and Mae la Champ (in Thailand) was also conducted by Ernst and Young in 2005. The report provided 12 recommendations and 13 better practice suggestions. Of these, 7 are being implemented through the current tender process.

Following the RCOA and audit reports, a number of recommendations and program enhancements have been implemented for the AUSCO program:

- AUSCO has been expanded to include seventeen countries.
- A youth program has been piloted in Thailand and a program for pre-literate humanitarian entrants in Iran introduced.
- To improve attendance rates at AUSCO classes and ensure participants safety on the journey to and from classes, an IOM bus now transports attendees in Kakuma Refugee Camp.
- AUSCO trainers are now provided with an opportunity to travel to Australia. They spend up to four days with Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS) service providers. This provides them with first hand knowledge of Australia and IHSS services available, which they can feed back into their classes.
- An educational video containing settlement information on Australia, cultural information and refugee testimonies has been produced and distributed for AUSCO classes. The DVD or video is free and is available in a number of language formats.

Implementing the recommendations has proved effective in increasing client safety in

Kakuma, ensuring AUSCO is accessible to clients and that it is delivered in a culturally sensitive manner. The audit conducted by Ernst and Young confirmed that the established training venues are suitable with regard to cost, safety, availability and accessibility.

DIMA is committed to developing and improving the AUSCO program. The success of the new initiatives will be evaluated and an approach of continuous improvement is in place.