

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING: 13 February 2006

IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

(99) Output 2.1: Settlement Services

Senator Nettle asked:

How does DIMA monitor the performance of contractors such as ACL? How does DIMA ensure it does not breach its duty of care to refugees by contracting out settlement services?

Answer:

Under the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS), all service providers are required to provide regular reports to the Department (at least every six months) to address performance against output specifications and key performance indicators, along with annual audited financial statements. Information on client satisfaction must be included in these reports. Feedback from volunteers must also be included in the annual report.

Service providers are also required to participate in contract management meetings with the Department, routinely on a quarterly basis and more often if required. A number of other meetings/conferences are also provided for in the contract.

The Lead Agency for each of the contract regions must establish and maintain a formal mechanism, for example, a reference group, to gain input and feedback from client communities and other stakeholders regarding the delivery of services. This group must meet at least twice in a calendar year and meeting records must be provided to the Department.

DIMA contract managers in State and Territory Offices conduct spot checks of the service provider's performance and are in regular contact with service providers to discuss and resolve any issues that arise.

Service providers must also implement processes for hearing and dealing with client complaints. Where a complaint is not able to be resolved through these processes, the service provider is required to refer the matter to the Department's contract manager in the relevant State or Territory office.

The Department works in partnership with the service providers and encourages open and communicative relationships between all the players, including other service providers, the community, volunteers and the recipients of the services.