

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

ADDITIONAL BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 9 FEBRUARY 2010

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(135) Program 5.1: Settlement Services for Migrants and Refugees

Senator Humphries asked:

(1) From what funding do the plane flights come from in bringing refugees to Australia? i.e. Foreign aid budget or otherwise?	The Australian Government funds travel for refugee clients. Holders of Special Humanitarian Program visas are paid for by their proposers. (Proposers may seek assistance under the No Interest Loans Scheme, an interest-free loan program designed to help entrants and proposers to meet costs of travel to Australia, which is administered by the International Organization for Migration.)
(2) Is the foreign aid budget used in any way in the resettlement process?	No.
(3) In what type of accommodation are refugees housed in Sydney/Melbourne/processing before being moved permanently to regional towns such as Wagga Wagga?	Refugees are settled directly into their destination city or regional centre. Some refugees or migrants may move from one location to another independently after being settled elsewhere in Australia.
(4) What sort of housing are the resettled refugees provided once they have been relocated to regional areas?	Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS) service providers to whom clients are referred source accommodation from the private housing market.
(5) Are refugees given priority to public housing over those who have applied locally, including Aboriginals?	No.
(6) Exactly which Centrelink benefits do refugees have access to?	Refugee entitlements for income support under social security law are exactly the same as for any other Australian. At present, the maximum fortnightly rate of pensions including the Age Pension, Carer Payment and the Disability Support Pension payable to a single person including Rent Assistance is \$783.70. The maximum fortnightly rate of Newstart Allowance or Special Benefit including Rent Assistance is \$567.80. Customers

	<p>with dependent children under the age of 16 may also be entitled to family assistance including Family Tax Benefit.</p> <p>Centrelink's "<i>A guide to Australian Government Payments</i>" gives information about the different payments, the rate of payment and the eligibility criteria. This publication can be found on Centrelink's website at: www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/filestores/co029_0909/\$file/co029_0909en.pdf</p> <p>Additional information is contained in "<i>Australian Government's assistance to refugees</i>". This fact sheet is available on the Parliamentary Library's website at: http://www.apo.org.au/research/australian-government-assistance-refugees-fact-v-fiction</p>
(7) What is the overall Government spend per year on the resettlement of refugees?	The estimated overall Government cost of the Humanitarian Program over a 4 year period is \$2.5 billion across all relevant departments.
(8) What percentage of overall budget is this?	The percentage depends on the total budget and DIAC does not have that information.
(9) What courses are available? Are these fully funded?	Refugees settling in Australia have access to up to 510 hours of fully funded English language training under the Adult Migrant English Program. Depending on circumstances, clients who have special needs may be eligible for additional hours of tuition in a tailored, supportive environment. This helps them settle more effectively in Australia by giving them skills to engage with the community at large and to find employment. Access to other courses is on the same needs basis as other permanent residents.

<p>(10) Are there any other entitlements, funds, or special help available to refugees?</p>	<p>The Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS) provides initial, intensive settlement assistance for humanitarian entrants for six months after arrival and up to twelve months on a needs basis. Services provided include: initial information and orientation assistance; help to find suitable and affordable accommodation; a basic package of goods to help humanitarian entrants establish a household; information and assistance to access local community services including mainstream services such as Centrelink and Medicare; and short term torture and trauma counselling.</p> <p>To assist in their transition into the Australian community, IHSS contracted service providers assist refugees, following their arrival in Australia, with initial information and orientation assistance; a basic package of household goods (such as simple furnishings, linen, some white goods and kitchen/cleaning equipment) to help them establish a household; information and assistance to access local community services including mainstream services such as Centrelink and Medicare; and short term torture and trauma counselling. Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) provides free interpreting services to non-English speaking Australian citizens and permanent residents communicating with approved groups and individuals including doctors in private practice and pharmacies.</p> <p>The Settlement Grants Program (SGP) provides organisations with funding to deliver settlement services to recently arrived humanitarian entrants and migrants. The SGP is a discretionary, merit-based grant program, with community organisations developing funding proposals to respond directly to the identified needs of clients. It aims to deliver services which help clients to become self reliant and participate equitably in Australian society as soon as possible after arrival. There are currently 328 projects funded nationally to provide services under the SGP.</p>
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