

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

ADDITIONAL BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 21 FEBRUARY 2011

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(14) Program 1.1: Visa and Migration

Senator Cash asked:

- 1) When did DIAC assume responsibility for the MARA?
- 2) Since that time, how many agents have been sanctioned? What was the nature of the incidents requiring sanctioning?
- 3) If the number of agents sanctioned is less than 15 does the Department accept that such a low rate of sanctions demonstrates that the vast majority of migration agents are working to a high standard and in a professional manner?

Answer:

- 1) DIAC assumed responsibility for the MARA on 1 July 2009.
- 2) Since 1 July 2009, 11 agents have been sanctioned.

Of the 11 agents who have been sanctioned in the relevant period:

- 4 were barred;
- 2 were cautioned;
- 3 were suspended; and
- 2 were cancelled.

The conduct leading to the sanction decisions included:

- Professional misconduct or negligence that resulted in significant loss to the client;
 - Mishandling of client monies; and
 - A pattern of behaviour demonstrating a lack of integrity, fitness and propriety.
- 3) The Department considers the low rate of sanctions demonstrates that the majority of migration agents provide their clients with a responsible and professional service.

The efforts of the Department and the Office of the MARA in this area are designed to protect a particularly vulnerable group of consumers from the actions of a minority of migration agents.