

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

ADDITIONAL BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 21 FEBRUARY 2011

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(286) Program 4.3: Offshore Asylum Seeker Management

Senator Abetz asked:

When did it become apparent that media would be present at the funerals in Sydney for the survivors of the SIEV 221 incident?

Answer:

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) never publicly confirmed the timing or the location of the funerals beyond confirming they would take place in Sydney.

It is standard practice that where media interest or attendance is likely, a departmental public affairs officer (PAO) attends the event to manage media interest and provide operational support. In this case, a PAO was deployed to each of the two locations to manage media interest in the event media learnt of the details and locations of the funerals through other sources, such as families and representatives.

When media presented at both funerals, the department's PAOs continually requested media respect the clients' privacy and right to grieve.

The department took its first media enquiry about funeral arrangements on 12 February 2011. However, it did not become apparent that media would be on-site until the morning of 15 February 2011, the date of the funerals.