

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING: 13 FEBRUARY 2012

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(AE12/0519) Program 5.1: Settlement Services for Migrants and Refugees

Senator Sarah Hanson-Young asked:

The current Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) National Interpreting Guideline is restricted to Australian citizens and permanent residents. It does not cover onshore or offshore asylum seekers. Will the Government expand the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) National Interpreting Guideline to asylum seekers and refugees?

Answer:

The Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) National provides interpreting services on a fee-for-service basis to people who do not speak English and for the English speakers who need to communicate with them.

The Australian Government, through the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (the department) also funds a fee-free interpreting service, through TIS National, to assist approved organisations and individuals, such as private medical practitioners, in communicating with non-English speaking permanent residents and Australian citizens. The fee-free interpreting service is not intended for asylum seekers.

However, the department funds a number of programs that provide assistance to eligible asylum seekers living in the community (i.e. in community detention or on bridging visas) who are awaiting the outcome of their protection visa application. These programs include the Asylum Seeker Assistance Scheme, the Community Assistance Support Program, Immigration Advice and Application Assistance Scheme, the Community Detention Program and the Restoring Family Links Program. Interpreting and translating costs for clients serviced by these programs are covered by the department.