

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES - 25 FEBRUARY 2014

IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

(AE14/602) PROGRAMME – 2.1: Refugee and humanitarian assistance

Senator Xenophon (Written) asked:

Since the decision was made at the end of last year (2013) to cease issuing asylum-seekers already in the community with permanent visas, some 33,000 asylum seekers were issued bridging visas to ensure their lawful status in Australia.

1. Can you advise how you plan to monitor the immigration status of these 33,000 asylum seekers in the community to ensure that their status does not change to unlawful?
2. Can you also advise if any of these asylum seekers are residing in Australia unlawfully, and if so how many?

Answer:

Since 25 November 2011, successive Ministers have used their non-compellable, non-delegable intervention power under s195A of the *Migration Act 1958* to grant Bridging E visas to some illegal maritime arrivals. Under this programme, to 25 February 2014, Bridging E visas have been granted to 28 413 illegal maritime arrivals and they have been released to live in the Australian community pending assessment of their protection claims.

As at 25 February 2014, there were 23 616 illegal maritime arrivals remaining in the community who had been granted a Bridging E visa. Of these, 11 804 had visas which were in effect and 11 812 had visas which had ceased.

The cessation dates of Bridging E visas are monitored through departmental systems. The process of assessing and granting further Bridging E visas to those illegal maritime arrivals in the community whose previous Bridging E visa has ceased has recommenced and is subject to each individual aged 18 years and older signing the Code of Behaviour.