

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 22 May 2006

IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

(225) Output 1.3: Enforcement of Immigration Law

Senator Ludwig asked:

1. Do the detainees who volunteer under the 'meaningful activity' program receive any benefits or 'awards'?
 - a. If so, detail the various 'awards' available, the typical monetary value per hour of those awards.
 - b. In particular did GSL offer detainees the usage of their telephone or fax machine?
 - i. If so, what sort of phone call could a detainee make and how many pages could they fax, in return for one hour of volunteer labour?
2. What is GSL charged by their telecommunications carrier for a fax per page?
3. What is the payment made to GSL under the contract for covering their telecommunications component? – is this itemised in the contract?

Answer:

1. Yes.
 - a. Clients who volunteer under the meaningful activity program are awarded one merit point for every hour of meaningful activity completed. One hour's participation is equivalent to one merit point. One merit point equates to one Australian dollar.
 - b. The meaningful activity program does not incorporate an informal arrangement relating to the use of GSL phones or fax machines. Clients are able to purchase a range of items with the merit points that they earn from participation in the meaningful activity program. This can include the purchase of phone cards.
 - i. Clients are able to use payphones located within the compounds of Immigration Detention Facilities (IDFs) at regular commercial payphone rates. Clients do not pay for sending legal, immigration processing or personal faxes. However, until recently GSL at Baxter were charging clients for personal faxes, with the first page free and subsequent pages costing one dollar (\$1) each. Where clients lacked sufficient funds, GSL at Baxter would absorb the cost. While this practice was consistent with the operational procedure, other IDFs were not charging for personal faxes. A new standard operating approach has been implemented so that clients are not charged for any faxes.
2. DIMA is not party to the arrangements between GSL and their telecommunications carrier therefore does not have records relating to the cost of a fax per page.
3. Telecommunications are not itemised for payment under the Detention Services fee.