

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 27 MAY 2009

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(26) Program: Internal Product

Senator Fierravanti-Wells (L&CA 71) asked:

Are there places where there have been recurring complaints in relation to, for example, the sort of sensitivities that we were talking about this morning – about perhaps treatment by staff over the counter or something like that?

Answer:

In relation to allegations made about staff overseas, there are no discernable trends in any particular country or overseas post. Complaints based on sensitivities of ethnicity or religious belief arise infrequently. Allegations may also relate to cultural expectations, for example, that preferential treatment should be provided.

The Department received 60 allegations of corruption relating to staff in overseas posts during the 12 month period from January 2008 to December 2008.

The majority of the corruption complaints related to alleged requests for money in return for visas or to expedite the visa process. Other complaints of corruption related to the alleged use of fraudulent documentation in applications, biased decision making and visa scams involving third parties. Many of the allegations once investigated were found to be vexatious complaints, or perceptions of bias or poor customer service.

In addition to the allegations of corruption, the Department received a further 15 allegations relating to breaches of the APS Code of Conduct in overseas posts during the 12 month period from January 2008 to December 2008.

The nature of the APS Code of Conduct complaints included: conflicts of interest; misuse of Commonwealth resources; improper use of the employees duties, status, power or authority; and treating others without courtesy and respect.