

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 26-27 MAY 2010

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(125) Program 3.1: Border Management

Senator Hanson-Young asked:

(1) Does government consider asylum seekers among those likely to threaten the national interest, whose entry must be prevented under Program 3.1?

(2) Does “capacity building” include building capacity to identify and address protection needs of asylum seekers and refugees?

Answer:

(1) Non-citizens, irrespective of country of origin or ethnicity, have to meet health, character, identity and security requirements before any visa is granted. This includes asylum seekers found to be in need of protection.

Security checking is conducted to identify non-citizens whose entry to, or continued presence in, Australia would present a risk to security. The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) refers visa applicants to the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) for security checking for the purposes of the *Migration Act 1958*. ASIO’s role is to conduct an assessment and provide advice to DIAC as to whether it would be consistent with the requirements of security to grant the visa to the person.

Each case is considered on an individual basis according to its particular circumstances.

(2) DIAC’s capacity building programs can include projects to build the capacity of partner governments to identify irregular migrants, make decisions on refugee protection and establish processes to refer migrants for reintegration or return solutions. These projects are designed to reduce the vulnerability of refugees and displaced persons to people smugglers in the region. For example, DIAC funds a capacity building strategy providing practical advice and procedures to Pacific Island governments and assistance to deal with individual cases; \$470,000 over 2 years.

In addition DIAC has a separate program, the Enhancement of Protection Program (EPP), that delivers protection enhancement assistance to high priority countries in the region.

Each country requires different types of support and assistance on protection matters. Some examples of the types of support and assistance, which could fall under the EPP, include:

- In-country training of immigration officers on protection matters. The training might be very general or more targeted depending on the countries current involvement with protection and refugee status determination (RSD).
- Assisting with the development of guidelines and procedure manuals for countries.
- Excursions to Australia to participate in training or exposure to Australia's RSD processes.
- Conferences or workshops organised in a regional country in which multiple countries to participate.