

## QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

### BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARINGS: 23-24 MAY 2011

#### IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

#### **(BE11/0626) Program 4.3: Offshore Asylum Seeker Management**

Senator Cash asked:

With reference to the incident where immigration officials were forced to take asylum-seekers off a flight from Christmas Island to the mainland after the charter pilot expressed concern some had not passed health checks. What did the health check entail?

*Answer:*

For Irregular Maritime Arrivals (IMAs), the Department's contracted Health Services Provider conducts public health screening immediately following their arrival on Christmas Island.

The health screen process consists of the following:

- Consent is obtained, utilising an interpreter, where required;
- Medical observations are taken;
- A public health screen is conducted (including tuberculosis screening questions);
- A medical examination is conducted by the attending doctor;
- A chest x-ray (CXR) is ordered;
- A Mental State Examination is conducted;
- Urinalysis;
- Medical observations (ie. blood pressure, pulse, temperature, height, weight, blood glucose level);
- Pathology tests, including, but not limited to, full blood count, liver function test, Hepatitis B serology, and Syphilis serology;
- The client's full medical history is documented; and
- CXR is reviewed by both the radiologist and the General Practitioner.

Health screening takes approximately 90 minutes per client, assuming there are no interruptions to the process and not including the time taken for CXR and pathology blood tests.

All clients are subjected to health induction and screening, with the following exceptions:

- All females, 12 years and older, also undergo a urine pregnancy test;
- Children under the age of 12 and pregnant women do not undergo a CXR;
- A Mental State Examination is conducted on all clients, except if under the age of 18 and accompanied by an adult family member;

- Pathology tests are only conducted on those 16 years and over, unless symptomatic or history warrants it; and
- Consent is required for minors (accompanied and unaccompanied) under the age of 18 from their respective guardian.

As noted, diseases tested for at the time of induction include Hepatitis B and Syphilis. Should either of these return positive, the client is also offered a test for Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and other Sexually Transmitted Diseases. HIV testing is also offered to all pregnant clients.

In addition, prior to any client being transported by plane, a Fit To Travel assessment is conducted. Only people deemed Fit To Travel are transported.