

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 1 November 2005

IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

(197) Output 2.1: Settlement Services

Senator Hurley asked:

All the countries been mentioned as emerging communities above has English as a third language. What measures has been taken to address the problems associated with improving community leaders level of communication as they have to be intermediaries between their communities and DIMIA?

Answer:

The Government funds a range of programs to assist all migrants to develop the communication skills necessary to interact with and become functioning members of the Australian community.

The Adult Migrant English Program offers all migrants and humanitarian entrants who have low English proficiency up to 510 hours of English language tuition. The operating budget is \$140 million per annum. Recognising that flexibility is critical, clients can choose from a range of learning options including classroom or community based tuition, distance learning, or one-on-one tuition.

The Government also provides funding for translating and interpreting services. A national 24 hour-a-day telephone interpreting service is available. The interpreting service helps migrants and refugees, who do not speak English, communicate with various service providers. Organisations funded by the department to deliver settlement services are able to access fee-free interpreting services.

The Government also supports community capacity building through the Settlement Grants Program. This includes supporting the settlement, establishment and participation of communities in the wider Australian community, including assisting them to develop their capacity to organise, plan and advocate for their own needs.

Using funding allocated in 2004-05 and 2005-06, the department has been working with relevant organisations to develop a framework for the delivery of basic interpreting skills training to bi-lingual people identified as potential interpreters in new/emerging community languages. The Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) has developed strategies to recruit more professional interpreters in new/emerging community languages.