

## QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

### SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 19 OCTOBER 2010

#### IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

#### **(232) Program 4.1: Visa Compliance and Status Resolution**

Senator Cash asked:

- (1) How many Afghans who have been refused refugee status, either on primary decision or appeal have voluntarily left Australia in 2009-10 and in 2010-11 so far?
- (2) How many have been removed?
- (3) When was the last one removed?
- (4) How many are awaiting removal?
- (5) On average how long have those awaiting removal been held in detention following their negative decision?

*Answer:*

(1) Persons who arrive lawfully and who remain lawfully in Australia may make their own arrangements for voluntary departure at any time without involving the Department of Immigration and Citizenship. No action is required by the Department if a client makes their own voluntary departure arrangements and the Department does not keep statistics on those cases.

For the above reason the total number of Afghans who were refused refugee status, either on primary decision or appeal, and who voluntarily left Australia in any given financial year is not readily available.

However, the Department does offer an assisted voluntary return service to eligible non-citizens wishing to depart Australia who are unable to do so without some support. The Department has partnered with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to offer assisted voluntary returns.

In 2009-10, two Afghan irregular maritime arrivals (IMA) who had been refused refugee status were assisted to voluntarily return to their home country. As well, three non-IMA Afghans (none of whom made protection claims) were voluntarily removed during this time period.

In 2010-11, as at 19 January 2011, two Afghan IMAs were assisted to be voluntarily removed to Afghanistan after being refused refugee status. No non-IMA Afghans were removed during this period.

(2) There were no involuntary removals to Afghanistan in 2009-10 or 2010-11.

(3) This information cannot be provided as it may lead to identification of the individuals.

(4) Prior to the High Court decision of 11 November 2010, the Department was making arrangements for a number of IMAs who had been refused refugee status to be removed to Afghanistan once a Memorandum of Understanding was signed with Afghanistan and the UNHCR. Following the High Court's decision, most of these individuals are now going through a renewed process and are no longer available for removal. However, some individuals have requested to depart voluntarily and the Department is arranging their removal. The number of people who have requested voluntarily removed cannot be provided as it may lead to identification of the individuals.

(5) The average number of days Afghani nationals spent in detention prior to being removed is 37 days.