

## QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

### SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 19 OCTOBER 2010

#### IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

#### **(248) Program 2.1: Refugee and Humanitarian Assistance**

Senator Cash asked:

1) Can you provide the Committee with the 'new' country information used by decision makers in making their refugee status determinations on asylum seekers from Afghanistan and Sri Lanka?

2) Is this information also provided to the Independent Review Panel?

*Answer:*

1) Refugee status decision-makers take into account country of origin information from a range of reputable sources. Some of this is not 'new', but remains current in significant areas and is supplemented by new material where appropriate.

For example, the latest UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Afghanistan were released in July 2009; the latest United States State Department report on Human Rights in Afghanistan was released in March 2010, covering the 2009 calendar year; and the Human Rights Watch World Report Afghanistan 2010 was released in January 2010, reporting on events in 2009.

As at 28 October 2010, some 5500 country of origin items on Afghanistan and some 6700 items on Sri Lanka have been accessible to protection decision-makers, of which some 580 and some 1100 items respectively have been added since 9 April 2010.

Sound protection decision-making requires consideration of a range of key material which can country conditions over a number of years, taking into account changes in human rights issues and evidence of developing trends in significant areas.

The Department's country of origin information includes reporting from international organisations, non-government organisations, foreign government reporting on human rights issues, such as the UNHCR and other UN agencies, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, the USA State Department and the United Kingdom Home Office, reputable internet and media sources, and subscriptions with other reputable sources.

2) This information is available to the Refugee Review Tribunal and Independent Merits Reviewers. Independent Merits Reviewers can also obtain country of origin information from the Country Advice service of the Refugee Review Tribunal.