QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 17 OCTOBER 2011

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(SE11/0360) Program 4.2:   Onshore Detention Network

Senator Cash asked:

Darwin International Detention Centres: AAP reported on September 14 that up to 20 asylum seekers at Darwin detention centre had climbed into a hole which was dug as part of the building works at the site – to protest against the delay in processing their asylum claims. For how long did this protest continue? What sanctions if any were imposed on the protestors? Did the protest delay works at the site? If so, did the Department have to pay for workers or any other costs associated with the disruption to the project caused by the protestors? The same article also mentions that about 140 asylum seekers were part of the ongoing protests at the centre. Is this true? What form did the protest take and when did they cease?

Answer:

The protest began on 13 September 2011 and concluded on 14 September 2011. Clients involved in the protest action met with the DIAC Regional Manager and constructive conversations were held. Following the conclusion of the discussion the clients agreed to leave the construction area and return to their normal accommodation. As the protest action ended peacefully and without incident, following the meeting with the DIAC Regional Manager, there were no restrictions imposed on the protestors.

Building works at the NIDC were delayed as a result of this protest action. Costs associated with this protest action are included in an overall estimate of $300 000. This estimate includes other construction delays that occurred during September and October 2011.

Between 7 September 2011 and 16 September 2011, a group of clients undertook a peaceful protest. This was not related to the seven clients protesting in the construction area. The number of clients participating fluctuated but is estimated to have been approximately 50. Clients were gathering on a daily basis for short periods of time and displayed banners.