



Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee  
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2024–25  
Monday, 4 November 2024  
Daily summary

The committee met from 9.00am until 10.30pm.

The committee called the Department of Home Affairs and the Attorney-General's Department.

Topics discussed by the Committee included:

National Emergency Management Agency

- Update on the Northern Rivers Resilient Homes Program;
- Delivery on election commitments - commitment of 1.25 million for a new incident and response and communication centre and 1.75 million for improving mobile coverage (Wonnarua emergency management precinct);
- Disaster Ready Fund; and
- National Higher Risk Weather Season (HRWS) Preparedness Summit - consultation of stakeholders.

Cross portfolio, corporate and general matters

- Departmental Headshots (use of photoshop for flags);
- APSC survey;
- Division of responsibilities regarding counterterrorism; and
- Protective Security Policy Framework - protection of confidential information.

Outcome 1

- Counterterrorism;
- Centre for Counter-Terrorism Coordination priorities;
- Cybersecurity legislation introduced in October 2024 - consultation prior to introduction; any findings? Importance of the legislation for national security; ransomware reporting obligations; cyber incident review board comparison with the US model;
- Five-Country Ministerial meeting - virtual meeting rather than in-person - referring to communication of classified information on an insecure channel;
- Foreign interference - Iranian Ambassador involvement with universities and individuals;
- IRGC listing as terrorist organization;
- Implementation of cyber strategy;
- Cyber Uplift;
- Trusted information sharing network;
- Critical infrastructure;
- Cancelling in person Five-Country Ministerial meeting
- Connected (or smart) vehicles - including Minister's and departmental official's vehicles and fleet choices for members and senators;
- Cyber sanctions;
- CrowdStrike IT outage;

- Aviation and Maritime transport - cyber security risks; and
- National security privacy risks.

#### Outcome 2

- Israel/Palestine conflict - visas granted, cancelled, reinstated and relevant security assessments;
- Persons leaving Australia for Israel;
- MoU between Australia and PNG regarding Manus Island refugees, including support provided;
- Tender process and responsibilities of Toll group who deliver assisted passage and medical services for Australia's refugee and humanitarian program;
- Treatment of persons in Afghanistan and visas granted following Taliban taking over;
- Transferees/refugees on Nauru;
- Visa applications for Palestinian nationals and provision of humanitarian visas;
- International English Language Testing System for visas;
- Minister interaction with visa holders;
- Skilled migration program including utilisation of skills and qualifications;
- Visa pathways for persons coming from Gaza and Ukraine;
- Visas issued for those from Lebanon;
- Referral of visa applications to ASIO;
- Faya Al Hussani - character test for visas;
- Visa grants for Palestinians;
- Concerns around discrimination regarding visa processing times ;
- AQoN relating to non-refoulement for refugees – suggestions regarding refoulement of refugees who were held in offshore detention;
- Ministerial intervention for subjects of fast-tracked asylum processing;
- Faya Al Hussani;
- Social cohesion funding (package to Palestinian communities);
- Student visas; and
- Protection visa reforms.

#### Outcome 3

- NZVQ cohort;
- SERCO- Contractual penalties and changed definition of critical incidents;
- Request for Operation Sovereign Borders - unlawful maritime arrivals since May 2022 - take-back vs turn-backs, referrals of criminal activity from offshore detention;
- Discrepancies in data between 2022-23 and 2024-25 report - removing a target - rationale for removing the target;
- Border Force- stopping vapes at the border and working with partner agencies; siege of vapes in Sydney; enforcement and compliance work with the TGA;
- Illicit Tobacco and E-cigarette Commissioner;
- Aerial surveillance activities and abatements - declining levels of aerial surveillance - improving reporting and performance;
- SERCO contract - original contract was 1.9bn, now 4.6bn - explanation for more than doubling in contract price? Performance management framework- reporting of incidents and timeliness of reporting -no penalties for incidents as long as they report on time;
- Home Affairs contracts with Healthcare Australia vs IHMS - Healthcare Aus double the price – explanation;

- Border Force data on people of military age who are PRs/Passport holders who depart Australia, noting that planning to fight for Russia or Israel is against Australia's national interests;
- Reports re ABF questioning people on the streets about their visa statements;
- Foreign interference cases involving Pakistan diaspora in Australia;
- Pro-Palestinian rallies in Australia - why didn't ASIO intervene; and
- Whether Palestinian and Lebanese visa applicants support Hezbollah.

The committee will next meet at 9.00am on Tuesday 5 November 2024, in the Main Committee Room for further examination on the Attorney-General's portfolio.