

**HOME AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO  
DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS**

**PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY SPOKEN QUESTION ON NOTICE**

Joint Committee on the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity  
Inquiry into the Integrity of Australia's border arrangements

11 September 2020

**QoN Number: 02**

**Subject: Integrity of Australia's border arrangements**

**Asked by:** Tony Zappia

**Question:**

**Mr ZAPPIA:** My questions are mainly addressed to Home Affairs. I'm not going to go through them in terms of expecting answers. I refer to the ACLEI corruption investigation referred to as Operation Angove and in particular what is referred to as the arrangement between Home Affairs and Crown Melbourne. I have a series of about 14 questions, which I'm going to put on the record. If you want to take them on notice and respond back to the committee, that will be fine by me.

The questions are as follows. What were the terms of the arrangement? Was a specific Home Affairs officer tasked with oversight of the arrangement? Were any breaches at any time detected by persons who entered or departed Australia under the arrangement and, if so, what was the nature of those breaches? Did the arrangement bypass any existing security protocols? Who authorised the arrangement? Did the arrangement require the minister's approval? Who was covered by the arrangement—that is, which government agencies were included in the arrangement? When did the arrangement commence? I heard earlier on that it ended in 2016. Another question was going to be: when did it end? Are any similar arrangements in place with any other parties and, if so, with whom? Were any other government agencies advised of the arrangement? Were any other government agencies consulted prior to the arrangement being implemented? Were there any objections raised about that arrangement and, if so, by whom? Was the arrangement specific to certain individuals only and, if so, to whom? I assume we would be here all day if you tried to answer all of those, so you're welcome to respond later on.

...

**Mr Kefford:** We'll take the details of your question on notice... In terms of the historical detail of these matters, we'll see what is able to be provided on notice.

**Answer:**

***What were the terms of the arrangement?***

The Department had a stakeholder arrangement with Crown Casino from 2003 to 2016

The arrangement covered Chinese nationals wishing to travel to Australia for the purpose of visiting Crown Casino. Under the arrangement, supported visitor visa applications were lodged only in the Department's Guangzhou visa office, enabling the Department to identify linked applications, effectively scrutinise individuals of interest, and process applications more efficiently.

The arrangement also provided a single contact point for Crown Casino.

While applying as a group, Crown-supported visa applicants had to individually satisfy all legislative criteria to be granted a visa. All applicants were individually subject to the full range of applicable checks – including in relation to character and national security. No outcomes were ever guaranteed and visa applications were refused where appropriate.

***Was a specific Home Affairs officer tasked with oversight of the arrangement?***

Australian-based officers at Guangzhou post managed the arrangement.

***Were any breaches at any time detected by persons who entered or departed Australia under the arrangement and, if so, what was the nature of the breaches?***

Between July 2011 and October 2016, four people (representing approximately 0.07 per cent of visas granted during the period) overstayed their visitor visa.

***Did the arrangement bypass any existing security protocols?***

No.

***Who authorised the arrangement? Did the arrangement require the Minister's approval?***

At the time of commencement in 2003, visa program management was devolved to the regional level overseas. While the arrangement did not require Ministerial approval, it was documented in 2011 in discussion with the Department's National Office in Canberra and the Minister's Office at the time.

***Who was covered by the arrangement; that is, which government agencies were included in the arrangement?***

The arrangement related to the administrative arrangements for visitor visa applications supported by Crown Casino and lodged in mainland China. It did not include any other Government agencies.

***When did the arrangement commence, and when did it end?***

The arrangement ran from 2003 to October 2016.

***Are any similar arrangements in place with any other parties and if so with whom?***

There are five current stakeholder arrangements:

- Papua New Guinea citizens processed at the Australian visa office in Suva, Fiji
- Approved Destination visitor visas for guided Chinese tourist groups (legislated)
- Key Distribution Partner Program under the auspices of Tourism Australia
- Fast Track Priority processing for subclass 600 Visitor visas in China, India and the United Arab Emirates (legislated)
- ICC (International Cricket Council) Men's T20 World Cup

***Were any other government agencies advised of the arrangement? Were any other government agencies consulted prior to the arrangement being implemented? Were there any objections raised about that arrangement and, if so, by whom?***

The stakeholder arrangement related to the administration of visa processing arrangements for a specific cohort of applicants. As such it did not encompass or impact on the operations of other Government agencies. Departmental records indicate that representatives of the Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism were aware of the arrangement, through the Tourism Visa Advisory Group. There is no record of any Government agency raising objections.

***Was the arrangement specific to certain individuals only, and if so to whom?***

No.