

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

Output 1.3: Immigration Law Enforcement

Catherine King MP (PA74) asked for information on the number of illegal landings. Chairman, Bob Charles MP (PA75) asked about overstay location rates.

Answer:

The following is information on the number of illegal landings and overstay locations.

1999/00 - there were two vessels with 37 persons on board who were detected after an illegal landing.

2000/01 - there were two vessels with 47 persons on board who were detected after an illegal landing.

2001/02 - there were no illegal landings. **(1)**

During the 1999/00, 2000/01 and 2001/2002 the Department located 14,369, 14238, and 17,307 persons respectively, who were unlawful non-citizens or had breached their visa conditions. These figures represent approximately a quarter of the estimated overstayer population in Australia.

(1) The above statistics on illegal landings do not include the majority of unauthorised boat arrivals intercepted prior to landing.

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Senator Scullion (PA 72) asked about procedures in place to address the problem of illegal entrant vessels arriving off Darwin with possible marine pest infection.

Answer:

There is a protocol in place in the Northern Territory for aquatic pest inspection procedures for illegal entrant vessels and foreign fishing vessels which involves the Northern Territory Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries (NTDPIF), the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service, the Australian Fisheries Management Authority, the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, the Australian Customs Service and the Royal Australian Navy. These illegal entrant and foreign fishing vessels are taken to a buoy outside of Darwin Harbour where they are inspected by divers contracted by the NTDPIF.

If bad weather or sea conditions prevent inspection at the nominated site there is a contingency plan where, at the direction of the divers, the vessel will be moved to a nominated buoy in calmer waters. If the waters are not suitable on reaching the second buoy the vessel is moved along a transect towards a third nominated buoy. If the weather or sea conditions are still unsuitable for diving the vessel is moved in a line towards the Quarantine Area until calmer water suitable for diving is reached.

If all the above locations are deemed unsafe for diving due to bad sea conditions the vessel is inspected in the Quarantine Area.

When an illegal entrant vessel arrives off Darwin the priority is to inspect the vessel for marine pest infection. If marine pests are detected then appropriate treatment is arranged. At the time of arrival the Department's concern is for the safe transfer of the people on board and the contingency plan outlined above addresses that concern.

The people remain on board during the inspection of the hull. Once the vessel has been cleared and it is brought to the Quarantine Area or the vessel is brought into calmer waters to allow inspection the unauthorised arrivals are transferred to shore where they undergo customs, quarantine and immigration clearances and are interviewed by DIMIA officers.