



Parliamentary Committee to inspect new \$396 million detention centre on Christmas Island

The Joint Standing Committee on Migration will visit immigration detention facilities in Darwin and Christmas Island next week as part of its inquiry into immigration detention in Australia.

“This visit will give the Committee a clearer understanding of border security in Australia’s northern waters, and assist us in determining the most appropriate and humane means of responding”, said Chair Michael Danby.

In Darwin on Monday 7 July, the Committee will visit the Northern Immigration Detention Centre, which is primarily used for the short-term detention of Indonesian illegal fishers, and the local hotel where minors are held while awaiting deportation.

“In 2006-07, a total of 1,391 illegal foreign fishers were detained in Australia,” said Mr Danby, “Some of these are unaccompanied minors so the Darwin facilities have a unique client profile in contrast to the rest of Australia’s detention centres”.

On Christmas Island on Tuesday 8 July, the Committee will visit the temporary detention facility at Phosphate Hill as well as the recently completed \$396 million facility built by the previous Government. Both facilities, with a combined maximum capacity of over 1000 people, are currently empty.

Mr Danby said, “As part of the inquiry we will be looking at current detention practices and the cost-effectiveness of existing facilities with a view to developing a blueprint for Australia’s future immigration detention policy and centres”.

The Committee is inquiring into and reporting on issues such as:

- the criteria for detention and length of time in detention
- the criteria for release from detention
- accountability and transparency in immigration detention processes
- the infrastructure and physical environments of detention centres
- types of detention (including residential housing and community detention) and other alternatives, and
- the administration of the services available to those in detention.

The inspections are not open to the media but the Committee Chair, Michael Danby MP, is available for comment on (03) 9534 8126 (electorate office) or on 0400 419 420 (Monday and Tuesday).

For background information, including the full terms of reference, please visit the inquiry website at <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/mig/detention/index.htm> or contact the Committee Secretariat on (02) 6277 4560 or jscm@aph.gov.au.