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JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON MIGRATION (JSCM)

INQUIRY INTO IMMIGRATION DETENTION IN AUSTRALIA

44 QUESTIONS

Responses from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship  
15 October 2008

**Detention data**

The Committee requests the following data to inform its inquiry:

1. Annual number of immigration detainees in Australia for each year from 1988 – present, and breakdowns of

- most common nationalities

[see over the page]

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**Nationalities of people taken into  
immigration detention 1989-90 to 2007-08  
Nationalities shown in rank order**

Year	1st rank	2nd rank	3rd rank	4th rank
1989-90	Cambodia	China, Peoples Republic Of	Vietnam	Fiji
1990-91	Cambodia	Vietnam	China, Peoples Republic Of	Fiji
1991-92	China, Peoples Republic Of	Tonga	Philippines	Poland
1992-93	China, Peoples Republic Of	Fiji	Romania	Tonga
1993-94	China, Peoples Republic Of	Vietnam	Indonesia	Fiji
1994-95	China, Peoples Republic Of	Vietnam	Indonesia	Philippines
1995-96	China, Peoples Republic Of	Indonesia	Fiji	Somalia
1996-97	Iraq	Sri Lanka	China, Peoples Republic Of	Somalia
1997-98	Indonesia	China, Peoples Republic Of	Iraq	Sri Lanka
1998-99	Iraq	China, Peoples Republic Of	Afghanistan	Turkey
1999-00	Iraq	Afghanistan	Iran	China, Peoples Republic Of
2000-01	Afghanistan	Iraq	Iran	Indonesia
2001-02	Iraq	Afghanistan	China, Peoples Republic Of	Indonesia
2002-03	Indonesia	China, Peoples Republic Of	Papua New Guinea	Malaysia
2003-04	Indonesia	China, Peoples Republic Of	Malaysia	Korea, South
2004-05	Indonesia	China, Peoples Republic Of	Malaysia	Korea, South
2005-06	Indonesia	Malaysia	China, Peoples Republic Of	Korea, South
2006-07	Indonesia	Malaysia	China, Peoples Republic Of	Philippines
2007-08	Indonesia	Malaysia	China, Peoples Republic Of	India

Note: Data for years prior to 2002-03 has excluded those for whom no nationality is reported.

Note: In 1989-90 and in 1993-94 the count for "China, Peoples Republic Of" includes those recorded as "China, so stated".

23. In his report *DIAC: Administration of detention debt waiver and write-off*, the Ombudsman recommended that DIAC should consider debt waiver where a person is or was released from detention as 'not unlawful.' DIAC responded that this is the current process.

**Has the review been undertaken and if so what is the outcome?**

An initial review of detention debt was undertaken. The findings of the review are now being considered as part of the broader changes to immigration detention as announced in the government's New Directions in Detention.

### **Other**

43. **Is there a policy on media access to immigration detention centres?**

People in immigration detention may call journalists at any time. There are no restrictions but the Department asks that journalists have regard to concerns about identifying individual people in immigration detention.

The Department has a responsibility to protect the privacy of people in immigration detention and detention staff. This is paramount, because identification of people in immigration detention may give rise to adverse attention from the authorities in their country of origin (*sur place* claims) or jeopardise the safety of their families overseas.

Also for this reason, restrictions are placed upon journalists who seek to conduct interviews at immigration detention facilities with people in immigration detention.

From time to time the Department has arranged media tours of its immigration detention facilities but has placed some restrictions to protect the privacy of people in immigration detention, as well as to pay due regard to operational requirements relevant to the continuing management of the facilities. Under these arrangements, journalists, camera crew and photographers:

- may take cameras into the centre, but are not permitted to photograph people in immigration detention, officers of the Department or officers of the detention services provider (GSL Australia Pty Ltd) in a way that they may be identifiable, noting that pixelling/blurring of faces may not be sufficient to mask identity
- may not do any type of audio recording in the facility
- may photograph/film in interview rooms and accommodation areas when they are unoccupied
- may photograph eating, recreational, medical and religious facilities, ensuring that any people present will not be identifiable.

A departmental officer accompanies participants and provides a briefing to explain the different parts of the processing operation and describe the facilities. For obvious reasons, the arrangements are subject to security considerations on the day.