



Submission No 50

Inquiry into Australia's Relations with the Republic of Korea; and Developments on the Korean Peninsula

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE

Inquiry into Australia's Relationship with the Republic of Korea; and Developments on the Korean Peninsula QUESTION ON NOTICE

I recommend the attached reply to the question on notice from the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade concerning the number of DPRK border crossers in China:

- Precise estimates on the number of DPRK border crossers residing in China are difficult to obtain given the underground nature of this flow of people and lack of access to the border region in northeastern China by international organisations.
- The US State Department's 2004 Human Rights Report on China notes that several thousand North Koreans were reportedly detained and forcibly repatriated to the DPRK in 2004, despite the harsh penalties of imprisonment and even execution for defectors under the DPRK Penal Code. The PRC insists that North Koreans in China are "economic migrants" who have no legitimate claim to refugee status. Through bilateral human rights dialogue with China, Australia has urged China to allow the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees access to DPRK border crossers in northeastern China.
- In 4 November 2004, Refugees International (RI) Vice President for Policy Joel Charny testified to the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations that RI accepts estimates of 60,000-100,000 North Korean refugees currently in northeastern China. Other estimates range from as low as 10,000 to as high as 300,000.

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