

## QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

**ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING : 23 February 2015**

IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

**(AE15/111) - Ebola - Programme 1.2 Border Enforcement (ACBPS)**

Senator Carr, Kim (L&CA) written:

- a. What happens when a humanitarian worker checks in and boards their plane overseas to return home with a flagged passport?
  - Who speaks to them?
  - What do they ask?
- b. When they land in Australia – what happens then?
- c. How long might they be detained for?
- d. If an Australian humanitarian worker had undergone their 21 day quarantine period, would there be cause to question them at length on re-entry to Australia?

*Answer:*

a. The Government's response to the Ebola outbreak involved collaboration across a range of government agencies, and is being led by the Department of Health and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The Portfolio has worked closely with other Australian Government departments to develop and implement enhanced border screening procedures to effectively manage the risk of Ebola entering Australia.

The measures introduced to screen travellers at risk of Ebola, including humanitarian workers such as health care workers returning to Australia, leverage Australia's universal visa requirements and advance passenger information systems to create intervention points which allow the risks associated with travellers returning from affected countries to be assessed on a case-by-case basis. A change in the Portfolio's pre-border processes for Ebola in January 2015 means that Australian passport holders are no longer questioned at check-in when boarding a flight to Australia. This means when health care workers check in for a return flight to Australia nobody speaks to them or asks them questions.

The Portfolio is working with the Red Cross to identify travellers returning from EVD affected areas to assist the Portfolio officers with pre-arrival identification.

- b. On return to Australia, all passengers (including returning health care and other aid workers) are screened at the international border, under the border screening arrangements for Ebola virus disease:
  - i. All travellers must complete a Travel History Card (THC) and declare whether they have been in an Ebola affected country over the past 21 days.

- ii. Travellers who have been in an Ebola affected country in the 21 days prior to entering Australia are referred to airport biosecurity officers to have their temperature checked and undergo further questioning to assess their risk of exposure to Ebola virus disease.
- iii. If a passenger has been in close contact with a person with Ebola, attended a funeral or had a fever in the past 24 hours, or has a temperature above 37.5 degrees celcius, biosecurity officers will refer the passenger to state and territory human quarantine officers for further assessment.

Travellers who self-process through SmartGate are asked electronically at the kiosk whether they have travelled to Africa in the previous 21 days. Where the answer is “yes” they are referred to an officer for manual processing, and further assessment of the THC. All travellers who have been in an Ebola affected country in the past 21 days are referred to the Department of Agriculture (Agriculture) biosecurity official for health screening on arrival into Australia. Where the answer is “no”, they proceed through to baggage collection without further THC assessment, and may present their THC at the Secondary Marshal Point prior to exiting the arrivals hall.

c. Health care workers are not detained by officers of the Immigration and Border Protection Portfolio for Ebola related issues. If a health care worker presents a possible quarantine risk they are referred to Agriculture for the appropriate screening processes (as referred above).

d. The THC / SmartGate screening only identifies people who have been in Ebola affected countries in the past 21 days. If a healthcare worker is returning to Australia more than 21 days after leaving an Ebola affected country, then they will not fall into the criteria for further screening or assessment at the border.