

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING : 08 February 2016

IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

(AE16/012) - Staff reallocations - Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme - Programme 2.4: Refugee and Humanitarian Assistance

Senator Carr, Kim (L&CA 34 & 36) asked:

Mr Vardos: We have supplemented our existing posted resources. These are people who go on three-year postings to the region. We have supplemented those resources with short-term missions, which can last a matter of months or a matter of weeks. It is subject to a range of factors, including availability of office accommodation. We are not the only ones who occupy those offices.

Senator KIM CARR: How many staff have been reallocated on a short-term basis?

Mr Vardos: I would have to take that on notice. I was looking for that figure before I came to the table, and I do not actually have it.

Mr Pezzullo: We will take it on notice.

Mr Vardos: Someone else may have it, but I do not.

Mr Pezzullo: We will take it on notice.

Senator KIM CARR: Can I just finish on this. In terms of the question on notice—

CHAIR: We will come back to you later.

Senator KIM CARR: It is a simple question: can you provide information about where the officers have been transferred from to take on this additional work?

Mr Vardos: Okay.

Answers:

At any point in time there have been seven additional A-based visa processing officers on Short Term Missions (STMs) processing applications for the Syrian Response caseloads: two officers in each of Amman, Beirut, Dubai and one officer in Ankara.

There have been approximately 22 additional locally engaged staff brought in to provide administrative support for the Syrian Response caseloads: eight in Amman, one in Ankara, nine in Beirut and four in Dubai. These have been a mix of temporary short term contracted staff and locally engaged employees temporarily reassigned to the response.

To provide additional support for visa processing offices in the Middle East, officers within the Department's Intelligence Division and National Security Branch have undertaken STMs to coordinate security assessments.

The Assistant Secretary, Immigration Health Branch, has also visited Middle East posts to review and coordinate health clearances and departmental biometrics trainers have visited posts to provide technical advice on biometrics collection.

Additional departmental visa processing officers working on the Syrian Response comprise the following:

- (a) officers from the Department in Canberra or from State and Territory offices;
- (b) posted officers temporarily reassigned from other duties; and
- (c) DIBP officers accompanying family posted to the Middle East who have been recalled to duty.

Officers have been selected on the basis of availability and having previous experience in refugee and humanitarian caseload processing.