QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

BUDGET ESTIMATES – 26 – 27 MAY 2014

IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

(BE14/050) PROGRAMME – Operation Sovereign Borders

Senator Conroy (L&CA 118) asked:

Senator CONROY: In his recent speech to the Lowy Institute, on 9 May this year, the minister said that this policy 'ensured a safe platform for return on each occasion'. I know we have had a debate about the minister's words and whether we like to use them at this table or not, but I am going to ask you about what a 'safe platform' is in the mind of the minister, hopefully yourselves. Presumably he is talking about returning boats back to Indonesia against their express wishes. Is that what we are talking about - safe platform for 'return' on each occasion? This is the minister's statement.
...
Senator CONROY: Well, can you please explain to me what exactly is a 'safe platform'?
Mr Pezzullo: I have to just remind myself of the context in which that sentence was stated.
Senator CONROY: I am sure the minister could call the speech up. One day we will get you into that technological age, we will get your boats GPSed, we will get you on a laptop or a tablet.
Mr Pezzullo: Senator, I am happy to take advice from anyone to assist me with my technological ineptitude. No, I do not have it in front of me.
Senator Cash: Senator Conroy, we can take that question on notice and put it to the minister for you.

Answer:

A safe platform is the conditions created for turnbacks that reflect the priority of safety of all involved parties: passengers, crew and all Australian personnel involved in on-water operations.