

## **QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE**

### **BUDGET ESTIMATES – 26 – 27 MAY 2014**

#### **IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION PORTFOLIO**

#### **(BE14/254) PROGRAMME – 3.3 and 3.4: Illegal Maritime Arrival (IMA) Onshore Management**

Senator Carr (Written) asked:

In an address to the Putrajaya Forum 2014 on 14 April 2014 Minister Morrison stated that ‘we need stronger regional borders, both internally and externally’.

- a. How does the Bali Process fit into the Minister’s plans for stronger border protection throughout the region?
- b. What progress has been made in the region that has strengthened regional borders?
- c. Are any other countries investing in this regional strategy?
- d. How does Australia’s contribution compare to our regional neighbours?
- e. Which regional countries have indicated their willingness to commit to strengthening their borders?
- f. What are the possible human rights implications of the ‘strengthening regional borders’ initiative?
- g. How will the Department ensure that our regional partners in this initiative appropriately take into account human rights obligations?
- h. What are the details of the MOU signed between Minister Morrison and Dr. Zahid in regards to transnational crime?
- i. Can we obtain a copy of this MOU?

*Answer:*

- a. The Bali Process effectively raises regional awareness of people smuggling, trafficking in persons and related transnational crime, and provides a forum to develop practical regional responses to irregular migration and border management.
- b. Considerable progress has been made in strengthening regional borders with increased cooperation between regional countries under a range of bilateral and multilateral forums including the Bali Process, Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation and the Association for South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and Regional Cooperation on Combatting Piracy and Armed Robbery against ships in Asia (ReCAAP). This cooperation has increased the focus in the region on transnational crime and border management issues. In addition, many regional countries have, in partnership with Australia, undertaken joint operations and capacity building initiatives, introduced or enhanced relevant legislation and developed information sharing arrangements. Australia is also working with regional countries and international organisations, such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the World Customs Organisation, to support border strengthening initiatives.

- c. Many countries in the region participate in initiatives to strengthen their borders, promote lawful movement and engage with regional partners, including the through the processes cited above.
- d. Australia is well placed to share best practice and provide technical assistance in the area of border management through strategic partnerships with countries in our region. Over many years the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) has made strong investments in a regional programme of capacity building which includes a focus on strengthening border management, through initiatives such as technical skills training, joint operational exercises, systems enhancements and sharing of information and expertise.
- e. Considerable progress has been made in strengthening regional borders with increased cooperation between regional countries under the auspices of bilateral and multilateral forums including the Bali Process, ASEAN, and ReCAAP. Regional partner countries for DIBP activities include Brunei Darussalam, Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste and Vietnam.
- f. It is difficult to speculate on the possible human rights implications of border strengthening activities. Stronger domestic and regional borders not only combat transnational crime through preventing the movement of people smugglers, traffickers, terrorists and other criminals, they also facilitate legitimate trade, commerce and travel.
- g. In regards to human rights in the region, Australia more generally supports capacity building to implement international human rights standards globally and in the Asia-Pacific.
- h. In October 2013, the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, the Hon Scott Morrison MP, announced that he would progress Malaysia's proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Transnational Crime in consultation with the Attorney General. The draft text is currently being negotiated between Australian and Malaysian officials.
- i. The draft text of the proposed Australia-Malaysia Memorandum of Understanding on Transnational Crime is currently being negotiated.