

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES – 20 OCTOBER 2014

IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

(SE14/156) PROGRAMME – Operation Sovereign Borders

Senator Carr (Written) asked:

What are the guidelines and policies that deal with sinking boats? What guidelines or policies are given regarding boarding a foreign vessel in international waters?

Answer:

The international law of the sea provides that masters of vessels at sea, including those assigned to Operation Sovereign Borders, have a general obligation to render assistance, if in a position to do so, to any vessels which they are aware are in distress at sea, and are to proceed with all speed to their assistance.

The international law of the sea, in particular, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, also deals with actions that may be taken in respect of vessels on the high seas.