

## QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

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

#### IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

#### **(SE14/368) PROGRAMME – 3.5 and 3.6: Illegal Maritime Arrival (IMA) Offshore Management**

Senator Carr (written) asked:

What are the details surrounding Australia's 'positive voluntary removal program'?  
What does this program involve? How does it work?  
What are the costs associated with running this program?  
How are people voluntarily removed from Australia, PNG and Nauru?  
How many people have been voluntarily removed from PNG since 7 September 2013? Since the last estimates in May 2014?

*Answer:*

*What are the details surrounding Australia's 'positive voluntary removal program'?  
What does this program involve? How does it work?*

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) provides return services to those non-citizens who want to voluntarily return from Regional Processing Centres (RPCs), but require assistance to do so.

On 30 May 2014, the Rapid Departure Assistance service was implemented at regional processing centres. The service is only available to transferees who wish to return voluntarily from a regional processing centre and is part of existing voluntary return products offered by the IOM. Currently, the IOM has case workers located on regional processing centres that manage and deliver returns assistance to transferees.

Offshore rapid departure assistance packages are structured on a country-specific basis to ensure that the assistance provided adequately supports income generating, employment or educational activities for the transferee and their families in the country-of-return. These packages are provided as in-kind assistance and are payable on a per person basis for each returnee of the age 18 and over.

This in-kind assistance is increased by 20 per cent of a single adult rapid departure assistance package for each dependent child who is under 18 years old.

The total amount of available assistance is in accordance with a calculation made in relation to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in the country-of-return.

On 11 July 2014, the department, as part of the existing returns services programme, introduced the Voluntary Departure Assistance service in order to facilitate departure from regional processing centres for those transferees who wish to return home. This service supports departure in circumstances where IOM are unable to assist due to an

absence of personnel or services in the country of return. Voluntary departure assistance provides initial assistance to facilitate departure to these countries.

The amounts are based on the 49 per cent cash component of an onshore reintegration assistance package. The difference in assistance between IOM-facilitated departures and non-IOM facilitated departures is due to the absence of IOM staff and services in the country of return to provide in-kind assistance.

*What are the costs associated with running this program?*

In the Financial Year 2014-2015, \$2.277m has been allocated under Program Outcome 3.5, for returns and reintegration services which are provided to Illegal Maritime Arrivals (IMAs) in regional processing centres. This includes the staff, office and client costs.

*How are people voluntarily removed from Australia, PNG and Nauru?*

Australia's *Migration Act 1958* creates a statutory framework regulating the entry and stay of non-citizens in Australia. It contains provisions for the removal of non-citizens whose presence in Australia is unlawful. People who have no legal entitlement to remain in Australia are expected to depart voluntarily. The Department of Immigration and Border Protection (the department) provides targeted assistance and support to individuals who cooperate with voluntary departure arrangements. People who are not willing to depart voluntarily are liable for detention and removal from Australia as soon as reasonably practicable. A person who is removed from Australia will incur a debt to the Commonwealth for the costs of their removal.

Removals from Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Nauru will be effected under relevant domestic laws and authority of these countries. Failed asylum seekers will be provided with the opportunity to depart voluntarily before formal removal proceedings commence. If the person is not willing to depart voluntarily, Papua New Guinea or Nauruan governments will make arrangements to enforce their removal in accordance with Papua New Guinea or Nauruan immigration laws.

*How many people have been voluntarily removed from PNG since 7 September 2013? Since the last estimates in May 2014?*

Between October 2008 and 27 November 2014, 840 illegal maritime arrivals have been voluntarily removed from Australia.

To date there have been no removals from regional processing centres.

Between 22 December 2013 and 22 December 2014, 334 transferees have voluntarily returned from a regional processing centre. Of these, 286 returned from Manus Island and 48 returned from Nauru.