

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

ADDITIONAL BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 19 FEBRUARY 2008

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(30) Output 1.6: Offshore Asylum Seeker Management

Senator Ellison (L&CA 98) asked:

Did the government advise the Nauruan Government of its decision to close the processing centre prior to publicly announcing that on 17 December last year?

Answer:

The Government of Nauru was aware of the present Australian Government's election commitment to close the Offshore Processing Centre (OPC) in Nauru prior to 17 December 2007.

On 4 December 2007, the then Nauruan President, H.E. Hon Ludwig Scotty, wrote a congratulatory letter to the Prime Minister, in which he acknowledged the Australian Government's policy intention to close the OPC. The then Foreign Minister, David Adeang, wrote a similar letter to the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs on 3 December 2007.

The Government of Nauru fell on 19 December 2007, and a new government was formed under the presidency of H.E. Hon Marcus Stephen.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has advised that the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs wrote to his new Nauruan counterpart, Dr Kieren Keke on 15 January 2008, formally advising the Government of Nauru of Australia's intention to close the OPC.