

## QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

### ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING: 9 FEBRUARY 2010

#### IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

#### **(70) Program 4.3: Offshore Asylum Seeker Management**

Senator Hanson-Young asked:

##### Christmas Island

(1) Has DIAC provided induction information to clients immediate to their arrival in a language appropriate to the client?

(2) (related to Afghans) Given, past ethnic conflict, are clients advised that Hazaragi is recognised as an official language in Australia and they have the right to ask for a Hazaragi speaking interpreter and furthermore to change the interpreter if they cannot understand the interpreter?

*Answer:*

(1) Information is provided to clients about processes and procedures on Christmas Island on an ongoing basis, beginning with their arrival at Christmas Island. This includes a verbal induction by a departmental officer with the assistance of an interpreter on arrival.

DIAC sources and engages interpreter services for irregular maritime arrival clients on Christmas Island based on client demand, so that resources are directed to those with the highest priority needs. In general, there is a permanent presence on Christmas Island of qualified interpreters catering to clients' most common languages (Hazaragi, Tamil, Arabic and Persian). Where client language needs are not met by interpreters already present on the Island, an appropriately qualified interpreter is engaged to provide their services as soon as possible.

(2) Afghan clients are advised that the Australian Government recognises Hazaragi as a unique language. All clients who arrive on Christmas Island are informed that the interpreters are impartial and are there solely for the purpose of interpreting for Government officials.

All interpreters currently working on Christmas Island are bound by a strict code of ethics. To remain compliant with this code, they must:

- maintain absolute confidentiality - they must never disclose information about a client;
- remain strictly impartial at all times;
- interpret as accurately and competently as they can;

- avoid conflicts of interest; and
- not seek to influence clients in any way. They must not give clients advice or share opinions with clients.

Afghan clients are advised that the interpreter is a professional and has nothing to do with their case, other than to interpret what they say. They are informed that at any time they can request a different interpreter if they cannot understand the interpreter they are working with. As a matter of course, clients are asked if they understand the interpreter provided before any interview commences.