

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

ADDITIONAL BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARINGS: 21 FEBRUARY 2011

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(306) Program 4.3: Offshore Asylum Seeker Management

Senator Cash asked:

- 1) How many families and unaccompanied minors have been moved into community detention? Over what period? Where are they? What is the cost per person per day of these arrangements?
- 2) What agreements or contracts have been entered into with Non Government Organisation's (NGO) to manage those released under residence determinations? What are their obligations and responsibilities in relation to those released? What obligation is placed on NGO's to have failed asylum seekers available for removal?
- 3) Please provide a list of each entitlement they receiving including but not limited to welfare payments, Medicare, other health and transport benefits, cash payments, Clothing allowance. Do these families or any members of these families have work rights?
- 4) Will they have a DIAC case manager? What other support will the department provide them?
- 5) Will the government be considering any special deal to regularise their status?

Answer:

- 1) As at 27 April 2011, 721 individuals had been approved by the Minister for the residence determination (also known as community detention) since the Minister's 18 October 2010 announcement. This included 155 families, 115 unaccompanied minors and 2 friendship groups. Meaningful cost estimates cannot be provided at this relatively early stage of the program.
- 2) The Australian Red Cross has managed the care and welfare of people in residence determination over the past five years under a contract with the Department and is the lead agency for the expansion of residence determination arrangements. Australian Red Cross is sourcing accommodation, residential/out-of-home care, case workers and other services from a range of community agencies.

In addition to an Australian Red Cross case worker, Unaccompanied Minors also have a live-in carer. Currently, organisations providing those services (in a subcontractor capacity to the Australian Red Cross) are Jesuit Refugee Services, Marist Youth Care, Hotham Mission Asylum Seeker Project and Life Without Barriers. A comprehensive and client-focused care plan is prepared for all people placed in the residence determination program. This plan defines the appropriate services and support arrangements. School aged children generally attend the school in the community in which they are living. DIAC pays any additional costs incurred, such as the hiring of English Second Language teachers, if required.

Status resolution, including removals, is the responsibility of, DIAC.

- 3) Clients in residence determination stay in furnished accommodation funded by the Department and receive some support, but do not have working rights as they are still in detention.

In general, the type and amount of support residence determination clients receive is as follows:

- welfare payments – none
 - Medicare – none
 - other health benefits – clients are provided with access to health services through the Department's contracted health service provider, IHMS (as they do whilst in other immigration detention facilities)
 - transport benefits – none (except where recommended for health reasons in which case the Department can consider one-off transport support)
 - cash payments – clients receive support of up to 89% of the relevant Centrelink benefits, with which they support their daily living in the community, including activities, clothing, food, utilities bills etc
 - clothing allowance – none, although school aged children, who are required to attend school as a condition of residence determination, are provided with the appropriate school uniforms and stationery requirements by the Department through the Australian Red Cross (as they do whilst in other immigration detention facilities).
- 4) DIAC allocates case managers to clients in residence determination to support them from a status resolution perspective.

International Health and Medical Services (IHMS) are contracted to provide health services to people in immigration detention including in residence determination. In the case of residence determination, the services are usually provided through local GPs. The department fully funds health care including approved referrals to specialist services.

In addition, the Immigration Advice and Application Assistance Scheme (IAAAS) is available as a professional, free of charge service to help with the completion and submission of visa applications, liaison with DIAC, and to advise on complex immigration matters.

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) is also available to eligible clients.

- 5) No. Clients are referred to the Minister for consideration of a possible residence determination placement in recognition of their special needs and vulnerability. The refugee status assessment is a separate process. Being in the residence determination program does not change the processing or outcome for asylum seekers. Decisions about a person's refugee status are made on the merits of an individual's case and have nothing to do with where a person is accommodated.