

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING: 13 FEBRUARY 2012

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(AE12/0039) Program: Internal Product

Senator Cash asked:

Does the Department have a policy in relation to the manner in which authorised Officers are required to respond to media enquiries? If yes, please provide a copy. Is there a penalty applicable to a breach of this policy? If so, what is the penalty?

Answer:

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship's policy, wherever possible, is to respond to media in a timely fashion and often an initial response is provided within 60 minutes. This is not a formal policy but it is the department's best practice model. There is no penalty for not meeting this best practice model.

The following points are published on the department's intranet to provide guidance to staff providing information to the National Communications Branch for compiling media responses:

- *When staff members are approached by National Communications Branch for help in answering a media inquiry, every effort must be made to provide the information needed, including statistics and other data, with a maximum turnaround of 60 minutes. (If only an interim holding line is available within that timeframe, this will suffice in some circumstances.) They must also ensure the material is appropriately cleared in their work area as quickly as possible.*
- *It is the responsibility of staff to ensure they are aware of clearance requirements in their work area so that National Communications Branch can be confident that material supplied has been appropriately cleared.*
- *National Communications Branch aims to respond to all media inquiries within 60 minutes.*
- *All inquiries must be handled promptly, with respect for media deadlines to try and ensure timely and balanced reporting of portfolio issues. However, the accuracy of information should not be compromised and the provisions of the Privacy Act will be scrupulously observed by National Communications Branch.*