

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING: 13 FEBRUARY 2012

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(AE12/0268) Program 3.1: Border Management

Senator Cash asked:

New Zealand citizens: What is the status of the pilot scheme whereby policy will be able to carry out instant criminal checks? What role is the department playing, if any, in this pilot?

Answer:

On 29 January 2012, the Prime Minister, the Hon Julia Gillard MP, and her New Zealand counterpart, the Rt Hon John Key MP, agreed to enhance the reciprocal sharing of criminal history information for employment vetting purposes. This involves a plan for an initial six month trial with Queensland to test how consistent and systematic requests for criminal history checks for employment purposes can be facilitated between Australia and New Zealand.

The Prime Ministers also announced that officials will accelerate existing efforts to share criminal history information for border control and law enforcement purposes.

At the Commonwealth-level, the trial to exchange criminal history information for employment vetting purposes will be led by the Attorney-General's Department. DIAC will be a stakeholder in this trial as it may have relevance for the efforts to share criminal history information for border control purposes.

The trial is intended to examine how criminal history information may be exchanged in a more systematic manner. The trial aims to accomplish this by establishing more automated processes around requesting, and processing of, criminal history information between Australia and NZ. Any new processes will still involve making enquires with jurisdictions to obtain relevant information and the application of spent convictions (Australia) and clean slate (NZ) legislation.

Regarding the exchange of information for border security purposes, DIAC will work closely with agencies in Australia and New Zealand to explore options to further enhance arrangements that prevent the entry and stay of criminals in our respective countries.