

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING: 13 FEBRUARY 2012

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(AE12/0403) Program 4.2: Onshore Detention Network

Senator Cash asked:

1. Have any former detainees who had arrived by boat been employed as interpreters to work in immigration detention centres for current detainees?
2. What safeguards are put in place to ensure such people are not 'coaching' detainees in their asylum applications?
3. Please provide a code of conduct for interpreters. Have any interpreters been sanctioned for breaching this code?

Answer:

1. The Department does not have a policy that prevents former detainees being added to the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) national panel of interpreters. Interpreters must be Australian citizens or permanent residents, have the appropriate skills - National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) accreditation where this is available - and display a knowledge of, and ability to apply, the Australian Institute for Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT) Code of Ethics.

While information about an interpreter's immigration history is not recorded by the Department, it is reasonable to assume that a number of interpreters may have personal experiences of immigration detention.

2. Interpreters should never be in a position where they are alone with clients in detention. Interpreters should only interact with clients when a DIAC, detention or health provider staff member is also present.

3. All interpreters deployed by TIS National are bound by the AUSIT Code of Ethics, which has been developed in consultation with NAATI.

During the 2011 calendar year the Department provided eight notices for early termination of deployment, following breaches of the AUSIT Code of Ethics. One interpreter was, in part, terminated because of complaints that she was advocating for clients. No assignments were terminated during 2011 for 'coaching' detainees.