

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 21-22 May 2007

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(146) Output 1.5: Detention

Senator Bartlett asked:

What is the current number of former immigration detainees remaining in Australia who have been asked to pay for the cost of their detention since 2001?

How many of these have:

- Paid the amount in full,
- Are in process of paying the amount, and
- Have not paid any amount?

What percentage of these detainees have received:

- permanent protection visas;
- temporary protection visas; or
- other categories of visas?

Please provide a percentage breakdown of all visa classes, including countries of origin if possible.

Does the imposition of a detention debt have ramifications in regard to the credit rating of a person?

Answer:

As at 11 July 2007, there are in the order of 10,000 people residing in Australia who were former detainees.

The department recognises the Refugee Convention of 1951 not to penalise asylum seekers, including those holding visas such as Temporary Protection, Protection or Special Global Humanitarian. In these instances, the department records the debt but does not issue an invoice or pursue the debt. These debts are written off.

All other detainees, who are detained for more than one night, are liable for the costs of detention.

In respect of detention debtors where judicial review is pending the department suspends recovery until all litigation has ceased.

It is too resource intensive for the department to manually analyse individual receipt and payment arrangements for all former detainees to determine the information at the level of detail requested. However, the department can advise that it has written off 93% of all the detention debt raised between 1 July 2000 and 30 June 2006.

Approximately 30% of former detainees still in Australia have received permanent protection visas. Approximately 3% of former detainees have received temporary protection visas. The balance is spread across other visa classes, the most significant being bridging visas at approximately 18%.

The department is unable to provide detailed information by visa class by country of origin. However, the department can advise that for former detainees on permanent

protection visas, the most significant countries of origin are Afghanistan, with approximately 4%, Iraq, with approximately 2% and stateless persons with approximately 4%.

Detention debts do not affect an individual's credit rating because no information about the existence of an individual debt is released to outside agencies.