

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 27-28 MAY 2009

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(88) Program 5.1: Settlement Services for Migrants and Refugees

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

Is DIAC aware of Minister Tanner's Media Release of 9 December 2008 relating to transparency in grant allocations? What measures did the Department put in place prior to the recommendations of the Auditor-General's report to ensure transparency in the decision making process concerning the allocation of funding? Describe the particular measures which the Department had in place prior to the Auditor-General's report, to ensure transparency when dealing with funding allocations in the Minister's or Parliamentary Secretary's own electorate?

Answer:

The Department is aware of Minister Tanner's Media Release of 9 December 2008 relating to transparency in grant allocations.

The processes the Department had in place prior to the Auditor General's report were consistent with the guidelines relating to grants as provided by the Department of Finance and Deregulation. The report of the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) did not raise concerns over the broad administration of the process, but rather highlighted a shortcoming relating to documentation in a small number of additional grants provided as a result of increases in the appropriation for settlement grants.

The Department agreed with the ANAO that its documentation of key factors contributing to SGP grants allocation decisions relating to additional funding was not adequate for the 2008-09 round. While all funding decisions were evidence-based, it is clear that more explicit documentation was required in these instances. This element of documentation has been improved for the 2009-10 round and will be followed in all future funding rounds.

The Department accepts the importance of documenting any consideration as a measure to improve transparency around the decision-making process. Consequently guidance around this issue has been enhanced in the SGP Assessment Guide.