

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 26 - 27 MAY 2010

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(124) Program 2.1: Refugee and Humanitarian Assistance

Senator Hanson-Young asked:

- (1) How does Australia participate in IOM's governance?
- (2) How does the government ensure that IOM's work, particularly work specifically funded by Australia in Indonesia, meets Australia's human rights obligations?
 - Are human rights among the "interests" that the government advocates in its participation in IOM's governance?
- (3) What specific demands has Australia made to IOM regarding the protection of human rights of individuals, particularly asylum seekers and refugees, within its care?
 - Standards of detention?
 - Ensuring non-refoulement?

Answer:

(1) Australia is a member state of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), an international organisation based in Geneva committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society.

Australia actively engages in IOM's governance mechanisms, including through the IOM Council, Standing Committee on Programmes and Finance (SCPF) and Executive Committee. As the main governing body for policy, strategy and governance discussions and decisions, Australia's involvement in IOM Council serves two important functions. Firstly, it provides the forum to discuss issues with member states, such as the governance and direction of IOM as a whole. Secondly, through the International Dialogue on Migration, it allows Australia to engage in a range of strategic policy issues and assists states to identify areas of common interest.

The SCPF discusses different financial and programmatic issues related to the activities and projects of the IOM, for example, human resources, structural reform and budget allocation. Australia also attends the meetings of the Executive Committee and follows its operation closely.

Australia also utilises IOM policy and governance dialogues to encourage the IOM and its members to seek practical solutions to migration issues, including in the Asia-Pacific region. Australia seeks to maintain a productive and useful relationship with the organisation through a broad range of engagements in Australia, at posts and at IOM headquarters in Geneva.

(2) The agreement between the IOM, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) and the Government of Indonesia is confidential between the parties.

(3) Australian funding of IOM in Indonesia is in line with the IOM Constitution, which recognises and respects the individual's human rights. The funding is provided to improve the standard of immigration detention facilities in Indonesia, to provide food, accommodation, emergency medical assistance and counselling, and to undertake a voluntary return program.

IOM refers any claims for protection to the Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for assessment.