

## **QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE**

### **BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 23-24 MAY 2011**

#### **IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO**

#### **(BE11/0229) Program 2.1: Refugee and Humanitarian Assistance**

Senator Cash asked:

What is the reason for the increase in processing time for IMAs?

*Answer:*

There are a number of reasons for the increase in processing times for Irregular Maritime Arrivals (IMAs) including:

- increased number of IMAs in 2010 as compared to 2009;
- the lead times to recruit, train and mentor additional staff to be fully operational in refugee status assessments at both the primary and review stages;
- changing country of origin information leading to changes in complexity of assessments for clients seeking asylum;
- the suspension of processing for the Sri Lankan (three months) and Afghan (six months) client cohorts in 2010;
- the processing of security assessments; and
- responding to the High Court of Australia decision of 11 November 2010.

Consistent with the government's announcement following the High Court's decision of 11 November 2010, the protection obligations determination (POD) process was implemented on 1 March 2011, to allow for a faster initial assessment by a departmental officer.

On 15 March 2011, following a review of security assessment procedures for IMAs, the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) and the Department implemented a more efficient process for IMA security assessments.