

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 23 MAY 2011

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(BE11/0587) Program 4.3: Offshore Asylum Seeker Management

Senator Cash (L&CA 102) asked:

When was the decision made to treat the \$129.971 million as an estimates variation, as opposed to putting it in the budget papers as a budget measure?

Answer:

The estimates variation was agreed between DIAC and the Department of Finance and Deregulation during the 2011-12 Budget process and is consistent with the normal processes for estimates variations which are included in the Budget each year.

The provision for an offshore facility was treated as an estimates variation as it represented an operational decision likely to occur during the 2011-12 financial year. Specifically, funds provisioned for the processing of Irregular Maritime Arrivals within Australia may instead be diverted to processing some of the caseload offshore if a Government agreement was reached.

If a capital injection was required to construct a new facility onshore or offshore it would be reflected as a new measure. Operational costs for existing caseloads are traditionally handled as estimates variations.