

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 23-24 MAY 2011

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(BE11/0627) Program 4.3: Offshore Asylum Seeker Management

Senator Cash asked:

With reference to the incident where immigration officials were forced to take asylum-seekers off a flight from Christmas Island to the mainland after the charter pilot expressed concern some had not passed health checks. Did the health check, check for TB and if not, why not?

Answer:

Testing for TB is included in the Health Induction Assessment (HIA) that all clients undergo, including these 12 clients.

TB testing includes:

- A TB questionnaire, to determine if the client has symptoms of acute TB infection;
- A physical examination by the GP; and
- A chest x-ray (CXR), which is reviewed by the radiologist and the GP.

The screening process includes a CXR for all clients, except those under 12 years of age and those who are pregnant (a urine pregnancy test is carried out and the result documented prior to the CXR being conducted).

The final health check is for a reported CXR confirming no active TB.

The 12 clients taken off the flight were exhibiting no signs or symptoms of active TB. While they had not yet had their CXR results confirmed, there was minimal risk that these people had active TB, and hence no clients were at risk of being exposed to active TB or of contracting the disease by being on the same plane as these individuals.