

## QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

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

#### IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

#### **(BE11/0638) Program 4.3: Offshore Asylum Seeker Management**

Senator Cash asked:

In relation to concerns raised by Captain Bennett, the Our Airline charter pilot, were the remaining asylum seekers advised that they had been potentially exposed to TB? If not, why not?

*Answer:*

Active TB is most commonly spread by continuous close contact (such as living in the same household) or by coughing exposure over an extended period of time, usually of more than eight hours duration (World Health Organization 1998).

The 12 clients who left the plane prior to departure were free of respiratory symptoms, including signs of any cough, and had undergone Health Induction Assessments, which had found no signs or symptoms of active TB. It is acknowledged that chest x-ray results, which later confirmed this diagnosis, were outstanding at the time the clients were intended to be moved.

There was minimal risk that the remaining 82 clients on the flight were at any time exposed to active TB from these 12 clients having been on the plane, whether or not they had remained on the flight. On this basis, there is no medical reason why the remaining 82 clients who took the flight would be told of any potential exposure to TB.