

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 21-22 MAY 2012

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(BE12/0056) Program: Internal Product

Senator Cash asked:

Media visit: Can you confirm that the deed of arrangement the department requires journalists and media organisations to sign prior to visiting detention centres was “informed by...the current US Department of Defence media access policy for its detention facility at Guantanamo Bay”?

Answer:

The department consulted extensively with other organisations and in-confidence with working media in the development of this final policy. Suggestions the policy is “based” on the US Defense Department’s procedures for media access to its Guantanamo Bay facility are false. The department consulted widely across a range of media policies before developing the current approach.

In an on-air report from Inverbrackie APOD in early 2011, ABC 7.30's Leigh Sales specifically referred to her visit to Guantanamo Bay in Cuba where she reported on prisoners’ experiences, with the cooperation of US Defense authorities. She compared this with the department’s refusal to grant her access to detainee client families at Inverbrackie.

On this basis, the Guantanamo Bay document was one of a number of documents that was assessed in updating the department's media access policy before its release in October 2011.