

## QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

### BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 21-22 MAY 2012

#### IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

#### **(BE12/0225) Program 1.1: Visa and Migration**

Senator Boyce asked:

As a result of a Freedom of Information application abridged copies of discussions between DOHA and the Department of Immigration and Citizenship have just been released. In this document there are references to issues that relate to serious and I quote "public health risk". Can you provide us the complete detail of any event that related to a "public health threat" emanating from migration matters since 2007? (Document reference) The DS-level meeting on 19 March 2009 noted that: "...most reponses from DoHA are timely and comprehensive... Advised that a couple of issues did take longer than the prescribed time [but the issues were complex (public health threat) and required external input]... our first request took a significant time to be responded to and then follow-ups were required."

*Answer:*

Australia has a system of identifying travellers at the border with key symptoms and assessing them for diseases of concern. This surveillance is undertaken on approximately 70,000 flights into Australia each year and on all travellers, irrespective of whether they are Australian citizens, visitors or migrants. Australians account for almost half of all passenger movements<sup>1</sup>. Travellers identified through this surveillance are referred for assessment and treatment by state and territory health services.

While diseases may be imported from overseas, they can be carried by people who display no symptoms or can manifest many years after migration. The identification and management of communicable diseases in migrants and travellers after arrival in Australia is the responsibility of state and territory health authorities. Once a person is diagnosed with a disease listed on the National Notifiable Diseases List, the health authority reports the cases to the National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System (NNDSS). This reporting does not include information on each case's migration status. Therefore it is not possible to link notified cases to migration matters.

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<sup>1</sup> National Passenger Facilitation Committee, Summer 2012 – Forecast Passenger Movements