

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 1 November 2005

IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

(168) Output 1.3: Enforcement of Immigration Law

Senator Ludwig asked :

Did the Department have any contact with the Identity Checking Unit in Afghanistan in relation to the Bakhtiyari family? If so, what was the nature of the contact??

Answer:

The Identity Checking Unit (IDCU) is an agency of the Afghan Government that provides identity verification services for the Afghan Government. The Afghan Embassy advises the department of its findings in relation to identity investigations, but does not provide it with the IDCU reports.

The department refers cases to the Afghan Embassy in Australia for identification first. If the Afghan Embassy in Australia is not able to identify an individual, it sends information that could be used to confirm a person's identity and Afghan nationality to the IDCU in Kabul.

Based on advice from the Afghan Embassy in Australia, the IDCU undertakes the following investigations:

Kabul-based investigation: The information provided is assessed against all Ministry of Interior records to search for a match, any photos and fingerprints are checked and a forgery analysis of applicable documents is undertaken. If a positive match is made, the investigation ends. If a match is not made, the investigation continues to the provincial level.

Provincial investigation: The information provided is assessed against any provincial records. If a positive match is made, the investigation ends. If a match is not made, the investigation continues to the local level.

Local investigation: The information provided is assessed against any local records and through an examination of local knowledge. If a positive match is made, the investigation ends. If a match is not made a negative outcome is returned to the Afghan Embassy in Australia. An identity investigation can be reopened at any point, if more information about the person's claimed identity becomes available.

A positive identification would include a Kabul based investigation and if need be a provincial and local investigation.

An investigation that has a negative outcome needs to be exhausted in Kabul and at the provincial and local levels. As such the time and operational resources required to produce a negative identification are often substantially more than a positive identification.

Once an applicant's identity is either verified or denied by the IDCU, the results of the identification check are transferred from the IDCU back to the Afghan Embassy in Australia. The Embassy then produces a Statement of Identity that states either:

- “that the following individual is a national of Afghanistan“; or
- “that on the balance of probabilities the person in question may not be an Afghan national“.