**QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE**

**SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING:   1 November 2005**

IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

**(235) Output 2.3:   Australian Citizenship**

Senator Ludwig asked:

1.       What information does the Department collect which is utilised by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade?
(a) How is this information stored, maintained and accessed?
(b) Does DFAT access this remotely or through DIMIA?

2.       In relation to Mr Harry Seidler was incorrectly recorded as a non-citizen for a number of years, yet was issued a passport by DFAT during this period…
(a) What information database was accessed to determine Mr Seidler's status?
(b) Who is responsible for the integrity of the information used to issue Mr Seidler's passport, DFAT or DIMIA?
(c) How was Mr Seidler issued an Australian passport even though DIMIA records showed he was a non-citizen?
(d) Has this ever happened before? If yes, when, who and how?
(e) Has the Department conducted an investigation to determine whether this has occurred before?
(f) Can DFAT issue a passport or travel document without cross checking with DIMIA?
(g) Has DIMIA requested travel documents for an individual in a name and identity different to one which it had previously requested, and where the original identity documents were not cancelled?  If yes, is it common practice to request different identity documents from DFAT for the one individual?
(h) What measures have been taken to ensure that an Australian passport is not issued to a non-citizen again?

3.       Is the cost of maintaining the database accessed by DFAT a cost to DIMIA or is there a cost recovery from DFAT for access and maintenance?

*Answer*:

1(a) and (b)     Since 1999, DIMIA has provided the Department Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) with an extract from its citizenship database, which is stored in the Integrated Client Services Environment system (ICSE).  The extract provides DFAT with updated information held by DIMIA on the acquisition and loss of Australian citizenship.  The extract provided to DFAT includes details of personal particulars, such as given and family names, date and country of birth and gender to establish the identity of the citizen or former citizen.

Information on how extracts from the DIMIA citizenship database are stored and maintained by DFAT should be referred to DFAT.

2(a)-(f), (h)     As the agency responsible for the issue of passports, DFAT is best placed to respond to these questions.

(g)    A search of our records show that two persons were in the community on Bridging Visa Es on the basis that they were making arrangements to depart Australia.  They were instructed to seek Certificates of Identity from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) to facilitate their departure.  These were issued on 21 June 2004, but subsequently cancelled.

Subsequent to receiving their Certificates of Identity, the Department established that the two persons had provided false and misleading information in relation to their identities.  The Department requested that DFAT issue Certificates of Identity in what we believe to be their true names.  These were issued on 24 November 2004, but subsequently returned to DFAT and cancelled.

In due course, if Certificates of Identity are required to effect a removal of these two persons, the Department will seek such certificates from DFAT in what we believe to be their true identities.

The Department has not [knowingly] requested different identity documents from DFAT for the one individual.  The cases mentioned above were the first occasion where the Department sought Certificates of Identity for persons who had previously applied for Certificates of Identity in what we believe to be false identities.

3.    DIMIA bears the cost of maintaining the citizenship database.  DIMIA does not recover its costs for data transfer to DFAT.