

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 1 November 2005

IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

(39) Output 1.2: Refugee and Humanitarian Entry and Stay

Senator Hurley (L&C 98) asked:

Does DIMIA have any way of checking whether sponsors under the Humanitarian Program have the capability to assist their relatives in the way that you describe?

Answer:

The offshore component of the Humanitarian Program comprises two categories: the Refugee category and the Special Humanitarian Program (SHP). The SHP visa is granted to those persons who, while not meeting the Refugee criteria are nevertheless recognised as those who would benefit from resettlement because of their links with Australia. These links are required to be demonstrated in the form of a 'proposal' from an Australian citizen, permanent resident or a body operating in Australia. These arrangements are different to sponsorship under the family migration stream.

The person or organisation supporting the applicant is called a proposer and indicates a willingness to:

- help the applicant as necessary to pay for travel to Australia;
- meet the entrant at the airport on arrival;
- provide the entrant with initial accommodation;
- familiarise the entrant with services and service providers such as Centrelink, banks, public transport, Translating and Interpreting services and health care; and
- help the entrant find long-term accommodation.

Therefore there is an expectation that a certain degree of support would be provided by the proposer.

While a completed form 681 'proposal' is a legal requirement for a SHP visa, it is not a legal undertaking by the proposer to provide assistance to the entrant. The purpose of the proposal is to assist in the identification of people in need of humanitarian resettlement under the Humanitarian Program with links to Australia and to understand the potential level of support available to the applicant.

Although contact is generally made with a proposer to confirm their willingness to assist and for proposers to understand that commitment, no formal assessment of the proposer's capacity to provide support to the entrant is required under the Migration Regulations. The information provided by the proposer in form 681 and orally to departmental officers and to Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS) service providers, helps to determine the level of support that the entrant is likely to receive from the proposer. Services provided under the IHSS are provided on a needs basis and includes Case Coordination, Information and Referrals. This involves a case coordination plan based on an initial needs assessment; information about and referral to other service providers and mainstream agencies; and help for proposers to fulfil their role of assisting SHP entrants.