

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 1 November 2005

IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

(86) Output 1.3: Enforcement of Immigration Law

Senator Kirk asked:

In evidence presented to the Migration Inquiry, Tamara Domicelj from the Asylum Seekers Centre in Sydney, spoke at length about the hardships experienced by asylum seekers released on bridging visas who are ineligible for Centrelink, Medicare or any other forms of assistance, and that people are released without a single contact number or money to make a phone call, including the case of a man who had been sleeping for over 2 weeks at Central Station, without a word of English, after having spent two years in Detention.

The Asylum Seekers Centre has been asking for some time for people released to be given a list of names and numbers of charitable organisations to go to for help.

What reasons does DIMIA have for not doing this? Does DIMIA have a policy on this?

Answer:

DIMIA provides immediate practical assistance to all detainees when discharged, including assisting with travel arrangements, providing sufficient food, clothing and footwear and medical check-ups.

It is not currently DIMIA policy to provide all persons released from detention centres with the contact details of charitable organisations. People are released from detention under a range of circumstances. Each person has different support networks within the community available to them upon release and not all detainees require assistance. However, where it is apparent that a person being released from detention may require support of a charitable group, government agency or other organisations, DIMIA staff provide contact details of such groups to the detainee prior to release.

People released from detention on Removal Pending Bridging Visas are entitled to support benefits including work rights and job matching, access to Medicare benefits, eligibility for Special Benefit and associated payments.

Specific financial assistance is also available to eligible protection visa applicants living in the community to cover basic needs that they are otherwise unable to meet themselves.