QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE
SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 1 November 2005

IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

(95) Output 1.3:   Enforcement of Immigration Law

Senator Kirk asked:

What is DIMIA doing to improve the mental health outcomes of detainees?

Answer:

DIMIA is implementing the recommendations of the Palmer Report to improve the mental health outcomes of detainees.

Environmental Change

Wide-ranging changes to buildings infrastructure at Baxter Immigration Detention Facility (IDF) and other detention facilities are being pursued.

At Baxter IDF enhancements include new sports facilities such as a floodlit oval with soccer and hockey pitches, a basketball hard court and volleyball turf court. Detainees will also have the opportunity to participate in additional outside activities such as local outings for fishing expeditions, attending sporting games and shopping.

Mental Health Screening and Assessment

Mental health services at Baxter IDF have been increased and there is now a multidisciplinary mental health team. This team comprises of two mental health nurses, psychologist, senior counselor, general practitioner and psychiatrist. The mental health nurses are available at all times. A psychiatrist visits on a fortnightly basis, or more frequently if required.

The enhanced mental health capacity at Baxter is being rolled out as a 'pilot' and will be adapted to fit the population characteristics of other IDFs. Agreement has been reached on a project management strategy to start this process at other IDFs ahead of necessary building work that will be needed to accommodate measures to protect the mental health and wellbeing of detainees.
The strategies aim to have full implementation by early in 2006.

DIMIA has established a Health Service Delivery group, involving GSL and its sub contractors International Health and Medical Services and Professional Support Services (psychologists), together with input from the Immigration Detention Advisory Group, to oversee this process.