

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 20 OCTOBER 2009

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(28) Program 2.1: Refugee and Humanitarian Assistance

Senator Hanson-Young (L&CA 66) asked:

Is it your understanding that the UNHCR has been refused access to Tamil refugee camps by the Sri Lankan government? Could you please take that on notice—the reports that the UNHCR has been refused access to these internally displaced camps by the Sri Lankan government?

Answer:

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship has not received information stating that the UNHCR is being refused access by the Sri Lankan government to Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps.

Advice from the UN Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to the Australian Government, as recently as 26 October 2009, stated that the UN currently appears to have access to all areas where resettlement is taking place. Other recent reports indicate that the Sri Lankan government has stated it will provide UN agencies with full access in the north where the new transit sites and resettlement areas for returnees are located. Reports from UNHCR also state improved access to camps in Vavuniya in the north of Sri Lanka, and that they have access to the transit sites and resettlement areas.