

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 20 OCTOBER 2009

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(99) Program 4.3: Offshore Asylum Seeker Management

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

Does the decision to move juveniles from Christmas Island to the Melbourne Detention Centre before their processing has been completed represent a change in Government policy? If not, why has this been done?

Note: The juveniles in question were transferred to the Melbourne Immigration Transit Accommodation, not a detention centre.

Answer:

No. Government policy is that all irregular maritime arrivals are processed on Christmas Island.

Groups or individuals are moved to immigration accommodation on the mainland for a variety of reasons, such as facilitating health care, gaining access to particular support services, or prioritising processing of particularly vulnerable groups such as unaccompanied minors.

Decisions on mainland relocations are made on a case-by-case basis, depending on individual needs and in consultation with all relevant agencies. All individuals remain in secure detention arrangements until health, identity and security issues are resolved. Offshore entry people will retain that status even if transferred to the mainland.

Transfers of this nature have occurred from time to time in previous years. There were 61 occasions when people were transferred from the Nauru and Manus offshore processing centres to Australia. The reasons for transfer were either for medical or legal, or to accompany a family member transferred for these reasons.