

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 19 OCTOBER 2010

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(108) Program 5.1: AMEP / Settlement Services for Migrants and Refugees

Senator Cash (L&CA 112) asked:

Provide a list of all of the translation services that are available to migrants and humanitarian entrants when they come here.

Answer:

The Australian Government's Access and Equity Strategy encourages all Commonwealth agencies to design and deliver their services in a way that is accessible and responsive to cultural and linguistic diversity. This includes being responsive to the needs of clients who have limited English language skills.

This obligation extends to services delivered through third party providers.

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) provides the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) for people who do not speak English and for the English speakers who need to communicate with them. TIS National is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week on a fee for service basis for any person or organisation in Australia requiring interpreting services.

The Department, through TIS National provides free interpreting services to approved individuals and organisations to help them communicate with non-English speaking migrants and humanitarian entrants who are Australian citizens or permanent residents. Free services are available to:

- private medical practitioners providing services under Medicare
- non-profit, non-government, community-based organisations providing settlement services and casework (subject to their funding arrangements)
- Members of Parliament for constituency purposes
- local government authorities
- Emergency Management Australia
- pharmacies for the purpose of dispensing PBS medications.

The Department also provides a free translations service to permanent residents and some temporary visa holders within their first two years of arrival or grant of permanent residence. Returning Australian citizens may also be eligible for a free translation service within two years of returning to Australia to settle permanently.

Documents eligible for free translation include settlement-related personal documents, identity and relationship documents (for example, birth and marriage certificates), facilitation documents (for example, drivers licences), and education and employment documents.

In addition to the Access and Equity Strategy for Commonwealth Agencies, long standing arrangements require state and territory government agencies to make provisions for interpreters in the services and programs they deliver.