

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 19 OCTOBER 2010

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(117) Program 6.1: Multicultural and Citizenship Services

Senator Barnett (L&CA 116) asked:

The Bible Society of Tasmania has provided Bibles to various councils in Tasmania and they are given as gifts to new citizens at citizenship ceremonies. Would that particular form of providing gifts to new citizens be banned?

Answer:

Citizenship ceremonies are conducted in accordance with the Australian Citizenship Ceremonies Code (the Code) which provides guidance for organisations conducting citizenship ceremonies.

According to the Code:

“Citizenship ceremonies are apolitical, bipartisan and secular. They must not be used as forums for political, partisan or religious expression or for the distribution of material which could be perceived to be of a political or religious nature.”

This has been the case since 2003.

As Australian citizenship ceremonies are secular in nature it is not appropriate for organisations hosting citizenship ceremonies to give holy books as gifts or to insist that candidates make the pledge on a particular holy book.