

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 19 OCTOBER 2010

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(133) Program 2.1: Refugee and Humanitarian Assistance

Senator Abetz asked:

(1) How many Chinese have come to Australia on legitimate visas, overstayed and in 2008, 2009 and 2010 subsequently claimed refugee status? What have been the lengths of time between the expiry of their visas and their claims being lodged?

(2) Does the Department have any figures or an estimate of how many Chinese in this situation have been working "underground" since their arrival?

(3) When they claim refugee status what assistance do they qualify for in terms of (a) housing (b) social security (c) other?

(4) For 2008, 2009 and 2010 how many such claims have been (a) successful (b) unsuccessful?

Answer:

(1) Historical point-in-time information about the lawfulness of Protection visa applicants at the time of application is not readily available in consolidated form and it would be a major task to assemble it. The practice of successive governments has been not to authorise the expenditure of time and money involved in such assembly.

(2) See answer to (1) above.

(3) While a person's claim for protection is being assessed they have no access to Centrelink benefits. The Asylum Seeker Assistance (ASA) Scheme was established to assist this group of people. The ASA Scheme is administered by the Australian Red Cross and provides financial help to those unable to meet their most basic needs for food, accommodation and health care. The ASA Scheme is also able to assist in meeting torture and trauma counselling costs.

Where a person has been found to be a refugee, they are eligible for a permanent protection visa. This entitles refugees to the same income support payments as other Australian permanent residents and citizens.

(4) See answer to (1) above.