

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 19 OCTOBER 2010

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(139) Program 1.1: Visa and Migration

Senator Cash asked:

What was the underlying public policy for the establishment of centres of excellence?

Answer:

Centres of Excellence were first established in July 2008 following a recommendation by the Financial Health Check conducted by the Department of Finance and Deregulation (DoFD) and DIAC.

The Health Check was designed to position the department for a sustainable future in terms of financial viability, modern service delivery practice and evidence-based policy development. The subsequent Financial Health Check Implementation Group used the Health Check findings as the basis for recommending a range of efficiency measures across the department's operations. These measures targeted improvements in business processes, reduction of duplication and general cost savings.

A major recommendation from the project was greater devolution of service delivery work to the service delivery network, the establishment of centres of excellence and other caseload processing hubs.

The creation of Centres of Excellence (COEs) was designed to ensure:

- 1) greater consistency in decision making by having similar processing work done in larger centres of excellence where best practice could be shared for particular business lines more readily, training and mentoring conducted more frequently by experts in the COEs;
- 2) streamlined business processes leading to greater efficiencies, more timely and responsive client service, and reduced backlogs;
- 3) an increase number of applications finalised within service standards; and
- 4) improved program integrity.