

## QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

### SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 19 OCTOBER 2010

#### IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

#### **(333) Program 4.3: Offshore Asylum Seeker Management**

Senator Cash asked:

(1) According to the latest available figures on people in detention provided on 13 August 2010, there are 339 Afghan males under the age of 18 currently detained. How confident is the department that these males are in fact under the age of 18 years?

(2) What tests are carried out to ensure that adults are not posing as children?

*Answer:*

Determining age is an important element in the process to establish a person's identity and therefore an important part of ensuring the integrity of the Department's processing arrangements and the level of care provided to clients.

Where it is not clear whether a client is over or under 18 years of age, the Department seeks to establish this through focused interviewing to determine the most likely age of the client and by working with clients to obtain their identity documents. The detention health services provider can also provide advice as part of the determination.

Circumstances in which it may not be clear whether a client is over or under 18 years of age include where the client is themselves uncertain about their age or where the client claims to be a minor but the Department has doubts about their age.

Other ways in which the Department tests and verifies claims in relation to age includes by contacting family members through contact details provided by clients. When these checks are undertaken, departmental officers identify themselves and explain the reasons for the calls. Interpreters may assist in this process. Checking of claims is undertaken in accordance with the Department's obligations under the *Privacy Act 1988*.