

## QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

### SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 19 OCTOBER 2010

#### IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

#### **(354) Program 3.1: Border Management**

Senator Cash asked:

(1) What biometric tools have been trialled or are scheduled to be trialled for potential use at Australian airports and seaports?

(2) What policies are in place to protect the privacy of travellers and prevent airport workers from misusing security equipment?

*Answer:*

(1) During 2005 - 2006, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) sponsored a project trialling the use of biometrics in selected DIAC activities. One of the areas chosen for the trials was Sydney Kingsford Smith Airport. DIAC trialled a solution to acquire fingerprints, facial images and iris scans. This project was part of a wider Federal Government identity management initiative involving DIAC, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service (Customs and Border Protection). A number of recommendations were derived as a result of the trials and these helped inform our use of biometric tools in other DIAC activities.

DIAC is working with Customs and Border Protection to model the impact of biometric collection at the border with analysis to be completed this financial year.

(2) Part 4A of the *Migration Act 1958* and the *Privacy Act 1988* contain legislative provisions protecting the privacy of biometric and other identity information provided to the department by Australian visa applicants. Procedural advice for staff administering these provisions is set out in the Procedures Advice Manual (PAM) 'Identity information – Access and Disclosure'. Essentially, these regulate biometric data collection, storage, disposal, access and disclosure to ensure privacy is protected. Personnel working at airports cannot access security equipment containing or revealing biometric data, as DIAC does not have such equipment located at our airports.

Customs and Border Protection operates the SmartGate automated border processing system at major Australian international airports. Customs and Border Protection officers adhere to the legislative provisions contained within the *Customs Administration Act 1985* and the *Privacy Act 1988* in relation to the collection, storage, disposal, access and disclosure of biometric data and personal identifiers.

The *Privacy Act 1988* requires that Customs and Border Protection must:

- only obtain data required to process passengers and aircrew across the border;
- store data securely and accurately; and

- use or disclose data only for the purpose for which it was collected or as otherwise required or authorised by law.

The Office of the Privacy Commissioner (OPC) has assumed active involvement in the SmartGate Program from its inception in mid 2005. OPC undertook a detailed privacy audit and advised Customs and Border Protection on how to collect and store information. OPC has conducted a series of subsequent audits and Customs and Border Protection continues to work closely with OPC to ensure SmartGate adheres to all privacy requirements.

An assessment of the necessary security and privacy controls will be included as part of the work to model the impact of biometric collection at the border.