

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 17 OCTOBER 2011

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(SE11/0202) Program 2.1: Refugee and Humanitarian Assistance

Senator Cash asked:

What is the Department doing in relation to negotiating return arrangements with countries such as Iran and Iraq?

Answer.

As part of an Australian Government delegation to Iran in early 2011, the Department participated in a number of discussions about a range of border issues with Iran, including involuntary return of failed asylum seekers. The Department continues to explore avenues of facilitating involuntary return to Iran.

In addition, the Minister has met with his international counterparts to discuss comparative approaches, as well as potentially collaborative approaches, to effecting involuntary removals to countries such as Iran. Ongoing dialogue is also taking place between responsible departments and agencies in like-minded countries to explore options for increasing involuntary returns of failed asylum seekers.

It is worth noting that Iranian irregular maritime arrivals have made up the largest national cohort of IMAs who have returned home voluntarily since 2008.

The Department continues to engage with Iraqi officials to determine ways of facilitating involuntary return.