

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 17 OCTOBER 2011

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(SE11/0391) Program 4.3: Offshore Asylum Seeker Management

Senator Cash asked: Christmas Island: Is the Department aware of allegations in the media that inexperienced workers, some as young as 17, have been put on the front line of riots and other violence management control situations?

Answer:

At one point during the unrest on Christmas Island in March, members of the administrative staff were asked to observe movements of clients from beyond the perimeter of the Aqua and Lilac compound. They were asked to take part in two vehicle patrols and were not required to leave their vehicle at any point. Their role was simply to observe and report.

The perimeter itself was manned by Client Service Officers. The administrative staff members were outside that perimeter and not in client-facing roles. At no time were the staff members in immediate danger of harm. A response plan was in place to ensure the safety of staff had there been any escalation of the situation.

Serco has advised that the decision to deploy staff in this way occurred in extreme circumstances, and that it has not and will not be repeated.