

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 17 OCTOBER 2011

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(SE11/0423) Program 3.1: Border Management

Senator Eggleston (Foreign Affairs, Defence & Trade Legislation Committee) asked:

- a) What is the passport status of persons who enter Australia by air then claim refugee status?
- b) How many of these individuals have forged passports?
- c) How is the true identity of these individuals determined?

Answer:

- a) DIAC systems data for Protection visa applicants does not always include information about documentation and it is therefore not possible to reliably report on air arrivals who presented as undocumented after immigration clearance. Moreover, a proportion of applicants without recorded information about documentation would likely be children born subsequent to the grant of a visa to a parent.
- b) Figures on Protection visa applicants with fraudulent documents are not available from DIAC systems.
- c) In deciding whether there is a reasonable level of confidence about the person's identity, officers consider:
 - o Documentary evidence of identity, if any has been provided, and how easy it would be for this evidence to be fraudulently altered or fraudulently obtained.
 - o The degree to which any of the identity information provided by the person can be independently verified.
 - o Whether the information provided is consistent with the officer's understanding or knowledge of identity claims from those with a similar background.
 - o Whether systems checks confirm that Australia already holds records of the individual, that is, that there is information that the person has travelled to Australia before. These system checks include name based or biographic checks and biometric checks.

Immigration detainees and certain visa applicants, including Protection visa applicants, are required to provide a digital facial image and a scan of their fingerprints. This biometric data is checked against biometric records held by the department and Australian law enforcement agencies. Fingerprints are also checked against immigration databases in the United Kingdom, United States of America, New Zealand and Canada, to determine if the person has an immigration record or has previously applied for protection in those countries. These checks assist in verification of an individual's true identity.