



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

BILLS

Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2011-2012

Consideration in Detail

SPEECH

Wednesday, 15 June 2011

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

Date Wednesday, 15 June 2011
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Questioner
Speaker Morrison, Scott, MP

Source House
Proof No
Responder
Question No.

Mr MORRISON (Cook) (11:37): The coalition welcomes the increased skilled migration numbers that are in the budget. The coalition significantly increased skilled migration when we were in government, so any increase in skilled migration is also always welcome. But where I want to focus today is on a matter that the minister has not focused on in his opening statement. I would have thought he might have, because he is, I am sure, spending quite a bit of time trying to land a deal in Malaysia which, almost seven weeks later, has not yet been completed. My questions relate to that arrangement, and specifically to the funds that have been set aside in the budget. I refer to page 17 of the portfolio additional statements regarding administered expenses, and the item 'Regional Cooperation Framework—Transfer of Irregular Maritime Arrivals to Malaysia', which provides for \$65.7 million to be spent over four years in output class 4.3. Can the minister provide a breakdown of the amounts to be paid to the UNHCR, the IOM, any other NGOs and the Malaysian government and any agencies of that government, as well as the purpose of these payments—in other words, what are these payments paying for?

Secondly, what is the per capita payment being made for each of the 800 persons to be transferred to Malaysia to these various agencies, and are the payments for each person being made on a one-off basis upon their transfer or annually over a period of years? If the latter, how many years? Are the payments being made for those transferred intended to cover support for the entire duration of their stay in Malaysia or for a fixed period? If not for a fixed period, what is the estimated length of stay for all of those who are transferred to Malaysia?

What amounts have been set aside for any capital building or refurbishment works for facilities in Malaysia to accommodate people transferred to Malaysia under the deal, and where are those facilities? What is the nature of the works and how much will those works cost?

Can the minister advise whether within this funding envelope funding has been set aside for the training of the approximately half a million RELA members in Malaysia—the paramilitary civil volunteer corps formed by the Malaysia government—who are charged with enforcing illegal immigration in Malaysia, who have the power to search without a warrant, who can carry arms, who are paid on arrest and who have the ability to inflict all sorts of punishments? Has the minister provided in that funding envelope any package for training of those approximately half a million individuals to ensure that they do not abuse the human rights and liberties of any of the 800 people transferred to Malaysia?

Can the minister provide a breakdown of the \$65.7 million to be paid to support those transferred to Malaysia, specifically on health, education, accommodation, meals, transfers, including airfares, immigration processing—I should say refugee status assessment processing, but immigration processing to the extent that is required for their entry into Malaysia—and legal support? Will the \$65.7 million spent by the agencies receiving these funds be paid directly to service providers in areas such as health, education, accommodation and meals on a consumption basis or is it a fixed payment to the provider of those services with no reference to whether those services are actually used? How much of the \$65.7 million will be spent by the agencies receiving these payments on administration?

Finally, what audit processes have been put in place to monitor and report on the disbursement of funds in Malaysia provided under this arrangement to support those transferred to Malaysia? How will this government be reporting on the disbursement of those funds to this parliament? In particular, will they be subject to scrutiny by the Auditor-General? If so, when?

These questions go to how the money that has been set aside will be spent—not in generalities but in specifics. Who gets the money? What is it for? How will it be spent? How will it be audited? Will it support those 800 who are sent there on an ongoing basis or will it just be one lump, up-front payment and after that they will be on their own? These are the questions that I think it is necessary to answer. They involve the specifics of this arrangement so Australians can understand what exactly it is that the government is proposing with this arrangement. I look forward to the minister's answers.