

Consular - Australians in Syrian IDP camps

Key Messages

- The Australian Government is not repatriating Australians seeking to return from Syria.
- Australia's Security Agencies have confirmed they are prepared to respond to any self-managed returns from IDP camps. The Government has confidence in its security agencies.
- DFAT provides consular services to Australians in accordance with the Consular Services Charter.
- Our ability to provide any consular services in Syria is extremely limited due to the dangerous security situation and because we do not have an embassy or consulate in Syria.
- Any Australian can apply for, and if they meet eligibility requirements, be issued an Australian passport. We do not discuss individual applications.
- We continue to advise do not travel to Syria due to the dangerous security situation and the threat of armed conflict, air strikes, terrorism, arbitrary detention and kidnapping.

Status of Australian women and children in IDP camps in Syria

- In 2019, the Australian Government repatriated eight Australian unaccompanied minors.
- On 29 October 2022, the Australian Government repatriated four Australian women and their 13 Australian children to New South Wales from an IDP camp in Syria.
- One further family [2 women and four children] found their own way to return to Australia [on 26 Sept 2025] from an IDP camp in north-east Syria
- The Australian Government has long been aware of individuals in internally displaced persons camps in Syria with an intention to return to Australia.
 - DFAT is not involved in any planning for a repatriation of this cohort.
 - Note the testimony of AFP Commissioner Barrett at Estimates [8 October] that “the AFP remains appropriately prepared and positioned to respond to any self-managed returns from the internally displaced camps, alongside our Commonwealth and state partners”

: the Government has confidence its security agencies

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DFAT's role in providing consular services to the remaining cohort

- DFAT's provision of consular services to the remaining cohort is limited to the consideration of passport applications.
- DFAT has no role in monitoring the movement of Australians overseas
 - ***If pressed: DFAT's awareness of Australians' movements overseas***

DFAT is only made aware of the movement of Australians overseas if Australians provide this information to us, for example, when seeking consular assistance.
 - ***If pressed further: Has the remaining cohort offered information to DFAT about their travel plans?***

No. But we have been aware of their intention to return to Australia for some time.

Is providing a passport DFAT assistance?

- Under legislation, any Australian can apply for and, if they meet the eligibility requirements, be issued an Australian passport.
- Issuing replacement passports and travel documents is also in DFAT's Consular Services Charter as an example of the standard of services we provide.
- We provide passports and travel documents to Australians around the world every day – we would characterise this as a standard service.

Have Australians in IDP camps been issued passports?

- We are aware there are a number of women and children in Syria that are seeking to return to Australia
 - the department has been aware of this for some time.
- DFAT is not assisting this cohort to return to Australia.
- The issuance of passports is a government service mandated by law, subject to citizenship and identity requirements.
 - ***If pressed further: for more detail on applications***

DFAT manages its information and data appropriately and properly. This is why we do not disclose information or data without careful consideration.

In doing so, we have regard to a range of considerations, including potential risk to individuals' safety and security, and privacy limitations.

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How many applications have been received from Syria?

- . Australians may apply for passports overseas at any Australian diplomatic mission or post – not necessarily from the country of their residence
 - for this reason, we cannot be precise about how many applications we receive from people resident in Syria.
 - ***If pressed: whether applications for passports have been received***

Yes. Passport applications for Australians in IDP camps have been lodged with DFAT.

These applications are being assessed in line with our standard practice.

We are unable to comment further owing to security and privacy concerns.
 - ***If pressed: on the risk to the safety and security of individuals in the camps***

The Department does not want to put the safety and security of Australian citizens at risk. On that basis we do not intend to provide further detail.

Will DFAT know if those with passports depart the camps?

- . DFAT does not track the movement of individuals who have been issued passports.
- . DFAT would have no role in monitoring their movement overseas.
 - ***If pressed: who would know if they've left the camps?***

Syrian Kurdish authorities control entry and exit to the camps.

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Return of family from Syrian IDP camp on 26 September 2025

s 47F(1)

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Supporting information

Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Recent Ministerial Comments

16 October	Minister for Home Affairs [National Press Club address]	<i>'I don't accept that public servants doing what they are legally obliged to do is assistance in any form. I just don't accept that. When you're under repatriation, you assist. When you go out of your way to help someone beyond the absolute bare minimum of legal entitlements, you're helping, you're supporting. But for public servants, where they have a legal obligation if there's an application to process it, I just don't – I think it's absolute spin from the Opposition – and I'm glad that you've put it to me – absolute spin from the Opposition to try to characterise that as somehow being assistance.'</i>
9 October	Minister for Home Affairs	<i>'Everything that was just described as assistance by the Leader of the Opposition – it would have</i>

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	[Question time, 2.11pm, responding to the Leader of the Opposition]	<i>been an offence for the government to not do. Under the Citizenship Act, once someone applies, there is an obligation to make a decision according to law. Under the laws governing passports, if someone is eligible for a passport and applies to one of our embassies, there is an obligation for them to be provided with it. These individuals received what they were entitled to by law—no more and no less.</i>
October	Prime Minister (presser – PM Marape visit)	<i>'Australia did not provide assistance [to the family that smuggled themselves out of Syria]. The Australian citizens, of course, have the right to enter Australia. That's what occurred here...I made very clear that Australia wasn't providing assistance for those people to return to Australia. They, of course – Australian citizens are eligible to – obviously, Australian citizenship brings with it rights. I have confidence in our authorities and our agencies, our security agencies to undertake their work. And that's my position'</i>
4 September	Prime Minister	Stated that the Australian government was <i>'not providing assistance to the cohort'</i> [in Syria]
4 September	Minister for Finance, Public Service, Government Services and Government business in the Senate [Gallagher]	<i>In response to a request by Senator Hanson to seek leave to move a motion, said 'The Australian Government is not providing assistance and is not repatriating individuals in Syrian IDP camps. The reporting is incorrect. It's nothing less than irresponsible to take that reporting on national security issues as fact when the reporting has been clearly rejected. The motion that the senator seeks to move refers to an operation that does not exist.'</i> <i>'Our agencies are aware of who the persons of interest are in this cohort. If any of those people find their own way to return, our agencies are satisfied that they are prepared and will be able to act in the interests of community safety. There is no higher priority for the Albanese government than keeping Australians safe'.</i>

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3 September	Prime Minister	Stated in the House of Representatives that the media reporting - that <i>'government officials are helping to bring ISIS terrorist brides to Australia'</i> - was not accurate.
3 September	Foreign Minister	<i>'the Australian Government is not providing assistance and is not repatriating this cohort'. 'The Government always takes the advice of our security agencies and our first priority is to keep Australians safe'.</i>

Relevant Media Reporting

- 7 November 2025 – The Nightly** reported that 'more Australian women who went to Syria in support of Islamic State now expected to return'. Quotes a Professor of Islamic Politics at Deakin University that the recent return of the family of six *'had lit the path for others desperate to come home'*.
- 6 October 2025 – SBS news** reported Senator Shoebridge's visit to Al Roj camp. The Senator says *'[it was] absolutely in the capacity of the Commonwealth government to ... safely bring Australian children home ... I was able to do this [travel to Al Roj] as a senator ... The administration in north-east Syria is very open to providing secure escorts and assistance for your visit'* – ([link](#))
- 3 October 2025 – The Guardian, ABC, The Age, The Herald Sun and the Sydney Morning Herald** report that two Australian women and four children had escaped from the Al-Hol detention camp in north-east Syria and obtained Australian travel documents before returning by commercial flight, arriving in Melbourne on 26 September. Quotes a government spokesperson that the government was not providing assistance, and that *'if any of those people find their own way to return, our security agencies are satisfied that they are prepared and will be able to act in the interests of community safety'*. Opposition leader Sussan Ley says she is *'gravely concerned by the news and that this was 'a highly dangerous cohort of individuals who associated themselves with the barbaric Islamic State regime'* – ([link](#))
- 21 September 2025 – Local media in Syria (Hawar News Agency - ANHA)** reported that *'an Australian delegation, led by Senator David Shoebridge, visited the [Democratic] Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) as part of a field tour to assess the political, social, and humanitarian realities in the region'* – ([link](#))
- 8 September 2025 – A Strategic Analysis Australia** article by Peter Jennings explored 'Questions for the federal government about ISIS brides' return',

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- claiming *'Anthony Albanese is hiding his government's involvement to return the third group of so-called "jihadi brides" to Australia, apparently before Christmas'* – ([link](#))
- . **4 September 2025** – **The Australian** published an article titled *'Albanese accused of misleading parliament over secret plan to repatriate ISIS brides'* which reported NSW Police referring to there being discussions underway about the potential return of individuals from Syria and saying there is *'no doubt'* NSW police would have a role if so-called *'ISIS brides'* returned to Australia, along with other agencies. The article states that *'about 40 so-called ISIS brides, many with children, ended up in Syrian camps. It is understood there are 34 people, 14 adults and 20 children, in Al Roj camp; the youngest is five years old'* – ([link](#))
 - . **3 September 2025** – **Sydney Morning Herald** article titled *'Calls for government to "come clean" over return of ISIS "brides", children'* – ([link](#))
 - . **3 September 2025** – **The Independent** published an article titled *'Growing concern in Australia over reported repatriation plans for ISIS wives and children'* – ([link](#))
 - . **2 September 2025** – **The Australian** reports that *'ISIS brides stranded in northern Syria are set to be returned home before Christmas in a top-secret operation which is in the final stages of being green-lit'*. Cites a spokesperson for the Minister for Home Affairs: *'the federal government was not directly involved in the mission to bring the cohort home'* – ([link](#))
 - . **24 February 2025** – **The Guardian** published an article titled *'Australia should repatriate and investigate alleged crimes of Islamic State member found in Syria, experts say'*, which contained an interview with Australian man Mustafa Hajj-Obeid who is imprisoned in north-east Syria's Panorama Prison. The article states that Mr Hajj-Obeid is married to Ms Rayan Hamdoush, an Australian woman held in the Al Hol IDP camp in north-east Syria – ([link](#))
 - . **20 February 2025** – the **ABC** reported on the situation of two Australian women in Al-Roj camp (Kirsty Rosse-Emile and Zeinab Ahmed) captured after the defeat of ISIS in 2019, who now want to return to Australia – ([link](#))
 - . **9 December 2024** – **SBS** report on 42 Australian women and children in Syrian IDP camps following the fall of the Assad government – ([link](#))
 - . **26 September 2024** – **The Guardian** reported on the High Court's decision and conditions in Syrian IDP camps – ([link](#))

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- 18 May 2024 – The Saturday Paper article ‘Repatriation of ISIS brides shelved’ said further repatriations would not occur prior to the election – ([link](#))

DFAT QoNs from October estimates 2025

DFAT div	QoN no.	Question	Answer
CCD	233	<p><i>Senator CASH: Did DFAT officials engage with this cohort in Lebanon?</i></p> <p><i>Ms McGregor: We would have to take that on notice, largely because of privacy considerations.</i></p> <p><i>Senator CASH: Chair, can I ask one more question following up on this?</i></p> <p><i>CHAIR: Yes.</i></p> <p><i>Senator CASH: Were this particular cohort assisted in their passport applications, such as by a third-party organisation or an NGO?</i></p> <p><i>Ms Veneros: That would go to privacy information, and therefore I would not share that information at this point.</i></p>	DFAT is unable to provide further details due to privacy obligations.
ISD	236	<p><i>Senator HENDERSON: Could Ms Huggins come back to the table? I've just got a couple of questions to the ambassador. Ms Huggins, when you took that phone call on 6 June and were told that this cohort had left the camp in Syria, can you describe what else you were told in that phone call?</i></p> <p><i>Ms Huggins: I'll take that on notice.</i></p>	DFAT was informed by the Department of Home Affairs on 6 June that a cohort of Australian women and children had left the camps.
ISD	237	<p><i>Senator HENDERSON: Did they include that this cohort was going to Lebanon?</i></p> <p><i>Senator Wong: I think the officer responded to that before.</i></p> <p><i>Ms Huggins: I think that, at that point, it was unclear. I was informed that they'd left the camps, and that's the extent of the information that we knew of, but we'll take it on notice."</i></p>	DFAT was informed by the Department of Home Affairs on 6 June that a cohort of Australian women and children had left the camps.

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ISD	238	<p><i>Ms Huggins:</i> As I said before, I provided a note to the minister's office. I just conveyed that advice.</p> <p><i>Senator HENDERSON:</i> Can we, on notice, have a copy of that note?</p> <p><i>Senator Wong:</i> We've taken the note—</p> <p><i>Senator HENDERSON:</i> I'm sorry. Apologies if you already have.</p> <p><i>Senator Wong:</i> We've answered. I doubt that we will provide a copy of the note, but we can certainly take on notice the date.</p> <p><i>Senator HENDERSON:</i> Thank you.</p> <p><i>Senator Wong:</i> I think Senator Cash asked that.</p> <p><i>Senator HENDERSON:</i> Ms Huggins, did you have any other discussions in relation to this cohort, or did you provide any further advice or receive any advice from any other department about—</p> <p><i>Senator Wong:</i> That's a very broad question. I think we'll take that on notice.</p> <p><i>Ms Huggins:</i> We'll take that on notice.</p> <p><i>Senator Wong:</i> It's a very broad question. I mean, you're just saying—</p> <p><i>Senator HENDERSON:</i> I can make it more specific. Did you receive any advice at all, subsequent to 6 June, that this group—the women and their children—was returning to Australia?</p> <p><i>Ms Huggins:</i> No, not on 6 June.</p> <p><i>Senator HENDERSON:</i> When did you receive the advice they were returning to Australia?</p> <p><i>Ms Adams:</i> We'll take this on notice, as we already have in earlier questioning on the same matter.</p> <p><i>Senator HENDERSON:</i> I'm now directing the question to Ms Huggins, though.</p> <p><i>Ms Adams:</i> Well, sorry. The department takes the questions. We've taken it on notice."</p>	<p>Can we, on notice, have a copy of that note? No.</p> <p>Date of that note? 6 June 2025</p> <p>When did you receive advice [the cohort] was returning to Australia?</p> <p>The Australian Government has long been aware of individuals in internally displaced persons camps in Syria with an intention to return to Australia.</p>

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DFAT div.	QoN no	Question	Answer
CCD	229	<p><i>Senator CASH:</i> That's okay. How did the department of foreign affairs first become aware that they had departed the camps?</p> <p><i>Ms Sidhu:</i> I believe that we may have been contacted by a next of kin.</p> <p><i>Senator CASH:</i> And that next of kin was in Australia?</p> <p><i>Ms Sidhu:</i> I don't know that.</p> <p><i>Senator CASH:</i> Does anybody at the table or in the room know that?</p> <p><i>Ms Sidhu:</i> Could I take that on notice, please?</p> <p><i>Senator CASH:</i> Yes. Once you had become aware, in or about early June, that they had departed the camps, were you also then made aware that they wished to return to Australia?</p> <p><i>Ms Sidhu:</i> I'll have to take that on notice. I don't know what the nature of that communication was.</p> <p><i>Senator CASH:</i> Who had the communication?</p> <p><i>Ms Sidhu:</i> I'll have to take that on notice. I don't want to mislead you and I really do want to be precise.</p>	<p>1. Was next of kin in Australia?</p> <p>No. The next of kin was offshore.</p> <p>2. Once you had become aware, in or about early June, that they had departed the camps, were you also then made aware that they wished to return to Australia?</p> <p>The Australian Government has long been aware of individuals in internally displaced persons camps in Syria with an intention to return to Australia.</p> <p>3. Who had the communication (with the NOK)</p> <p>DFAT consular officers.</p>
ISD	0230	<p><i>Senator CASH:</i> Minister, when were you first made aware that this cohort had left the camps?</p> <p><i>Senator Wong:</i> I would have to take that on notice.</p> <p><i>Senator CASH:</i> Were you made aware that day?</p> <p><i>Senator Wong:</i> I've just said that I'll take it on notice."</p>	<p>On 6 June 2025, the DFAT informed the Foreign Minister's Office that a cohort of women and children had left a Syrian IDP camp.</p>

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DFAT div.	QoN no	Question	Answer
CCD	231	<p><i>Senator CASH:</i> Correct. That's what I thought. Exactly—the Ambassador for Counter-Terrorism Minister, when did you first find out that the two ISIS brides and their four children had actually touched down on Australian soil?</p> <p><i>Senator Wong:</i> I'll take that on notice.</p> <p><i>Senator CASH:</i> You don't know when you found out?</p> <p><i>Senator Wong:</i> I was going to say that it might only have been when it was made public.</p> <p><i>Senator CASH:</i> So you weren't—</p> <p><i>Senator Wong:</i> It wouldn't be for this minister. It would be for Mr Burke.</p> <p><i>Senator CASH:</i> But you're the Minister for Foreign Affairs.</p> <p><i>Senator Wong:</i> I don't monitor everyone who comes into the country. That would be—</p> <p><i>Senator CASH:</i> But this is a particular cohort that is of concern.</p> <p><i>Senator Wong:</i> Yes, and I will take it on notice, but it's not necessarily something that I would be the minister to be first briefed on.</p> <p><i>Senator CASH:</i> I didn't imply that you would be the minister who was first briefed on it. Given that both you and the Prime Minister have answered questions directly in relation to this matter in the parliament, I don't think anybody could deny that this has been a matter of great interest, in particular to the media, in terms of getting answers to questions. You were in Senate estimates on Tuesday as the Minister representing the Prime Minister. I'm assuming that you are aware of the reports on Wednesday that the cohort were confirmed, and you can't tell this committee when you first found out they had touched down on Australian soil?</p> <p><i>Senator Wong:</i> I believe I was travelling at the time, but I will take it on notice.</p> <p><i>Senator CASH:</i> Was it on the day? Did you get a call?</p> <p><i>Senator Wong:</i> I've just taken it on notice. You want the information.</p>	DFAT advised the Foreign Minister's Office on 29 September 2025.

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DFAT div.	QoN no	Question	Answer
CCD	232	<p><i>Senator CASH:</i> Let's just go back. I specifically asked you on Tuesday, 'Have you been briefed on this matter?' Your response to me was, 'If you're asking me in my personal capacity, you will have to ask me on Friday.' That was your response to me on Tuesday. So I'm going to ask you: when were you first briefed—not in your personal capacity, in your capacity as the minister—in relation to this particular cohort?</p> <p><i>Senator Wong:</i> I don't have the date. I will take that on notice to be accurate. I have been aware for some time that—in fact, it has been a matter of public knowledge that there is a cohort, including women and children, in the camps in Syria who wish to come home. That is public knowledge. It is well known. It was known to you. As I said, your government made it clear that you would see sporadic and occasional returns, and that is what we are seeing.</p> <p><i>Senator CASH:</i> Minister Burke didn't call you and say, 'The ISIS brides have touched back down on Australian soil'?</p> <p><i>Senator Wong:</i> I've taken that question on notice.</p> <p><i>Senator CASH:</i> Are you actually being serious?</p> <p><i>Senator Wong:</i> It's the same question. You're asking me when, and I am saying to you that I have taken the question about when I was advised about the actual return to Australia on notice.</p> <p><i>Senator CASH:</i> Did Minister Burke, between when his office was briefed on 6 June—and obviously the ambassador has said that your office was sent a note on 6 June. When did you, then, first become aware? Did you have any discussions with Minister Burke at this time, or did Minister Burke have any discussions with you or your office about the return of this particular cohort?</p> <p><i>Senator Wong:</i> I'd have to take that on notice.</p>	<p>1. DFAT first briefed the Foreign Minister's Office about the departure of this cohort from the Syrian IDP camps on 6 June 2025.</p> <p>2. DFAT advised the Foreign Minister's Office on 29 September 2025 that this cohort had returned to Australia.</p>

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DFAT div.	QoN no	Question	Answer
APO	239	<p>"Senator CASH: How many have made passport processing inquiries? Senator Wong: How many of who? Senator CASH: The people that have made them in Syria. Ms Veneros: I'll have to take on notice how many people in Syria have made passport inquiries. Senator CASH: Okay. Can you also take on notice when they made these passport application inquiries? Are any in the ISIS brides cohort?"</p>	<p>Between July and September 2025, the Australian Passport Office received three enquiries from individuals in Syria, one related to this cohort.</p>
CCD	262	<p>"Senator CASH: Yet on Wednesday in estimates the evidence given was that there is a broader cohort who are seeking to return to Australia. Senator Wong: Yes, there is, of course, which is what you said in 2017 and 2018. Senator CASH: Yes, so I am then asking— Senator Wong: You—as in vous, not tu; your government—made this point, there are people in Syria who want to come back to Australia. As your government said, we are likely to see a steady trickle/sporadic returns. That's what we have here. Senator CASH: Secretary, how large is this cohort? Senator Wong: Which cohort? The number of Australians in the IDP camps? We'd have to take that on notice. Senator CASH: That are seeking to come back to Australia. Ms Adams: I don't know. Senator CASH: You don't know? That's fine—you don't know. Does anyone else at the table have any idea?"</p>	<p>The Australian Government has long been aware of individuals in internally displaced persons camps in Syria with an intention to return to Australia.</p>

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APO	234	<p>Ms Veneros: The timeframe it takes for a passport process depends on the level of information and the type of passport that people are applying for. It does base also on complexity of the matter in front of us.</p> <p>Senator CASH: I would put to you that this is an incredibly complex situation.</p> <p>Ms Veneros: When a passport has been applied for, we're looking at two factors particularly, and those are, as per the obligations under the act, around whether the person has citizenship and whether we're able to confirm their identity.</p> <p>Senator CASH: Yes. For the four children, the answer was, in the first instance, they did not.</p> <p>Ms Veneros: To answer the question, the advice we provide to anyone, including those overseas, is to leave at least six weeks for a passport application to be processed. That's broad advice that we provide to everyone. That doesn't mean that's the timeframe it takes. In some circumstances, it can be much shorter than that; in other circumstances, it can be longer than that.</p> <p>Senator CASH: Are you able to give me a specific figure as to how long it took, in this instance?</p> <p>Ms Veneros: I'm not able to provide you with a specific figure at this time.</p> <p>Senator CASH: Are you able to take that question on notice?</p> <p>Ms Veneros: I will take that question on notice and see what I can find.</p>	<p>All customers are advised to allow at least six weeks from lodgement of an application to receive their passport. As of September 2025, over 99 per cent of travel documents were available within the six-week period.</p>

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Syria

Handling Note:

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

- Dep Sec ISG and FAS CCD will lead on repatriations, consular/welfare matters relating to Syrian IDP camps and travel advice, s 22(1)(a)(ii)

s 22(1)(a)(ii) – this section, together with the following pages (17-21) are out of scope and have been removed

Northeast Syria and IDP camps

[Note: Dep Sec ISG and FAS CCD will lead on consular, welfare and repatriations questions s 22(1)(a)(ii) ; AS GCB will address any questions related to the Save the Children Australia litigation]

Is the Government planning to repatriate Australians still in IDP camps in north-east Syria?

- . The Australian Government is not repatriating Australians seeking to return from Syria
 - DFAT provides consular services to Australians in accordance with the Consular Services Charter.
- . Our ability to provide consular assistance to Australians in Syria is extremely limited due to the dangerous security situation.
- . Our intelligence and security agencies are constantly monitoring any threats to our national security.
- . Approximately 60 Australia-linked men and women who are known to have fought (or otherwise associated) with groups in Syria and Iraq remain offshore.

Only if pressed on recent media reports [4 September 2025] quoting NSW Police referring to discussions underway about the potential return of individuals from Syria

- . DFAT is aware of media reporting about a cohort including Australians citizens seeking to return from Syria
 - as the Prime Minister said in Parliament [4 September 2025]: ‘The Australian Government is not providing assistance to repatriate this cohort’.
- . Australia’s security and the safety of the Australian community are paramount – our intelligence and security agencies are constantly monitoring any threats to our national security.

What support is the Government providing to Australians in IDP camps?

- . Our ability to directly assist individuals in the camps is limited.
- . We monitor the health and safety of Australians in the camps to the greatest extent possible, drawing on information shared with us by families and partner countries, NGOs and camp authorities
 - Australian officials have not entered Syria or Kurdish-controlled areas in northeast Syria for several years due to the volatile security situation.
- . Australia has partnered with humanitarian agencies that have the mandate and expertise to deliver assistance to affected populations in Syria, including in IDP camps.
- . Humanitarian partners provide assistance based on need – DFAT does not direct this assistance to specific individuals.

Why was the Government able to repatriate children in 2019 and 2022 but not now?

- . Since 2022, the security environment in northeast Syria has precluded the consideration of further repatriations
 - we are continuing to closely monitor the situation in Syria and northeast Syria.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Is DFAT providing assistance to any Australians who have left the IDP camps independently?

- In accordance with the Consular Services Charter, DFAT provided consular assistance to one family [*outside Syria*] that departed the IDP camps independently and travelled to Lebanon
 - this included providing travel documents [s 47F(1)] and liaising with families.
- For privacy reasons, DFAT is unable to comment on individual cases.

s 22(1)(a)(ii) – this section, together with the following pages (24-30) are out of scope and have been removed

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Relevant Media Reporting

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

On 3 September 2025, the SMH reported that the Albanese Government denied a plan to return ISIS 'brides'.

- On 2 September 2025, the [Australian reported that ISIS brides were to be returned home in 'secret operation' from Syria.](#)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

- On **20 February 2025**, the ABC reported on the situation of [two Australian women in Al-Roi camp](#) (Kirsty Rosse-Emile and Zeinab Ahmed) captured after the defeat of ISIL in 2019 who now wanted to return to Australia.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

- On **10 December 2024**, SBS reported on [“Urgent calls to repatriate 'terrified' Australian women and children from Syria”](#), containing comments from Kamalle Dabboussy and the CEO of Save the Children Australia about concerns expressed by Australian-linked individuals in IDP Camps in north-east Syria.

Consular - Australians in Syrian IDP camps

Key Messages

- The Australian Government is not repatriating Australians seeking to return from Syria.
- DFAT provides consular services to Australians in accordance with the Consular Services Charter.
- Our ability to provide any consular services in Syria is extremely limited due to the dangerous security situation and because we do not have an embassy or consulate in Syria.
- We continue to monitor the health and safety of Australians in the camps to the extent possible, drawing on information shared with us by families and partner countries.
- We make our own security assessments of the situation in Syria, informed by partner agencies, which underpin both public travel advice and decisions regarding official travel.

Status of Australian women and children in IDP camps in Syria

- In 2019, the Australian Government repatriated eight Australian unaccompanied minors.
- On 29 October 2022, the Australian Government repatriated four Australian women and their 13 Australian children to New South Wales from an IDP camp in Syria.
- We are aware of one further family [2 women and four children] that found their own way to return to Australia from an IDP camp in north-east Syria

If pressed: what assistance did DFAT provide to this family?

- DFAT did not provide repatriation assistance to this family
- DFAT provided standard consular services to this family [once outside of Syria], in accordance with the Consular Services Charter
- this included providing travel documents [s 47F(1)] and liaison with families.

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Position: Deputy Secretary

Group: International Security, Legal and Consular Group

If pressed: when did DFAT become aware this family had left the camps?

- DFAT was advised on 6 June by the family's next-of-kin that the family had left a Syrian IDP camp.
- We are aware of 34 Australians – 14 women and 20 children – remaining in IDP camps in north-east Syria
 - we have been aware for some time of their intention to return to Australia
 - DFAT is not involved in any planning for a repatriation of this cohort.

Nature of consular services in IDP camps

- Our ability to provide consular services in the camps is extremely limited due to the dangerous security situation and because we do not have an embassy or consulate in Syria
 - DFAT officials have not entered Syria for several years due to the security situation.
- We continue to monitor the health and safety of Australians in IDP camps to the extent possible, drawing on information shared with us by families and partner countries and through enquiries to Syrian Kurdish authorities.
- Australia has partnered with humanitarian agencies with appropriate mandate and expertise (UNICEF and UNFPA) to deliver assistance in camps.

Is providing a passport DFAT assistance?

- Providing replacement passports and travel documents is in DFAT's Consular Services Charter as an example of the standard services we provide.
- We provide passports and travel documents to Australians around the world every day – we would characterize this as a standard consular service
- It does not usually involve booking, paying or organizing flights, or any kind of repatriation assistance, and it did not in this case
- Any Australian can apply for and, if they meet the eligibility requirements, be issued an Australian passport.
 - ***If pressed on whether Australians in IDP camps in Syria have applied:***
Yes. For privacy reasons, DFAT is unable to comment on individual cases.
 - ***If pressed for more detail:***
Questions on individual passport applications will be taken on notice.

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Why was the Government able to repatriate Australians in 2019 and 2022, but not now?

- . Since 2022, the unstable security environment in north-east Syria has precluded the consideration of further repatriations
 - we are continuing to closely monitor the situation in Syria.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

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Supporting information

Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Recent Ministerial Comments

October	Prime Minister (presser – PM Marape visit)	<i>'Australia did not provide assistance [to the family that smuggled themselves out of Syria]. The Australian citizens, of course, have the right to enter Australia. That's what occurred here...I made very clear that Australia wasn't providing assistance for those people to return to Australia. They, of course – Australian citizens are eligible to – obviously, Australian citizenship brings with it rights. I have confidence in our authorities and our agencies, our security agencies to undertake their work. And that's my position'</i>
4 September	Prime Minister	Stated that the Australian government was <i>'not providing assistance to the cohort'</i> [in Syria]
4 September	Minister for Trade and Tourism [Farrell]	<i>'The Australian Government is not providing assistance to, and will not be repatriating, individuals in Syrian IDP camps'</i>
4 September	Minister for the Environment and Water [Watt]	When asked: (a) if any government department is <i>'issuing travel documents to children born of parents who are Australian citizens and are ISIS associates'</i> , (b) <i>'has the government been in discussions with New South Wales over the repatriation of the ISIS brides'</i> , and (c) <i>'has the government been briefed by Save the Children in relation to the repatriation of ISIS associates and/or their children'</i> or <i>'has the government met with representatives from Save the Children to discuss'</i> [the same matter], replied <i>'the Australian government is not providing assistance to this cohort'</i> .

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4 September	Minister for Finance, Public Service, Government Services and Government business in the Senate [Gallagher]	<p>In response to a request by Senator Hanson to seek leave to move a motion, said <i>'The Australian Government is not providing assistance and is not repatriating individuals in Syrian IDP camps. The reporting is incorrect. It's nothing less than irresponsible to take that reporting on national security issues as fact when the reporting has been clearly rejected. The motion that the senator seeks to move refers to an operation that does not exist.'</i></p> <p><i>'Our agencies are aware of who the persons of interest are in this cohort. If any of those people find their own way to return, our agencies are satisfied that they are prepared and will be able to act in the interests of community safety. There is no higher priority for the Albanese government than keeping Australians safe'.</i></p>
3 September	Prime Minister	<p>Stated in the House of Representatives that the media reporting - that <i>'government officials are helping to bring ISIS terrorist brides to Australia'</i> - was not accurate.</p>
3 September	Foreign Minister	<p><i>'the Australian Government is not providing assistance and is not repatriating this cohort'.</i></p> <p><i>'The Government always takes the advice of our security agencies and our first priority is to keep Australians safe'.</i></p>

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Relevant Media Reporting

- **6 October 2025** – SBS news reported Senator Shoebridge's visit to Al Roj camp. The Senator says *'[it was] absolutely in the capacity of the Commonwealth government to ... safely bring Australian children home ... I was able to do this [travel to Al Roj] as a senator ... The administration in north-east Syria is very open to providing secure escorts and assistance for your visit'* – ([link](#))
- **3 October 2025** – The Guardian, ABC, The Age, The Herald Sun and the Sydney Morning Herald report that two Australian women and four children had escaped from the Al-Hol detention camp in north-east Syria and obtained Australian travel documents before returning by commercial flight, arriving in Melbourne on 26 September. Quotes a government spokesperson that the government was not providing assistance, and that *'if any of those people find their own way to return, our security agencies are satisfied that they are prepared and will be able to act in the interests of community safety'*. Opposition leader Sussan Ley says she is *'gravely concerned by the news and that this was 'a highly dangerous cohort of individuals who associated themselves with the barbaric Islamic State regime'* – ([link](#))
- **21 September 2025** – Local media in Syria (*Hawar News Agency - ANHA*) reported that *'an Australian delegation, led by Senator David Shoebridge, visited the [Democratic] Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) as part of a field tour to assess the political, social, and humanitarian realities in the region'* – ([link](#))
- **8 September 2025** – A *Strategic Analysis Australia* article by Peter Jennings explored *'Questions for the federal government about ISIS brides' return'*, claiming *'Anthony Albanese is hiding his government's involvement to return the third group of so-called "jihadi brides" to Australia, apparently before Christmas'* – ([link](#))
- **4 September 2025** – *The Australian* published an article titled *'Albanese accused of misleading parliament over secret plan to repatriate ISIS brides'* which reported NSW Police referring to there being discussions underway about the potential return of individuals from Syria and saying there is *'no doubt'* NSW police would have a role if so-called *'ISIS brides'* returned to Australia, along with other agencies. The article states that *'about 40 so-called ISIS brides, many with children, ended up in Syrian camps. It is understood there are 34 people, 14 adults and 20 children, in Al Roj camp; the youngest is five years old'* – ([link](#))

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- . **3 September 2025** – *Sydney Morning Herald* article titled ‘Calls for government to “come clean” over return of ISIS “brides”, children’ – ([link](#))
- . **3 September 2025** – *The Independent* published an article titled ‘Growing concern in Australia over reported repatriation plans for ISIS wives and children’ – ([link](#))
- . **2 September 2025** – *The Australian* reports that ‘ISIS brides stranded in northern Syria are set to be returned home before Christmas in a top-secret operation which is in the final stages of being green-lit’. Cites a spokesperson for the Minister for Home Affairs: ‘the federal government was not directly involved in the mission to bring the cohort home’ – ([link](#))
- . **24 February 2025** – *The Guardian* published an article titled ‘Australia should repatriate and investigate alleged crimes of Islamic State member found in Syria, experts say’, which contained an interview with Australian man Mustafa Hajj-Obeid who is imprisoned in north-east Syria’s Panorama Prison. The article states that Mr Hajj-Obeid is married to Ms Rayan Hamdoush, an Australian woman held in the Al Hol IDP camp in north-east Syria – ([link](#))
- . **20 February 2025** – the ABC reported on the situation of two Australian women in Al-Roj camp (Kirsty Rosse-Emile and Zeinab Ahmed) captured after the defeat of ISIS in 2019, who now want to return to Australia – ([link](#))
- . **9 December 2024** – SBS report on 42 Australian women and children in Syrian IDP camps following the fall of the Assad government – ([link](#))
- . **26 September 2024** – *The Guardian* reported on the High Court’s decision and conditions in Syrian IDP camps – ([link](#))
- . **18 May 2024** – *The Saturday Paper* article ‘Repatriation of ISIS brides shelved’ said further repatriations would not occur prior to the election – ([link](#))

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Consular - Australians in Syrian IDP camps

Key Messages

- The Australian Government is not repatriating Australians seeking to return from Syria.
- Australia's Security Agencies have confirmed they are prepared to respond to any self-managed returns from IDP camps. The Government has confidence in its security agencies.
- DFAT provides consular services to Australians in accordance with the Consular Services Charter.
- Our ability to provide any consular services in Syria is extremely limited due to the dangerous security situation and because we do not have an embassy or consulate in Syria.
- Any Australian can apply for, and if they meet eligibility requirements, be issued an Australian passport. We do not discuss individual applications.
- We continue to advise do not travel to Syria due to the dangerous security situation and the threat of armed conflict, air strikes, terrorism, arbitrary detention and kidnapping.

Status of Australian women and children in IDP camps in Syria

- In 2019, the Australian Government repatriated eight Australian unaccompanied minors.
 - On 29 October 2022, the Australian Government repatriated four Australian women and their 13 Australian children to New South Wales from an IDP camp in Syria.
 - One further family [2 women and four children] found their own way to return to Australia [on 26 Sept 2025] from an IDP camp in north-east Syria
 - The Australian Government has long been aware of individuals in internally displaced persons camps in Syria with an intention to return to Australia.
 - DFAT is not involved in any planning for a repatriation of this cohort.
 - Note the testimony of AFP Commissioner Barrett at Estimates [8 October] that “the AFP remains appropriately prepared and positioned to respond to any self-managed returns from the internally displaced camps, alongside our Commonwealth and state partners”
- : the Government has confidence its security agencies

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DFAT's role in providing consular services to the remaining cohort

- DFAT's provision of consular services to the remaining cohort is limited to the consideration of passport applications.
- DFAT has no role in monitoring the movement of Australians overseas
 - ***If pressed: DFAT's awareness of Australians' movements overseas***

DFAT is only made aware of the movement of Australians overseas if Australians provide this information to us, for example, when seeking consular assistance.
 - ***If pressed further: Has the remaining cohort offered information to DFAT about their travel plans?***

No. But we have been aware of their intention to return to Australia for some time.

Is providing a passport DFAT assistance?

- Under legislation, any Australian can apply for and, if they meet the eligibility requirements, be issued an Australian passport.
- Issuing replacement passports and travel documents is also in DFAT's Consular Services Charter as an example of the standard of services we provide.
- We provide passports and travel documents to Australians around the world every day – we would characterise this as a standard service.

Have Australians in IDP camps been issued passports?

- We are aware there are a number of women and children in Syria that are seeking to return to Australia
 - the department has been aware of this for some time.
- DFAT is not assisting this cohort to return to Australia.
- The issuance of passports is a government service mandated by law, subject to citizenship and identity requirements.
 - ***If pressed further: for more detail on applications***

DFAT manages its information and data appropriately and properly. This is why we do not disclose information or data without careful consideration.

In doing so, we have regard to a range of considerations, including potential risk to individuals' safety and security, and privacy limitations.

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How many applications have been received from Syria?

- . Australians may apply for passports overseas at any Australian diplomatic mission or post – not necessarily from the country of their residence
 - for this reason, we cannot be precise about how many applications we receive from people resident in Syria.
 - ***If pressed: whether applications for passports have been received***

Yes. Passport applications for Australians in IDP camps have been lodged with DFAT.

These applications are being assessed in line with our standard practice.

We are unable to comment further owing to security and privacy concerns.
 - ***If pressed: on the risk to the safety and security of individuals in the camps***

The Department does not want to put the safety and security of Australian citizens at risk. On that basis we do not intend to provide further detail.

Will DFAT know if those with passports depart the camps?

- . DFAT does not track the movement of individuals who have been issued passports.
- . DFAT would have no role in monitoring their movement overseas.
 - ***If pressed: who would know if they've left the camps?***

Syrian Kurdish authorities control entry and exit to the camps.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

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Australian foreign terrorist fighters and their families

Australian agencies estimate there are currently around 60 Australian men and women who fought with, or were otherwise associated with, religiously motivated violent extremist groups in Syria and Iraq and who remain offshore. Most of these individuals are in detention or IDP camps.

Return of family from Syrian IDP camp on 26 September 2025

s 47F(1)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Supporting information

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

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Recent Ministerial Comments

16 October	Minister for Home Affairs [National Press Club address]	<i>'I don't accept that public servants doing what they are legally obliged to do is assistance in any form. I just don't accept that. When you're under repatriation, you assist. When you go out of your way to help someone beyond the absolute bare minimum of legal entitlements, you're helping, you're supporting. But for public servants, where they have a legal obligation if there's an application to process it, I just don't – I think it's absolute spin from the Opposition – and I'm glad that you've put it to me – absolute spin from the Opposition to try to characterise that as somehow being assistance.'</i>
9 October	Minister for Home Affairs [Question time, 2.11pm, responding to the Leader of the Opposition]	<i>'Everything that was just described as assistance by the Leader of the Opposition – it would have been an offence for the government to not do. Under the Citizenship Act, once someone applies, there is an obligation to make a decision according to law. Under the laws governing passports, if someone is eligible for a passport and applies to one of our embassies, there is an obligation for them to be provided with it. These individuals received what they were entitled to by law—no more and no less.'</i>
October	Prime Minister (presser – PM Marape visit)	<i>'Australia did not provide assistance [to the family that smuggled themselves out of Syria]. The Australian citizens, of course, have the right to enter Australia. That's what occurred here...I made very clear that Australia wasn't providing assistance for those people to return to Australia. They, of course – Australian citizens are eligible to – obviously, Australian citizenship brings with</i>

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		<i>it rights. I have confidence in our authorities and our agencies, our security agencies to undertake their work. And that's my position'</i>
4 September	Prime Minister	Stated that the Australian government was ' <i>not providing assistance to the cohort'</i> [in Syria]
4 September	Minister for Finance, Public Service, Government Services and Government business in the Senate [Gallagher]	In response to a request by Senator Hanson to seek leave to move a motion, said ' <i>The Australian Government is not providing assistance and is not repatriating individuals in Syrian IDP camps. The reporting is incorrect. It's nothing less than irresponsible to take that reporting on national security issues as fact when the reporting has been clearly rejected. The motion that the senator seeks to move refers to an operation that does not exist.'</i> <i>'Our agencies are aware of who the persons of interest are in this cohort. If any of those people find their own way to return, our agencies are satisfied that they are prepared and will be able to act in the interests of community safety. There is no higher priority for the Albanese government than keeping Australians safe'.</i>
3 September	Prime Minister	Stated in the House of Representatives that the media reporting - that ' <i>government officials are helping to bring ISIS terrorist brides to Australia'</i> - was not accurate.
3 September	Foreign Minister	<i>'the Australian Government is not providing assistance and is not repatriating this cohort'.</i> <i>'The Government always takes the advice of our security agencies and our first priority is to keep Australians safe'.</i>

Relevant Media Reporting

- **7 November 2025 – The Nightly** reported that 'more Australian women who went to Syria in support of Islamic State now expected to return'. Quotes a Professor of Islamic Politics at Deakin University that the recent return of the family of six '*had lit the path for others desperate to come home'*'.
- **6 October 2025 – SBS news** reported Senator Shoebridge's visit to Al Roj camp. The Senator says '*[it was] absolutely in the capacity of the*

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Commonwealth government to ... safely bring Australian children home ... I was able to do this [travel to Al Roj] as a senator ... The administration in north-east Syria is very open to providing secure escorts and assistance for your visit' – ([link](#))

- **3 October 2025 – The Guardian, ABC, The Age, The Herald Sun and the Sydney Morning Herald** report that two Australian women and four children had escaped from the Al-Hol detention camp in north-east Syria and obtained Australian travel documents before returning by commercial flight, arriving in Melbourne on 26 September. Quotes a government spokesperson that the government was not providing assistance, and that *'if any of those people find their own way to return, our security agencies are satisfied that they are prepared and will be able to act in the interests of community safety'*. Opposition leader Sussan Ley says she is *'gravely concerned by the news and that this was 'a highly dangerous cohort of individuals who associated themselves with the barbaric Islamic State regime'* – ([link](#))
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- **4 September 2025 – The Australian** published an article titled *'Albanese accused of misleading parliament over secret plan to repatriate ISIS brides'* which reported NSW Police referring to there being discussions underway about the potential return of individuals from Syria and saying there is *'no doubt'* NSW police would have a role if so-called *'ISIS brides'* returned to Australia, along with other agencies. The article states that *'about 40 so-called ISIS brides, many with children, ended up in Syrian camps. It is understood there are 34 people, 14 adults and 20 children, in Al Roj camp; the youngest is five years old'* – ([link](#))
- **3 September 2025 – Sydney Morning Herald** article titled *'Calls for government to "come clean" over return of ISIS "brides", children'* – ([link](#))

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- . **24 February 2025 – The Guardian** published an article titled ‘Australia should repatriate and investigate alleged crimes of Islamic State member found in Syria, experts say’, which contained an interview with Australian man Mustafa Hajj-Obeid who is imprisoned in north-east Syria’s Panorama Prison. The article states that Mr Hajj-Obeid is married to Ms Rayan Hamdoush, an Australian woman held in the Al Hol IDP camp in north-east Syria – ([link](#))
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Group: International Security, Legal and Consular Group

DFAT QoNs from October estimates 2025

DFAT div	QoN no.	Question	Published answer
CCD	233	<p><i>Senator CASH: Did DFAT officials engage with this cohort in Lebanon?</i></p> <p><i>Ms McGregor: We would have to take that on notice, largely because of privacy considerations.</i></p> <p><i>Senator CASH: Chair, can I ask one more question following up on this?</i></p> <p><i>CHAIR: Yes.</i></p> <p><i>Senator CASH: Were this particular cohort assisted in their passport applications, such as by a third-party organisation or an NGO?</i></p> <p><i>Ms Veneros: That would go to privacy information, and therefore I would not share that information at this point.</i></p>	DFAT is unable to provide further details due to privacy obligations.
ISD	236	<p><i>Senator HENDERSON: Could Ms Huggins come back to the table? I've just got a couple of questions to the ambassador. Ms Huggins, when you took that phone call on 6 June and were told that this cohort had left the camp in Syria, can you describe what else you were told in that phone call?</i></p> <p><i>Ms Huggins: I'll take that on notice.</i></p>	DFAT was informed by the Department of Home Affairs on 6 June that a cohort of Australian women and children had left the camps.
ISD	237	<p><i>Senator HENDERSON: Did they include that this cohort was going to Lebanon?</i></p> <p><i>Senator Wong: I think the officer responded to that before.</i></p> <p><i>Ms Huggins: I think that, at that point, it was unclear. I was informed that they'd left the camps, and that's the extent of the information that we knew of, but we'll take it on notice."</i></p>	DFAT was informed by the Department of Home Affairs on 6 June that a cohort of Australian women and children had left the camps.

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DFAT div.	QoN no	Question	Published answer
ISD	238	<p>Ms Huggins: As I said before, I provided a note to the minister's office. I just conveyed that advice.</p> <p><i>Senator HENDERSON:</i> Can we, on notice, have a copy of that note?</p> <p><i>Senator Wong:</i> We've taken the note—</p> <p><i>Senator HENDERSON:</i> I'm sorry. Apologies if you already have.</p> <p><i>Senator Wong:</i> We've answered. I doubt that we will provide a copy of the note, but we can certainly take on notice the date.</p> <p><i>Senator HENDERSON:</i> Thank you.</p> <p><i>Senator Wong:</i> I think Senator Cash asked that.</p> <p><i>Senator HENDERSON:</i> Ms Huggins, did you have any other discussions in relation to this cohort, or did you provide any further advice or receive any advice from any other department about—</p> <p><i>Senator Wong:</i> That's a very broad question. I think we'll take that on notice.</p> <p><i>Ms Huggins:</i> We'll take that on notice.</p> <p><i>Senator Wong:</i> It's a very broad question. I mean, you're just saying—</p> <p><i>Senator HENDERSON:</i> I can make it more specific. Did you receive any advice at all, subsequent to 6 June, that this group—the women and their children—was returning to Australia?</p> <p><i>Ms Huggins:</i> No, not on 6 June.</p> <p><i>Senator HENDERSON:</i> When did you receive the advice they were returning to Australia?</p> <p><i>Ms Adams:</i> We'll take this on notice, as we already have in earlier questioning on the same matter.</p> <p><i>Senator HENDERSON:</i> I'm now directing the question to Ms Huggins, though.</p> <p><i>Ms Adams:</i> Well, sorry. The department takes the questions. We've taken it on notice."</p>	<p>DFAT advised the Foreign Minister's office on 6 June 2025.</p> <p>The Australian Government has long been aware of individuals in internally displaced persons camps in Syria with an intention to return to Australia.</p>

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DFAT div.	QoN no	Question	Published answer
CCD	229	<p><i>Senator CASH:</i> That's okay. How did the department of foreign affairs first become aware that they had departed the camps?</p> <p><i>Ms Sidhu:</i> I believe that we may have been contacted by a next of kin.</p> <p><i>Senator CASH:</i> And that next of kin was in Australia?</p> <p><i>Ms Sidhu:</i> I don't know that.</p> <p><i>Senator CASH:</i> Does anybody at the table or in the room know that?</p> <p><i>Ms Sidhu:</i> Could I take that on notice, please?</p> <p><i>Senator CASH:</i> Yes. Once you had become aware, in or about early June, that they had departed the camps, were you also then made aware that they wished to return to Australia?</p> <p><i>Ms Sidhu:</i> I'll have to take that on notice. I don't know what the nature of that communication was.</p> <p><i>Senator CASH:</i> Who had the communication?</p> <p><i>Ms Sidhu:</i> I'll have to take that on notice. I don't want to mislead you and I really do want to be precise.</p>	<p>Consular officers were contacted by next of kin offshore.</p> <p>The Australian Government has long been aware of individuals in internally displaced persons camps in Syria with an intention to return to Australia.</p>
ISD	0230	<p><i>Senator CASH:</i> Minister, when were you first made aware that this cohort had left the camps?</p> <p><i>Senator Wong:</i> I would have to take that on notice.</p> <p><i>Senator CASH:</i> Were you made aware that day?</p> <p><i>Senator Wong:</i> I've just said that I'll take it on notice."</p>	<p>On 6 June 2025, DFAT informed the Foreign Minister's Office that a cohort of women and children had left a Syrian IDP camp.</p>

DFAT div.	QoN no	Question	Published answer
CCD	231	<p><i>Senator CASH:</i> Correct. That's what I thought. Exactly—the Ambassador for Counter-Terrorism. Minister, when did you first find out that the two ISIS brides and their four children had actually touched</p>	<p>DFAT advised the Foreign Minister's Office on 29</p>

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		<p>down on Australian soil?</p> <p><i>Senator Wong: I'll take that on notice.</i></p> <p><i>Senator CASH: You don't know when you found out?</i></p> <p><i>Senator Wong: I was going to say that it might only have been when it was made public.</i></p> <p><i>Senator CASH: So you weren't—</i></p> <p><i>Senator Wong: It wouldn't be for this minister. It would be for Mr Burke.</i></p> <p><i>Senator CASH: But you're the Minister for Foreign Affairs.</i></p> <p><i>Senator Wong: I don't monitor everyone who comes into the country. That would be—</i></p> <p><i>Senator CASH: But this is a particular cohort that is of concern.</i></p> <p><i>Senator Wong: Yes, and I will take it on notice, but it's not necessarily something that I would be the minister to be first briefed on.</i></p> <p><i>Senator CASH: I didn't imply that you would be the minister who was first briefed on it. Given that both you and the Prime Minister have answered questions directly in relation to this matter in the parliament, I don't think anybody could deny that this has been a matter of great interest, in particular to the media, in terms of getting answers to questions. You were in Senate estimates on Tuesday as the Minister representing the Prime Minister. I'm assuming that you are aware of the reports on Wednesday that the cohort were confirmed, and you can't tell this committee when you first found out they had touched down on Australian soil?</i></p> <p><i>Senator Wong: I believe I was travelling at the time, but I will take it on notice.</i></p> <p><i>Senator CASH: Was it on the day? Did you get a call?</i></p> <p><i>Senator Wong: I've just taken it on notice. You want the information.</i></p>	September 2025.
DFAT div.	QoN no	Question	Published answer
CCD	232	<i>Senator CASH: Let's just go back. I specifically asked you on Tuesday, 'Have you been briefed on this matter?' Your response to me was, 'If you're asking me in my personal capacity, you will have to ask me</i>	1. DFAT first briefed the Foreign Minister's Office

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	<p>on Friday.' That was your response to me on Tuesday. So I'm going to ask you: when were you first briefed—not in your personal capacity, in your capacity as the minister—in relation to this particular cohort?</p> <p><i>Senator Wong:</i> I don't have the date. I will take that on notice to be accurate. I have been aware for some time that—in fact, it has been a matter of public knowledge that there is a cohort, including women and children, in the camps in Syria who wish to come home. That is public knowledge. It is well known. It was known to you. As I said, your government made it clear that you would see sporadic and occasional returns, and that is what we are seeing.</p> <p><i>Senator CASH:</i> Minister Burke didn't call you and say, 'The ISIS brides have touched back down on Australian soil'?</p> <p><i>Senator Wong:</i> I've taken that question on notice.</p> <p><i>Senator CASH:</i> Are you actually being serious?</p> <p>Senator Wong: It's the same question. You're asking me when, and I am saying to you that I have taken the question about when I was advised about the actual return to Australia on notice.</p> <p><i>Senator CASH:</i> Did Minister Burke, between when his office was briefed on 6 June—and obviously the ambassador has said that your office was sent a note on 6 June. When did you, then, first become aware? Did you have any discussions with Minister Burke at this time, or did Minister Burke have any discussions with you or your office about the return of this particular cohort?</p> <p><i>Senator Wong:</i> I'd have to take that on notice.</p>	<p>about the departure of this cohort from the Syrian IDP camps on 6 June 2025.</p> <p>2. DFAT advised the Foreign Minister's Office on 29 September 2025 that this cohort had returned to Australia.</p>
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DFAT div.	QoN no	Question	Answer
APO	239	<p>"Senator CASH: How many have made passport processing inquiries? Senator Wong: How many of who? Senator CASH: The people that have made them in Syria. Ms Veneros: I'll have to take on notice how many people in Syria have made passport inquiries. Senator CASH: Okay. Can you also take on notice when they made these passport application inquiries? Are any in the ISIS brides cohort?"</p>	<p>Between July and September 2025, the Australian Passport Office received three enquiries from individuals in Syria, one related to this cohort.</p>
CCD	262	<p>"Senator CASH: Yet on Wednesday in estimates the evidence given was that there is a broader cohort who are seeking to return to Australia. Senator Wong: Yes, there is, of course, which is what you said in 2017 and 2018. Senator CASH: Yes, so I am then asking— Senator Wong: You—as in vous, not tu; your government—made this point, there are people in Syria who want to come back to Australia. As your government said, we are likely to see a steady trickle/sporadic returns. That's what we have here. Senator CASH: Secretary, how large is this cohort? Senator Wong: Which cohort? The number of Australians in the IDP camps? We'd have to take that on notice. Senator CASH: That are seeking to come back to Australia. Ms Adams: I don't know. Senator CASH: You don't know? That's fine—you don't know. Does anyone else at the table have any idea?"</p>	<p>The Australian Government has long been aware of individuals in internally displaced persons camps in Syria with an intention to return to Australia.</p>

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DFAT div.	QoN no	Question	Answer
APO	234	<p>Ms Veneros: The timeframe it takes for a passport process depends on the level of information and the type of passport that people are applying for. It does base also on complexity of the matter in front of us.</p> <p>Senator CASH: I would put to you that this is an incredibly complex situation.</p> <p>Ms Veneros: When a passport has been applied for, we're looking at two factors particularly, and those are, as per the obligations under the act, around whether the person has citizenship and whether we're able to confirm their identity.</p> <p>Senator CASH: Yes. For the four children, the answer was, in the first instance, they did not.</p> <p>Ms Veneros: To answer the question, the advice we provide to anyone, including those overseas, is to leave at least six weeks for a passport application to be processed. That's broad advice that we provide to everyone. That doesn't mean that's the timeframe it takes. In some circumstances, it can be much shorter than that; in other circumstances, it can be longer than that.</p> <p>Senator CASH: Are you able to give me a specific figure as to how long it took, in this instance?</p> <p>Ms Veneros: I'm not able to provide you with a specific figure at this time.</p> <p>Senator CASH: Are you able to take that question on notice?</p> <p>Ms Veneros: I will take that question on notice and see what I can find.</p>	<p>All customers are advised to allow at least six weeks from lodgement of an application to receive their passport.</p>

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Supporting information

Questions on Notice

- In QoN SQ25-000269, Senator Henderson asked the Ambassador for Counter-Terrorism (AmbCT) what details were discussed during a June 6 phone call that informed AmbCT that a cohort had left a Syrian IDP camp.
- In QoN SQ25-000270, Senator Henderson asked AmbCT whether she was informed during the 6 June phone call that the cohort was heading to Lebanon.
- In QoN SQ25-000271, Senator Henderson asked when the Department was informed that the cohort was returning to Australia.
- In QoN SQ25-000273, Senator Cash asked the Foreign Minister when she was first made aware the cohort had left the camps in Syria.

Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Recent Ministerial Comments

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

- On 4 September 2025, the Minister for Trade and Tourism, Special Minister of State and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate, Senator Farrell, said 'the

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2025

Australian Government is not providing assistance to, and will not be repatriating, individuals in Syrian IDP camps’.

- On 3 September 2025, the Prime Minister stated media reporting - that ‘government officials are helping to bring ISIS terrorist brides to Australia’ - was not accurate.
- On 3 September 2025, Foreign Minister stated that ‘the Australian Government is not providing assistance and is not repatriating this cohort’. When asked if the government could guarantee there would be no threat to community safety if the individuals returned to Australia, the Foreign Minister said ‘The Government always takes the advice of our security agencies and our first priority is to keep Australians safe’.

Recent Media Reporting

- 7 November 2025, The Nightly. [Article](#) titled **New Opportunity for ISIS brides to return to Australia** reported AFP comment that more ISIS brides are expected to return to Australia but would not reveal when or how many.
- 3 October 2025, The Guardian. [Article](#) titled **‘Two Australian women and four children escape Syrian detention camp and flee to Victoria’** reported two Australian women and four children escaped a Syrian detention camp and made their own way to Victoria.
- 3 September 2025, The Independent. [Article](#) titled **‘Growing concern in Australia over reported repatriation plans for ISIS wives and children’** quoted a source ‘familiar with the situation in the Syrian camps’ saying “It’s still a matter of if, not when...You can’t do this without government support. They need to issue passports, give security clearances and brief state and territory governments about what to expect”.

s 22(1)(a)(ii) – this section, together with the following pages (62-69) are out of scope and have been removed

OFFICIAL**PASSPORT APPLICATION FOR SIX AUSTRALIANS****Key Messages**

- Any Australian can apply for and, if they meet the eligibility requirements, be issued an Australian passport.
- The Australian Passport Office assesses each application in accordance with legislative requirements.
- Applications for these Australian women and children were assessed the same way as any other Australian.

Individual cases

- Although I seek to be of assistance to the Committee, for privacy reasons, I am unable to comment on individual passport applications.
- Questions on passport applications related to individuals will be taken on notice.

Services provided to cohort

- The Australian Passport Office provides a service that is available to any Australian who requires a passport or travel document.
- In 2024-25, the Australia Passport Office provided these services to over 2.3 million Australian
 - nearly 100,000 were for Australian's abroad at the time of lodgement.

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Eligible to apply for an Australian passport

- Any Australian can apply for and, if they meet the eligibility requirements, be issued an Australian passport [Section 7(1)].
- Before issuing a passport, the delegate must be satisfied that the person is an Australian citizen and of the identity of the person [Section 8].

Applications received

- In early June 2025, DFAT responded to a request for advice on the passport application process.
- Applications for two (2) women and four (4) children were lodged in s 47F(1) .

Passport issued

- The passports were available and collected in s 47F(1) .

Application form and fees

- The Australian Passport Office provided a service that would be offered to any Australian seeking a passport or travel document.
- The applications were made on the approved overseas passport application form with the applicable fees paid.

Eligibility assessment

- Applications were assessed in accordance with standard eligibility assessment requirements.

Specifically:

- Identity is usually confirmed through facial recognition and information provided as part of a passport application.
- Australian citizenship is confirmed through information available from the Department of Home Affairs and information in passport applications.

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OFFICIAL**Child applications – special circumstances**

- For privacy reasons, I am unable to comment on these matters.

Specifically:

- Section 10(3) of the Australian Passport Determination 2015 lists the circumstances a child passport may be issued without the consent of all persons with parental responsibility.

National security

- For privacy reasons, I am unable to comment on these matters.

Specifically:

- Australian passport legislation has provisions which allow a passport application to be refused on national security grounds [Section 14].

Advised other agencies

- The Australian Passport Office participates in interagency discussions where required.

Timeframe of travel

- Once a passport has been issued, DFAT has no jurisdiction over how a passport is used, or where the citizen travels.

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OFFICIAL**Applications****PASSPORT PROCESSES****Key messages**

- Any Australian can apply for, and if they meet the eligibility requirements, be issued an Australian passport.
- The Australian Passport Office assesses each application in accordance with legislative requirements.
- We apply standard assessment processes to all applications from any Australian citizen.

Passport services

- The issuance of passports is a government service mandated by law, subject to citizenship and identity requirements.
- Section 7 of the *Australian Passports Act 2005* states
 - an 'Australian citizen is entitled, on application to the Minister, to be issued an Australian passport.
- We issue passports to Australians around the world every day
 - in 2024–25, we issued around 9,000 per day.

Services provided to Australians who need help completing an application

- Any Australian may receive advice to help them complete a passport application.
- The Australian Passport Office Contact Centre operates Monday to Friday – 8am to 5pm in each Australian time zone
 - outside of these hours, Australians can contact the department's consular emergency centre.
- Staff at Australia Post or in our Australian Passport Office will also support customers with the completion of an application or in answering questions about an application, if needed.

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- The passports website also provides step-by-step information to help individuals apply for a passport.
- If overseas, individuals can contact their nearest Australian embassy, high commission or consulate.

s 22(1)(a)(ii) – this section, together with the following pages (75-80) are out of scope and have been removed

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OFFICIAL**SYRIAN IDP CAMPS COHORT****Contacts with the passport office regarding**

- Between July and September 2025, the Australian Passport Office received three inquiries from individuals in Syria, one related to the women and children in the Syrian IDP camps [Question on Notice 239].

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

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