



Sharon Grierson MP
Federal Member for Newcastle

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MIGRANT SERVICES – STILL LOOKING FOR ANSWERS

Federal Member for Newcastle Sharon Grierson says she is still looking for answers on the continuing problems in delivery of services to humanitarian migrants in Newcastle.

On the floor of parliament last night Sharon Grierson raised her concern that the IHSS service provider in Newcastle, ACL, may have referred or assisted new settlers to access a special Centrelink one-off \$500 advanced loan payment in their initial settlement period – in one case even before receiving their first Centrelink payment.

“I am alarmed to think that new settlers may have been encouraged to go into debt by the very people who are paid under their contract with DIMA to provide these settlers with direct assistance on arrival”.

“I seek Minister Vanstone’s assurance that the private contractor, ACL, is meeting its obligation to provide humanitarian migrants to Newcastle with the assistance they need to start a new life rather than referring them to Centrelink and charities as a first resort.”

“These are very basic services – financial assistance, help to find housing, assistance with food and shopping, school enrolment and help in registering with government agencies like Centrelink.”

The Department of Immigration & Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) will today face further questioning in Senate Estimates over its handling of the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Services (IHSS) contracts for Newcastle and the Hunter.

“Sadly, eight months after questions began to be raised about the adequacy of the services being delivered to humanitarian migrants in Newcastle we are still looking for answers,” Ms Grierson said.

“If the contractors cannot get it right, we need to know why, and we need DIMA to fix it.”

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