

**SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES
OCTOBER 2025**

**Home Affairs Portfolio
Department of Home Affairs**

Program 1.2: National Security and Resilience

SE25-0027 - Australian citizens returning from Syria - can the notes from the meeting with the minister be provided

Senator James Paterson asked:

Senator PATERSON: Do you know whether the departmental official at this meeting was asked to leave the meeting at any point?

Ms Smyth: I'm not aware.

Senator PATERSON: You don't know whether the minister had a private discussion with Save the Children without the official present?

Ms Smyth: I wasn't at the meeting.

Senator PATERSON: Is it reflected in the notes of the meeting?

Ms Smyth: I can't recall all the content of the outcomes.

Senator PATERSON: Can the notes of this meeting be located and provided?

Ms Smyth: We can take that on notice.

Senator PATERSON: Is it something that's stored electronically? Is it something that someone can look for right now?

Ms Foster: We'll take on notice the form and what we can do.

Answer:

Notes from the meeting are attached.

Towards the end of the meeting, one of the participants asked for a private meeting with the Minister. The outcome of that further discussion is made clear in the attached letter from Save the Children.

From: "Hasan SOWAID"
Sent: 13/06/2025 10:57:58 AM
To: [REDACTED] "Sneha
CHATTERJEE" [REDACTED]
Cc: "Gemma SMYTH" [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Meeting brief request: Mat Tinkler, Save the Children; Kamalle Daboussy and Dr Jamil Rifi - 13 June 2025, 10:30am - 11:00am - EO Punchbowl[SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Morning all,

Quick readout from the meeting. Meeting had been shifted to a 10am start and I had planned to arrive at 10 so that allowed me to be there for the start.

Minister opened the meeting and made the following statements:

Government doesn't have a plan to get people out of the camps at this time;
The thinking is if people are able to get out, there are no blockages to them returning;
Government doesn't want to be perceived to have been paying to have them smuggled out: Thanked the reps for keeping the these cases out of the news;
Can't give a guarantee that there will be no charges - this was in response to other representations made and not from the three we meet with.

Kamalle responded with they are not naive and understand they will have to face legal repercussions if thresholds are met.

Matt reiterated the at their position is if thresholds are met, all should face the law.

He then spoke of the situation in the camps with Kurds withdrawing and that the Kurds will allow people to leave if the government would provide assurances that passports will be issued.

Minister responded that this is not something the government is considering at this time.

Kamalle spoke more on the physical and psychological impact of what is happening within the camps arising from Kurdish withdrawals as they seek to build an alliance with the Syrian forces.

The camps are becoming more militarised, intrusive and securitised. The kids are being weaponised against their mothers ie if they go beyond the fence lines they will be shot. There is a reducing range of activities further impacting on the women and children.

Minister stated there may be a way to achieve the same outcome without government undertakings.

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Kamalle asked to speak frankly given with was a small delegation and provided an undertaking that anything discussed would not be shared unless agreed to by the Minister.

At this stage, I was asked to leave by the Minister to enable a frank discussion to take place.

Regards,

Hasan

Sent by Email+

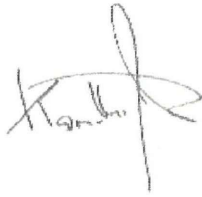
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Cross are ready and willing to provide support to the women and children on their return to Australia should that be of assistance to the Australian Government.

We emphasise that we have a critical opportunity to take advantage of support from US Central Command to bring these innocent Australian children and their carers back to Australia in a controlled and careful way.

We appreciate your urgent attention to this matter and look forward to your confirmation that travel documents have been prepared and are ready for issue.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kamalle Dabboussy', with a large, stylized flourish extending upwards and to the right.

Kamalle Dabboussy

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. Tinkler', with a long, horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mat Tinkler
On behalf of Save the Children Australia

Attachment: List of individuals to be repatriated.