

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2013-14, 5/6 & 7 June 2013

Question: E13-043

OUTCOME: 13 – Acute Care

Topic: Indigenous - Dental

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Boyce

Question:

While the most recent Closing the Gap Report (Feb 2013) indicated that in 2011-2012 3,842 dental services were delivered to 2,810 indigenous children and that the overall prevalence for children with at least one oral health problem fell by 12 per cent the Australian Dental association has called on the government to, and I quote, "ensure that comprehensive treatment is made available" and that "while fluoride varnish and fissure sealants are a good supplement ... they are not a substitute for complete dental care."

- a) What can you tell us about the fate of the project known as the \$780,000 - "Dental Drover" - last reported as sitting idle on Thursday Island for the lack of a driver and a dentist?
- b) The Commonwealth was accused of providing funding for the truck fit out but no on-going money to run it, which would seem a bit pointless. Where does the truth lie there?

Answer:

a) and b)

The funding for the Dental Drover was provided over 2010-11 and 2011-12 under the *Closing the Gap – Indigenous dental services in rural and regional areas program* through an Implementation Plan under the National Partnership Agreement on Health Infrastructure. Project locations were based on recommendations from a consultant and policy approval from the Minister for Indigenous Health.

Under the Implementation Plan, the Commonwealth provided funding towards mobile equipment, the Dental Drover and barge infrastructure. The Queensland Government is responsible for all aspects of project implementation, including the funding of any residual capital costs, and operating and maintaining the equipment for the delivery of dental services for the Indigenous populations throughout the region for a period of five years. In its June 2013 report, Queensland Health advised that the oral health service in the Torres Strait remain understaffed despite efforts to recruit to vacant positions.