

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates 26 May-6 June 2014

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Outcome/Program: 1.1 Prime Minister and Cabinet

Topic: National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development

Senator: Senator Cory Bernardi

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Type of Question: Written

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Question:

1. Is it true that the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development was designed to contribute to Closing the Gap target for access to early childhood programs in remote areas?
2. Why have centres been built in urban areas such as Belconnen in Canberra and Palmerston in Darwin and in other non-remote areas?
3. I understand that the Commonwealth provided funding for the "establishment" of the Centres. What was meant by the term "establishment"? What proof is there that this funding provided value for money to the Australian taxpayer?
4. At the time of the Agreement was there any expectation that the Commonwealth would be responsible for covering ongoing operational costs?
5. Was there any provision made by the former government for ongoing costs in the forward estimates? If not, why not?

Answer:

1. The National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development (NPA IECD) was established in 2008 to improve outcomes for Indigenous children in their early years and to contribute to Council of Australian Governments Closing the Gap targets for Indigenous Australians.
2. The National Partnership Agreement was aimed at addressing the needs of vulnerable Indigenous children across Australia. The National Partnership Agreement required that centres be established in areas with high Indigenous populations and disadvantage. The locations of the centres were nominated by the States and Territories.
3. The Commonwealth allocated funding for the establishment of Children and Family Centres under the NPA IECD. Establishment is not defined in the National Partnership Agreement and has a commonly understood meaning of initiate,

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begin or create. An evaluation of the National Partnership is being conducted and will be provided to government for consideration in late June 2014.

4 -5. The Agreement specified that it expires on 30 June 2014 and does not commit to any funding beyond its expiry. Accordingly no provision was made in the forward estimates for ongoing funding for the Children and Family Centres.