

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 Remote Indigenous Housing

Senator: Senator Cory Bernardi

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Question:

1. Please explain the responsibilities of the states and Northern Territory Governments under the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing.
2. Has NPARIH been successful in delivering on these specific responsibilities?
3. For example, what progress has the Agreement delivered on the output which calls for the "progressive resolution of land tenure on community titled land in order to secure government and commercial investment, economic development opportunities and home ownership possibilities"?
4. Please list any specific outcomes that NPARIH has delivered in terms of economic development opportunities in this area.
5. Please provide an update on progress in home ownership in remote communities. Are you aware of many cases where residents have purchased their own home?
6. Has NPARIH delivered any home ownership possibilities to support this?
7. Is the Department working on implementing any new arrangements under NPARIH to better address these priorities? How do you think you will achieve this?
8. Do you think the Northern Territory Government's recently announced sale of remote public housing policy will support better home ownership outcomes in the NT?

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Answer:

- 1 As outlined in the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH), the states and the Northern Territory (NT) are responsible for ensuring provision of standardised tenancy management and support for all Indigenous housing in remote areas, consistent with public housing standards of tenancy management. They are also responsible for developing and implementing land tenure arrangements to facilitate effective asset management, essential services and economic development opportunities.
- 2 Under NPARIH some progress been made in the provision of standardised tenancy management and the implementation of effective land tenure arrangements to support capital works.

However, there has been limited progress on reforms to broader land tenure arrangements; delivery of appropriate tenancy support services, and facilitating economic development opportunities through housing investment.

- 3 States and territories are responsible for their land tenure arrangements, and under NPARIH they are developing and implementing appropriate land tenure arrangements to facilitate home ownership and economic development. To date, progress has been slow, though the Queensland Government has made positive progress by introducing legislation that allows land holders to convert their land to freehold land. In the NT the Commonwealth has a direct legislative role in land rights and reforms. Of the 73 communities in the NT formally in scope for the NPARIH, 63 communities have tenure over public housing. However, in only five of those communities is there a tenure system in place that actively facilitates home ownership and economic development.
- 4 Some specific examples of the outcomes achieved through land tenure reform include:
 - As part of NT's 2014 budget, \$4.5 million over three years has been allocated to a new remote Indigenous home purchase strategy to give remote public housing tenants the opportunity to purchase their public housing dwelling. Since September 2013, three Statements of Commitment have been signed to negotiate 99-year township leases (which would provide tradeable tenure) in Gunbalanya, Yirrkala, and Pirlangimpi. This is in addition to the five communities with these arrangements already in place.
 - The Queensland (Qld) Government has recently introduced a Bill to allow 34 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities the right to transfer the tenure of selected land from communal ownership to freehold. The first 99 year Deed of Agreement to Lease (to secure the land and its

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improvement) in a remote Indigenous community in Qld was signed at Palm Island on 26 February 2014.

- 5 The Department continues to work with IBA to make use of its existing loan portfolio to support potential home owners, including in remote communities. As at 30 April 2014, there were 4,298 active loans administered by IBA. Nine per cent (374) of these were for dwellings in remote locations.
- 6 NPARIH has delivered outcomes (as outlined in response to question 4 and 5) by:
 - undertaking land tenure reform (detail provided in response to question 3); and
 - ensuring houses in remote Indigenous communities are at an acceptable standard, not only to provide safe and secure housing for remote residents, but also to enable housing stock to be sold.
- 7 Under NPARIH the Department is negotiating new bilateral arrangements with all states and the NT for 2014-15. These arrangements will better reflect the different requirements of each jurisdiction and the priorities of the Australian Government.
- 8 The development and implementation of the Sale of Remote Public Housing Policy in the NT will remove barriers and provide home ownership opportunities for remote residents. The Australian Government will continue to support the NT Government in achieving home ownership outcomes for Indigenous Australians in remote locations.