



MINISTER FOR INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Reference: C14/73955

Dr Dennis Jensen MP  
Chair  
Parliament of Australia  
House of Representatives  
Standing Committee on Petitions  
PO Box 6021  
PARLIAMENT HOUSE ACT 2600

*DENNIS*  
Dear Dr Jensen

Thank you for your letter of 1 September 2014 about a petition requesting an independent review of the corporate governance of Awabakal Newcastle Aboriginal Cooperative (the Co-op).

The Co-op is a major provider of services to Aboriginal people throughout Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Port Stephens and the Hunter Valley. I am advised that a review of the Co-op's financial and administrative management practices was undertaken by the Department of Health in 2012. This review recommended a course of action aimed at strengthening governance and operational practices.

The Department of Health advises that the organisation has been positively working to implement these recommendations. No misuse of Commonwealth funding was identified and the organisation's performance continues to be monitored by the Department of Health and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

The Commonwealth provides funding to the Co-op through a variety of Funding Agreements. The services and activities delivered by the organisation are monitored under the performance requirements outlined in the Agreements. As part of monitoring, staff from the relevant departments will act on any identified non-compliance issues.

Given the progress made by the organisation since 2012 to strengthen its governance and operational practices, I do not recommend an independent review of the Co-op. Similarly, given the Co-op's achievement of performance requirements in its current funding agreements, I do not recommend an independent qualitative evaluation of its services and programmes.

*Nigel Scullion*  
Yours sincerely

NIGEL SCULLION

*N/S* October 2014