

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: National Indigenous Australians Agency

Topic: Issues currently being considered by the National Indigenous Australian Agency Food Security Working Group

Senator: Siewert

Question reference number: 0145

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 June 2020

Number of pages: 2

Question:

Could you please provide a breakdown of the issues the NIAA Food Security Working Group currently looking at?

Answer:

Issues currently being considered by the National Indigenous Australians Agency Food Security Working Group.

ISSUE	STATUS
Supply of essential goods to remote communities	Active
Prioritisation by food and grocery manufacturers of essential products to remote community stores	Active
Local distribution issues of essential food and grocery products	Ongoing
Resolving delays to distribution of travel permits	Resolved
Northern Territory Government, Australian Government, Outback Stores, The Arnhem Land Progress Association (ALPA) and Metcash Limited (Metcash) seeking support from manufactures	Resolved

and suppliers	
Assisting community stores to anticipate demand for goods	Resolved
Securing supplies of winter stock including clothes	Resolved
Seeking support of the Australian Food and Grocery Council in supply	Resolved
Potential to repackage bulk food service products	Resolved
Support to small independent stores	Ongoing

From 10 June 2020, the Food Security Working Group transitioned from weekly meetings to meeting fortnightly.

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: National Indigenous Australians Agency

Topic: Reports received by the National Indigenous Australians Agency regarding food security issues in remote communities

Senator: Siewert

Question reference number: 0146

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 June 2020

Number of pages: 1

Question:

How many reports has the NIAA received of food security issues in remote communities and what have been the nature of these reports?

Answer:

There have been 100 reported food security issues during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The nature of these reports include access to supply due to travel restrictions and panic buying in other areas, pressure on store stock levels due to COVID-19 economic and supplementary payments and people returning to communities, availability of essential items such as tinned foods, flour, pasta and sanitary products, and availability of fresh foods.

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: National Indigenous Australians Agency

Topic: Resolution of food security issues in remote communities

Senator: Siewert

Question reference number: 0147

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 June 2020

Number of pages: 1

Question:

What steps have been taken to ensure food security issues are resolved quickly and effectively in remote communities?

Answer:

The COVID-19 Food Security Working Group (the Working Group) is comprised of representatives from major remote store management bodies, the food and grocery sector, state and territory governments and freight companies. Other members are co-opted as needed.

The Working Group meets regularly, initially on a weekly and now fortnightly basis, to monitor existing food security issues, identify potential issues and develop solutions to ensure issues are resolved quickly and effectively. An example of this includes approaching food and grocery manufacturers and suppliers to prioritise support for stores servicing remote Indigenous communities in response to the supply shortages and the significant increase in local demand.

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: National Indigenous Australians Agency

Topic: Freight subsidies for the supply of remote community food and essential goods

Senator: Siewert

Question reference number: 0148

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 June 2020

Number of pages: 1

Question:

Has the NIAA considered a freight subsidy for the supply of remote community food and essential goods? Why hasn't a freight subsidy been introduced? Can the NIAA provide copies of any reports addressing remote community freight subsidies?

Answer:

The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) is not currently considering freight subsidies for remote community stores.

NIAA has not conducted a recent review of literature in this area. The introduction of subsidies would be a matter for broader government consideration.

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: National Indigenous Australians Agency

Topic: Family Violence Prevention Legal Services funding

Senator: Siewert

Question reference number: 0150

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 June 2020

Number of pages: 1

Question:

Is the NIAA considering requests from the NFVPLS for urgent relief funding and the allocation of additional funding for FVPLS continuity plans? If not, why not?

Answer:

The Australian Government, through the Justice Sector Preparedness Package, is providing an additional \$63.3 million in support for the legal assistance sector (refer to QoN151 for additional information).

As part of this package, all 14 Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLS) received funding from the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) in 2019-20 for the purchase of IT and personal protective equipment. This is additional to \$3 million committed for three years from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2022 (bringing total funding to over \$75 million) to the FVPLS sector for frontline service delivery.

The NIAA has been in close contact with all FVPLS providers from the beginning of the pandemic.

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: National Indigenous Australians Agency

Topic: Protection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people experiencing family violence during COVID-19

Senator: Siewert

Question reference number: 0151

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 June 2020

Number of pages: 2

Question:

What steps is NIAA taking to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experiencing family violence are adequately supported during COVID-19?

Answer:

The Australian Government, through the Justice Sector Preparedness Package, is providing an additional \$63.3 million in support for the legal assistance sector – specifically: Legal Aid Commissions, Community Legal Centres, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services and Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLS) including:

- \$13.5 million for IT and personal protective equipment (PPE) to support the legal assistance sector to transition to online and remote service delivery
- \$49.8 million over two years to the legal assistance sector to support additional frontline services, with 40 per cent of this funding dedicated to matters involving family and domestic violence.

Additionally, the Australian Government is providing \$150 million to support Australians experiencing family, domestic and family violence as a result of COVID-19. The funding is comprised of the following elements:

- \$20 million for Commonwealth-funding programs (including 1800RESPECT and Mensline)
- \$130 million from the Commonwealth to be allocated over two years to jurisdictions (through the National Partnership on COVID-19 Domestic and Family Violence Responses) to bolster family, domestic and sexual violence supports.

This funding is one-off support package and the funding boost will support areas such as housing and emergency accommodation, crisis services, men's behaviour change programs and other perpetrator interventions. It will also support telephone counselling services such as 1800RESPECT and Mensline Australia.

To complement this, the National Indigenous Australians Agency is working with family safety service providers to access COVID-19 support to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, especially women and their children, who are experiencing family violence are adequately supported.

The package provides up to \$123 million over two financial years for targeted measures to support Indigenous businesses and communities to adapt their services to respond to COVID-19, including being able to access culturally appropriate and trauma informed care. This includes up to \$23 million for critical programs such as alcohol and other drug services, social and emotional wellbeing projects, family support and youth engagement and diversion programs.

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: National Indigenous Australians Agency

Topic: Response to reports of discriminatory policing against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people and communities

Senator: Siewert

Question reference number: 0152

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 June 2020

Number of pages: 1

Question:

What action has NIAA taken in response to reports of discriminatory policing against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities to ensure policing decisions are transparent, afford sufficient oversight and are not further contributing to the disproportionate contact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have with police and the criminal justice system?

Answer:

States and territories are responsible for their respective criminal justice systems, including policing.

The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) continues to work to establish a Custody Notification Service (CNS) in each jurisdiction to ensure this safeguard and wellbeing check is available to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people brought into police custody. Australian Government funded CNSs are being delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services in New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory, the Northern Territory and Western Australia. The NIAA is working with the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service to establish a formal CNS in the state.

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: National Indigenous Australians Agency

Topic: Collection of data related to policing of COVID-19 fines and charges against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples

Senator: Siewert

Question reference number: 0153

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 June 2020

Number of pages: 1

Question:

Is the NIAA collecting any data on the impact of policing during covid-19, allocation of covid-19 fines and charging with covid-19 related offences against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples? If so, please provide the information? If not, why not?

Answer:

The National Indigenous Australians Agency does not collect this data.

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: National Indigenous Australians Agency

Topic: Complaints regarding policing during COVID-19

Senator: Siewert

Question reference number: 0154

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 June 2020

Number of pages: 1

Question:

Has NIAA received, or is NIAA aware of, any complaints re policing during covid-19? If so, what are these complaints and how has NIAA responded?

Answer:

The National Indigenous Australians Agency has not received any complaints related to police enforcement of COVID-19 restrictions. Police operations and reporting are the responsibility of each state and territory.

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: National Indigenous Australians Agency

Topic: Supply of sanitation and PPE within correctional facilities

Senator: Siewert

Question reference number: 0155

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 June 2020

Number of pages: 1

Question:

What role is NIAA playing in ensuring there is adequate sanitation and PPE within correctional facilities?

Answer:

State and territory governments maintain responsibility for their justice systems, including the welfare of those in corrective services custody. Acknowledging the COVID-19-related risks to the safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in correctional facilities, all levels of government are working to ensure the health and safety of all parties, while ensuring essential justice services continue.

The Attorney-General's Department is the Commonwealth lead for this measure.

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: National Indigenous Australians Agency

Topic: Concerns regarding the management of COVID-19 risks within correctional facilities

Senator: Siewert

Question reference number: 0156

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 June 2020

Number of pages: 1

Question:

Does NIAA have any concerns to date, or has NIAA raised any concerns with the Minister, Department or PMO, regarding the management of covid-19 risks within correctional facilities? If so, what are they?

Answer:

State and territory governments maintain responsibility for their justice systems, including the welfare of those in corrective services custody. Acknowledging the COVID-19-related risks to the safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in correctional facilities, all levels of government are working to ensure the health and safety of all parties, while ensuring essential justice services continue.

The Attorney-General's Department is the Commonwealth lead for this measure.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: National Indigenous Australians Agency

Topic: Monitoring of policing of First Nations peoples during COVID-19

Senator: Siewert

Question reference number: 0157

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 June 2020

Number of pages: 1

Question:

What role is the NIAA doing to track and monitor policing, issuing of fines and arrests of First Nations peoples during covid-19?

Answer:

The National Indigenous Australians Agency does not collect this data.

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: National Indigenous Australians Agency

Topic: Support to Tennant Creek residents in relation to policing and military presence

Senator: Siewert

Question reference number: 0158

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 June 2020

Number of pages: 1

Question:

In mid-May, the ABC reported that members of the Tennant Creek community felt intimidated by police officers enforcing social distancing and travel restrictions. The military are reported to have been deployed to the town in March and federal police were sent in April to help at biosecurity checkpoints. An ABC article is available [here](#). Change the Record have reported that of the 48 fines issued in the Northern Territory relating to covid compliance, 15 were issued in Tennant Creek.

1. What support is the NIAA providing to Tennant Creek residents who are experiencing difficulties with the police and military presence?

Answer:

The National Indigenous Australians Agency is a member of the Tennant Creek Local Area Command meetings hosted by the local police and are actively working with stakeholders to monitor the environment and facilitate solutions where possible. Enforcement of biosecurity arrangements are a matter for the Northern Territory Government.