



STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY AFFAIRS
References Committee

7 May 2015

Ms Barbara Bennett
Deputy Secretary, Families and Communities
Department of Social Services

Dear Ms Bennett,

Inquiry into the grant tendering process by the DSS – written questions on notice

I am writing in relation to the public hearing which was held by the Senate Community Affairs References Committee in Canberra on Tuesday 21 April 2015.

In addition to the questions taken on notice during that hearing, confirmed in my letter to you of 24 April 2015, the Chair of the committee, Senator Rachel Siewert, has identified the attached written questions on notice.

The committee is proposing to hold a second hearing for the inquiry on Thursday 21 May 2015. Senator Siewert requests that you provide a response to these questions by **Wednesday 20 May 2015**, to enable the committee to consider the answers prior to the hearing.

Please don't hesitate to contact the secretariat if you have any questions in relation to this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Richard Grant
Inquiry Secretary

Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs
INQUIRY INTO THE GRANT TENDERING PROCESS BY THE DSS

Written questions taken on notice – Senator Rachel Siewert (Chair)

Department of Social Services

Question: 1

Was the decision to streamline programs a Government decision or a departmental decision?

Question: 2

Who decided which programs would be streamlined into the tender process in June – Government or the Department?

Question: 3

Did the Minister instruct the Department to open the application process on 19 June and close it on 23 July 2014? If not, who made the decision? Why was the period so soon after the budget announcement and so short a period of time?

Question: 4

On what date did the Department advise the Minister of the need to extend the application window by 24 hours?

Question: 5

On what date did the Department advise the Minister of the need to extend the assessment and decision making period on applications received from October 2014 to December 2014?

Question: 6

Is the practice of informing agencies of preferred provider status one month before providing details of the funding consistent with best practice guidelines or previous departmental practice? If not, why did this occur this time? If yes, please explain how it is consistent? Has the Department received complaints about this process?

Question: 7

Funding available for this tender process was reduced by \$30 million over four years in MYEFO in December 2014. Did this result in further extension of the assessment period?

Question: 8

When did the Department become aware of the need to provide transition funding to providers?

Question: 9

On what date was the Minister advised of the need to provide transition funding to providers?

Question: 10

Has the Department previously managed tendering of 26 funding streams or more at the same time?

Question: 11

Were the tender timeframes consistent with Commonwealth guidelines? If so, how was it consistent?

Question: 12

Was the tender process as managed by the department consistent with best practice guidelines? If so, how was it consistent?

Question: 13

Is it usual practice to publish information about the application process on the day the tender process opens or in the past has information about the application process been available prior to the opening of the application process?

Question: 14

Did the Department receive any request for the information provided in the grants services maps before they were published on 1 July 2014? If so, how many?

Question: 15

The grants services maps were published 12 days after the application round had opened and 22 days before it closed? Is this consistent with best practice guidelines? If so how is it consistent?

Question: 16

Have the grants services maps been made available in previous funding rounds? If so at what stage in the process were they made available?

Question: 17

The application checklists were published on 16 July, 7 days before the end of the application period, is this consistent with best practice guidelines? If so how is it consistent?

Question: 18

How many and of what dollar value and percentage of total funding available are the 5 year agreements from this tender process?

Question: 19

Why were some grants reduced from the promised 5 year agreements to 2, 3 or 4 year agreements?

Question: 20

Was any assessment done of the possible impact of changes and reduced funding on regional centres? If so what assessment was done? If not, why not?

Question: 21

How much was spent on consultants to help with the tendering process? Please provide a detailed breakdown of expenditure against activity?

Question: 22

Did each DSS state office assess the applications from their state? If not, how were state offices involved?

Question: 23

What was the makeup of the expert panel/s?

Question: 24

Were any applicants contacted for clarification of any aspect of their application during the assessment process? If yes, how many? What type of clarifications were sought?

Question: 25

Why were some funding programs such as the Carers support not included in this tender process?

Question: 26

Which funding stream got indexation? Please list with the percentage of indexation. Why did some funding streams get indexation and others not?

Question: 27

Please provide the criteria used for the gap analysis?

Question: 28

What data, evidence base, overarching outcomes framework, analysis or modelling was the basis for decisions about which services have been funded including where service providers have been asked to provide services to different towns or communities or with different funding amounts than tendered? Please provide this information to the committee?

Question: 29

What is the rationale for not sharing the needs analysis, program scope and design or modelling?

Question: 30

Was there an explicit intention to reduce the number of service providers and increase the scope and range of services?

Question: 31

Were there targets set for service size or regional coverage? If so, what were they?

Question: 32

What is the Department's response to the Western Australian Government submission (*Submission 84*) and do you intend to take up the offer of a trial of a partnership approach to service co-design?