

Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE Additional Estimates 2012-2013

Outcome 3 - Employment

DEEWR Question No. CA0045_13

Senator Smith asked on 15 February 2013, Hansard page 48

Question

Southern Aboriginal Corporation IEP contracts

Senator SMITH: I have two sets of questions that are broadly related. These follow representations that I had from the Southern Aboriginal Corporation which is based in Albany in the south of Western Australia. I am keen to get an update on the moratorium on the new IEP contracts that was put in place in June 2012.

Ms Taylor: I will get Ms Wood to give you the details of those. If I can explain about the IEP. At the moment, the situation with the IEP is an excellent situation in that the program has seen unprecedented demand over the last 12 months, and, at the moment, the commitments for the funding in IEP are nearly fully expended. However, as projects come on and off, there is more money freed up over the period of time. But, under the way in which the government operates with the FMA Act commitments, it is a staggered process as far as committing to further funding. That is a result of the demand for the program and the success of the high quality of applications that we have had for funding under this project. It is a fairly flexible funding pool, and there is a range of projects that have been funded in the past with excellent outcomes, and for the past financial year we have exceeded all of the outcomes in IEP. Regarding the actual detail on the program and, if we can, that particular applicant, we may have to take that on notice. Ms Wood can give some further detail. ... [p.50]

Ms Taylor: Certainly. We will also provide some information both to you and them about other portfolio opportunities and some of the training fund through the department of innovation, particularly the National Workforce Development Fund, which may be available as well. We will provide that information, Senator.

Senator SMITH: Excellent, thanks.

Answer

Following a significant increase in IEP panel membership, members were advised in May 2012 by the Department that unsolicited applications would not be considered until September 2012. This did not affect proposals with providers that demonstrated sustainable employment outcomes and were supported by employers and the community; or any applications received from employers, Indigenous businesses and community. All IEP applicants were advised of these arrangements and acceptance of unsolicited panel member applications resumed from 17 September 2012.

From 27 August to 22 October 2012 there was a short pause on all Australian Government grant funding rounds to allow the Government to examine all spending; and to provide ongoing scope for monetary policy to respond to economic developments.

During this time there was also a high demand for IEP funding resulting in a prioritisation of all applications. This resulted in some delays in the assessment of some projects.

Currently, IEP applications are still being received and continue to be prioritised and funded with a focus on those projects that will result in the strongest employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people.

Apart from the IEP, other funding opportunities that the Southern Aboriginal Corporation (SAC) may be able to access include the suite of programs under the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education Australian Government Skills Connect Program including the National Workforce Development Fund (NWDF).

Under Skills Connect employers have access to people with expertise specific to their industry or region, including Industry Skills Councils. Employers also have access to a simple, streamlined application process for up to six different Australian Government training and workforce development programs that provide support for:

- Australian apprentices;
- literacy, language and numeracy support; and
- assistance with developing or improving the skills of employees.

The NWDF is one of these programs that presently supports a number of projects that provide training for Indigenous people.

Regional Education Skills and Jobs (RESJ) Coordinators, funded by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, could also assist. The RESJs are engaged across the 46 RDA regions that cover non-metropolitan Australia and coordinate and integrate existing programs that include education, skills and jobs activities. SAC was recently assisted by the South West Western Australian RESJ.