

Senate Community Affairs Committee
ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
FAMILIES, HOUSING, COMMUNITY SERVICES AND
INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO
2011-12 Budget Estimates Hearings

Outcome Number: 7

Question No: 200

Topic: Mai Wiru and Outback Stores

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Scullion asked:

Statement: In another program the Government has provided for the establishment of the “Outback Stores”, a body whose aims are remarkably similar to Mai Wiru, in that they manage community owned stores for the benefit of the people, with a particular emphasis on providing healthy food and advice at the lowest possible price to these remote communities. The stores management was initially established under the umbrella of the Indigenous Business Australia with a grant of \$48.1m in 2006. This was followed by a further \$29.1m in 2007 and yet another \$15m in 2009/10. My information says that control of the “Outback Stores” has now been transferred from Indigenous Business Australia to FaHCSIA and the organisation is managing 21 stores.

Q: Given that Outback Stores is currently managing 21 stores and has been given \$82.2m over the last 5 years to do so, has the department compared the efficiency of Mai Wiru and Outback Stores? Considering Mai Wiru have been granted just \$450k over the last twelve months to manage 9 stores, how does this compare with the more than \$82m provided to Outback Stores to manage 21 stores over the last 5 years?

Answer:

The functions are not comparable. Outback Stores is responsible for the full operation of its stores. It received an initial funding injection under the previous government to establish the company. Funding provided since then is directed through Outback Stores to support specific community store projects approved by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. The funding addresses urgent infrastructure and other needs beyond the capacity of the store to address. The funding is also accessed when the Department requests Outback Stores to manage otherwise unviable stores that are important to local food security.