

Senate Community Affairs Committee
ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
FAMILIES, HOUSING, COMMUNITY SERVICES AND
INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO
2012-13 Budget Estimates Hearings

Outcome Number: 7

Question No: 306

Topic: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Expenditure

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Siewert asked:

The Strategic Review of Indigenous Expenditure report found that mainstream agencies need to implement reforms to provide effective policy and services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients. What action has the Government taken since this report to further this goal?

Answer:

The Government is committed to improving engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the design and implementation of programs and services intended to assist in Closing the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage.

The Council of Australian Governments agreed in 2009 to a National Urban and Regional Service Delivery Strategy for Indigenous Australians (URS) to coordinate the delivery of services to Indigenous Australians in urban and regional locations. The URS is included as Schedule B to the National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA). The URS draws on the significant investments of Indigenous-specific and mainstream National Partnership Agreements in health, housing and homelessness, early childhood, education and economic participation to progress the Closing the Gap targets in urban and regional locations.

As noted in the NIRA an important feature of the COAG framework is the focus on achievement of outcomes through the renegotiated National Agreements, and mainstream National Partnership agreements. These agreements aim to improve outcomes for a wide range of citizens, including Indigenous citizens and disadvantaged citizens more generally. Some National Partnerships (such as Improving Teacher Quality) include Indigenous specific outcomes. Further information on the National Agreements and National Partnership agreements can be found at Schedule C to the NIRA.

In addition, COAG has agreed to a National Framework for Reporting Expenditure on Services to Indigenous Australians. This provides governments with a better understanding of the level and patterns of expenditure on services to Indigenous Australians and assists policy makers to target policies to Close the Gap in Indigenous Disadvantage.

The inaugural Indigenous Expenditure Report, released in 2011, shows that most of the effort in Closing the Gap already occurs through investments in mainstream programs and services: 77 per cent compared to 23 per cent Indigenous-specific expenditure.