

# Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

## BUDGET ESTIMATES - 29 MAY 2012 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

### Human Services Portfolio

**Topic:** National Multicultural Advisory Group

**Question reference number:** HS 2

**Senator:** Fifield

**Type of question:** Hansard pages 59-62

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 27 July 2012

**Number of pages:** 2

#### Question:

- a) Senator FIFIELD: Are the terms of reference for the group available?  
Mr Tidswell: Yes, they would be.  
Senator FIFIELD: Would you be able to provide those to the committee?  
Mr Tidswell: We will take that on notice.  
Senator FIFIELD: Thank you. And also a list of members of the group.
- b) Senator FIFIELD: In the advice from last estimates, the estimated total average operating costs, excluding staff, per meeting was \$30,000. What does that \$30,000 cover? Is that airfares and accommodation and booking the meeting space for the annual meeting?  
Ms Ramsey: That is right. We pay the costs of the people who attend, and that includes meals over lunchtime et cetera and any accommodation costs if they are away from home overnight.  
Senator FIFIELD: Does it cover anything else other than accommodation, transport and meals?  
Ms Ramsey: I am unaware that it does, but I would like to take that on notice and confirm the accuracy of my response.  
Senator FIFIELD: Thank you.
- c) Senator FIFIELD: I am just trying to get a handle on the nature of the work that they do. Do the members of the advisory group receive an honorarium of any sort or a daily meeting fee?  
Ms Ramsey: I would need to take that on notice. I am unaware of the historical arrangements.  
Senator FIFIELD: If you could—and I would be interested in whether that \$30,000 figure includes any meeting fee that they receive.  
Mr Tidswell: My sense, over many years, is that that is not the case. We have not paid for people to attend or to provide us advice. A lot of these people are members of community organisations and groups. In a sense, it is the cost of the airfares, travel and accommodation. We will take that on notice to make sure that we get all the details.
- d) Senator FIFIELD: Would the minutes of the consultative group be available or something that could be tabled?  
Mr Sandison: I will take that on notice.  
Senator FIFIELD: Okay. Perhaps it could also be taken on notice, Ms Campbell, for the multicultural affairs consultative group as well.

**Answer:**

- a) Terms of Reference, including membership, are attached.
- b) The \$30,000 operational cost also covers venue hire.
- c) No.
- d) Draft minutes of the face-to-face meeting held on 6-7 July 2011 are attached. The minutes will be tabled at the next meeting scheduled for August 2012.



## National Multicultural Advisory Group Terms of Reference

The role of the National Multicultural Advisory Group is to provide advice to Human Services Portfolio agencies on all aspects of service to customers from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, including:

- The quality and effectiveness of service provided by Human Services Portfolio agencies
- The impact of new and existing policies and/or legislation on customer service
- Future service delivery developments
- Opportunities to build a stronger community in partnership with Human Services Portfolio agencies.

The group will achieve this by:

- Monitoring and providing feedback on
  - The quality and effectiveness of customer service
  - The equity of outcomes
  - Departmental multicultural policies for customers from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds
- Contributing to the development and improvement of customer service standards and practices for customers from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, including identification of best practices
- Actively soliciting and providing a focus for the input of community agencies, customer representative groups and customers
- Promoting ideas and opportunities for community partnerships in building a stronger community
- Advising client departments on the impact on customers from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds of changes to policies or procedures, by both client and related departments
- Receiving timely information from Human Services Portfolio agencies on issues critical to the above.

**Membership:** Chair/Executive Director/President/Convenor (or their nominated representative) of -

- Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia (FECCA)
  - Senior Deputy Chairs
  - Regional Deputy Chair
  - Women's Chair
  - Young FECCA Chair
  - New and Emerging Communities Convenor
- National Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (NMYAN)
- National Association for Multicultural and Ethnic Children's Services (NAMECS)
- Network of Immigrant and Refugee Women of Australia Inc (NIRWA)
- Settlement Council of Australia (SCoA)
- National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA)
- National Welfare Rights Network
- Refugee Council of Australia

The following may also be invited to attend meetings:

- A state or territory Ethnic Communities' Council or Multicultural Communities' Council
- A representative from a new and emerging community

**Frequency of meetings:** Three meetings will be held throughout the year. They will be held every four months and will consist of:

- One face to face meeting mid-year in Canberra
- Two informal meetings in Sydney— interstate participants will phone in while local participants will be given the option to either phone in or attend in person.

**Administration:** The Department of Human Services will provide secretariat services and meet basic travel and accommodation costs of members as required.



# MINUTES

National Multicultural Advisory Group  
Parliament House & Rydges Capital Hill  
Canberra ACT  
6 & 7 July 2011

## Day 1, Wednesday 6 July 2011 Parliament House – Senate Alcove

### 1. Welcome

*Karen Long, Acting National Manager, Multicultural Services Branch, Department of Human Services*

Karen opened proceedings and welcomed The Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP, Senator Kate Lundy, Kathryn Campbell, Secretary of the Department of Human Services, NMAG members and observers from various government agencies. She noted this was the 13<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the NMAG and thanked the community for their continuing participation and support.

☞ Refer to **Attachment A** for a full list of participants, speakers, observers and apologies.

### 2. Address by the Minister for Human Services and Minister for Social Inclusion

*The Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP*

Minister Plibersek spoke about the changing landscape of the Department of Human Services and the Government. She talked about the importance of the government's multicultural policy, the fact that Australia is a multicultural nation and how it should be celebrated and embraced.

Minister Plibersek mentioned that almost all Australians will interact with the Department of Human Services at some time in their lives, and that all services should be equally accessible to all Australians and the Government is always looking to improve services to its clients. She talked about case co-ordination trials and Local Connections to Work sites being rolled out across the country as well as the need for more co-design, outreach and early intervention.

Minister Plibersek finished by recognising the important role that NMAG members play, how their feedback and suggestions help the government to provide better services and influence future outcomes.

Some of the issues discussed by the group with the Minister were:

- The cultural issues related to the roll out of Income Management to sites with high numbers of multicultural customers such as Bankstown in NSW
- The need to evaluate Income Management using an evidence base
- The need to communicate well with the community given the challenges of a policy like Income Management

### **3. Community Caucus**

*Facilitated by Pino Migliorino, Chair, Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA)*

The Community Caucus was a closed session at the request of NMAG members. The NMAG members outlined the issues discussed and the role of the members in raising and progressing these.

☞ Refer to **Attachment B** for details of issues raised during the community caucus.

### **4. Address by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration and Citizenship**

*Senator Kate Lundy*

Senator Lundy spoke about 'The People of Australia - Australia's Multicultural Policy' and the importance of access and equity. She said that the launch of 'The People of Australia' reaffirms the Government's commitment to multiculturalism and that this has been a long time coming.

The Senator spoke of initiatives developed as a result of 'The People of Australia', including the creation of a new Australian Multicultural Council. She mentioned how the Council will strengthen the access and equity principles and implement the strategy and how there will be an inquiry to determine how well the Government incorporates and addresses the needs of people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds as it relates to access and equity.

The Senator spoke of the Settlement Outcomes for New Arrivals (SONA) Report and how the Report indicated that Centrelink was the easiest agency to access, while Job Services Australia was the least accessible. She stated that the government will need to look at the outcomes from the report and mentioned that data from the report was manipulated and used to report misleading information in the media.

The group discussed the obvious benefits of having a multicultural policy and how this has made it easier to have discussions across portfolios. Senator Lundy indicated that multiculturalism is now seen as a Whole of Government response and that more conversations have been had as a result of the new policy than ever before.

Some of the issues raised were the need:

- for greater engagement in the Access and Equity enquiry that will be conducted
- to include a disability focus in the policy
- to use information and strategies from the States that are currently available rather than attempting to reinvent the wheel

### **5. National Multicultural Reference Group Minutes 2010**

*Karen Long, Acting National Manager, Multicultural Services Branch, Department of Human Services*

Minutes from 2010 National Multicultural Reference Group (NMRG) of 17 – 18 July 2010 were tabled and accepted.

### **6. Service Delivery Reform and Multicultural Servicing**

*Kathryn Campbell, Secretary, Department of Human Services*

Kathryn spoke of the new Department of Human Services, the value of its heritage and its commitment to continue to provide quality customer service.

She talked about Service Delivery Reform and the Public Service Blueprint. Kathryn mentioned how the Blueprint fleshes out the government's commitments and what it is doing to improve services to better meet people's needs and make it easier to access these services.

Kathryn talked about the Department's single portfolio web and phone service, co-located offices and mobile and outreach services. She indicated there will be more convenient options to customers who prefer to manage their own affairs and extra assistance for people who need more intensive support and those with complex needs.

The group raised issues related to the:

- differing levels of staff expertise and competence – Centrelink is best practice in the multicultural space and the different parts of the Department can learn from each other
- challenges of refugee servicing and the expectation that refugee customers travel to Refugee Servicing Units even if they live quite far from them.

**Action 1** – Karen Long to liaise with Pino Migliorino and Louise Olliff to obtain further details related to refugees being asked to travel in order to be provided with a DHS service.

## 7. Income Management

*Roxanne Ramsey, General Manager, Indigenous, Regional and Remote Servicing Division, Department of Human Services*

Roxanne spoke about the types of Income Management in the Northern Territory and Western Australia and how these differ:

- Income Management is rolled out to anyone living in the Northern Territory.
- The Western Australian model is linked to child protection in Perth and the Kimberley. People must be referred by Child Protection agencies or they can participate voluntarily.

Roxanne also covered the definition of "vulnerable" as it pertains to Income Management and the indicators used to determine this.

Some of the issues discussed were the:

- potential for customers **not** to disclose vulnerability if they fear there is a risk that they will be income managed
- need for financial literacy to go with income management, as well as further work being done on the messaging to the community
- need for members to monitor the situation and have further discussions with DHS

**Action 2** – Susan Cartwright to be invited to have a discussion with NMAG members on Income Management.

End of Day One

**Day 2, Thursday 7 July 2011**  
**Rydges Capital Hill – Forrest Room 1**

**1. New Structure and Service Delivery**

*Brenda Parkes, General Manager, Families Division, Department of Human Services*

Brenda provided members with details of the Department's new structure. She spoke about Centrelink and Medicare coming together with more than 500 sites across the country, a move away from individual service delivery silos into one Department.

Brenda spoke about how the Department of Human Service will provide agile service delivery options, allowing it to be responsive to people's needs. She also mentioned that there will be better access to online services and increased technological capabilities.

☞ Refer to **Attachment C** for a copy of the presentation.

**2. Service Zones**

*Graham Maloney, General Manager, Access Service Division, Department of Human Services*

Graham gave an overview of the new Service Zones. He advised that:

- the number of Zones across Australia will be 16, increasing from the previous 15 Centrelink Areas
- a number of zone boundaries remain unchanged although a small number across New South Wales and Queensland are significantly different
- staff are not restricted by Zone boundaries and where applicable they can service across Zone boundaries
- there are enormous internal changes taking place, but it is still business as usual for customers
- community engagement will continue at the local level, and
- the role of Zone Service Leaders will become more complex, they will be responsible for performance and community engagement.

**3. Smart Centres**

*Mandy Ritchie, General Manager, Smart Centres Division, Department of Human Services*

Mandy spoke of the integration of Call Centres and processing services. She stated that:

- The Department has a large Call Centre capability and 153 processing teams. Services will be streamlined and activities coordinated to free up services for more vulnerable customers. There is a focus on moving suitable people into the online space.
- Multicultural customers currently use online services, but the Department realises it is not realistic to expect all customers to use online services.
- Technology is a significant enabler. Work management systems are being put in place to distribute work according to demand. Documents are scanned and tagged to customer records electronically. Work can then be completed by any of the 12,000 Call Centre and processing team staff trained to process this work.

☞ Refer to **Attachment D** for a copy of the presentation.

**4. Panel Discussion – Topics and Presenters as per Sessions 1 – 3**

*Facilitated by Amie Meers, Solicitor, and Community Education and Liaison Officer, National Welfare Rights Network*

The panel session covered content on the new structure and service delivery, Service Zones and Smart Centres that were discussed in the morning session. The following items were discussed:

- The use of technology and bilingual skills in the workforce - The Department is developing a new work management system to identify where skills are, and how they can be used to meet work demand and the needs of customers; this includes the use of bilingual staff.
- The need to consider competencies of multicultural customers – The Department is not ready technologically; however a great deal of work is being done in the online space and in forms.
- How the Department sees itself working with Non Government Organisations in the future – Increased focus on the community engagement strategy has seen a broadening of the Service Leader role to include more community engagement.
- The need for a monitoring role to ensure people with disability do not fall through the gaps – Recognising disabilities presents many challenges especially when dealing with customers with mental health issues. The role of the Service Leader is to identify those gaps and prevent them.
- Service expansion in regional and remote areas – In time all DHS service centres will have a broader range of services; this includes regional and remote areas.
- How community issues can be included in policy and service delivery development – This can be achieved through co-design processes.

**5. Ongoing Consultation and engagement considering the new environment**

*Pino Migliorino, Chair, Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia*

Pino discussed the continued value of the NMAG meeting. He indicated there is a need for the Multicultural Services Branch to be consulted at the beginning of any process for developing service delivery to ensure that multicultural issues are embedded in the design solution.

Pino outlined NMAG members' preference for ongoing consultation and engagement. The group feel it is important to continue to meet annually in the current format however they would like further consultations to also take place throughout the year.

Pino proposed that two additional informal meetings be held in either Sydney or Melbourne with an option for interstate members to phone in. NMAG members suggested that topical information be emailed on a regular basis.

**6. The New Humanitarian Settlement Services**

*Vincent Giuca, Assistant Secretary, Refugee Support Branch, Department of Immigration and Citizenship*

Vincent provided an overview of the new Humanitarian Settlement Service and he talked about national coverage in 24 contract regions and program enhancements. Vincent advised the Humanitarian Settlement Services Program will provide a better case management service that will see plans developed for individuals and families, a more flexible approach to accommodation, the delivery of good quality household items, a greater focus on youth and an expanded onshore orientation program.



He also spoke about a greater emphasis on regional settlement with three new areas: Geelong, Wollongong, Hunter.

Some of the issues discussed were:

- The increased mobility of young people issued with visa subclass 866. This impacts on how services are equipped to deal with unexpected arrivals
- The need for early warning of arrivals
- The possibility of including KPIs in the case coordination framework for HSS providers around employment and vocational pathways

**7. Update on Case Coordination and what it will mean for refugee servicing**  
*Nirvana Zambon, Placed Based Branch, Department of Human Services*

Nirvana provided an overview of Case Coordination. She stated that:

- case coordination is a key part of Service Delivery Reform
- case coordination aims to connect people to appropriate services in their community, improve outcomes and create opportunities for engagement especially for disadvantaged and vulnerable customers, and
- there will be 19 Case Coordination sites implemented in 2011-12 with more sites in the following two years.

☞ Refer to **Attachment E** for a copy of the presentation.

**8. Employment Assistance for Refugees**

*Irena Gorgiev, Acting Assistant Manager, Multicultural Services Branch, Department of Human Services*

Irena provided information about employment assistance for refugees. She spoke about the success of the Fairfield and Broadmeadows Initiatives and how Fairfield has assisted 138 young refugees while four Broadmeadows participants were employed by Centrelink.

☞ Refer to **Attachment F** for a copy of the presentation.

**9. Budget – New Announcement**

*Rocio Perri, Acting Business Manager, Multicultural Services Branch, Department of Human Services*

Rocio provided an overview of some of the major budget measures announced in the May 2011 Budget.

☞ Refer to **Attachment G** for a copy of the presentation.

**10. Workshop**

*Facilitated by Abeselom Nega, New and Emerging Communities Convenor, Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia*

The group discussed where there are currently gaps in programs and services to assist refugees into employment as well as what can be done to address these.

☞ Refer to **Attachment H** for a copy of the workshop notes.

☞ Refer to **Attachment I** for a copy of What Works – Employment Strategies for Refugee and Humanitarian Entrants.

☞ Refer to **Attachment J** for a copy of a presentation developed by Abeselom Nega.

**11. Summary and Close**

*Karen Long, Acting National Manager, Multicultural Services Branch, Department of Human Services*

Karen closed the conference, assuring the group that the Centrelink will follow up the issues raised at this year's NMAG and advise members accordingly.

Returning NMAG members commented that this was one of the best NMAG conferences they had attended partly due to the flexibility exercised over the two days which saw changes to the agenda to allow free flowing and topical discussions.

It was agreed that two additional informal meetings will be held every four months. Members will be able to attend these meetings either in person or telephone. Regular information will also be emailed to members on a regular basis.

**The conference closed at 4:30pm.**

## **LIST OF ATTACHMENTS**

- Attachment A** List of participants, speakers, observers and apologies
- Attachment B** Community Caucus
- Attachment C** New Structure and Service Delivery Presentation – Brenda Parkes
- Attachment D** Smart Centre Presentation – Mandy Ritchie
- Attachment E** Case Coordination Overview – Nirvana Zambon
- Attachment F** Employment Assistance for Refugees – a focus on pathways – Irena Gorgiev
- Attachment G** Budget Overview – Rocio Perri
- Attachment H** Workshop Notes
- Attachment I** What Works – Employment Strategies for Refugee and Humanitarian Entrants