

Chapter 5

Cross Portfolio Indigenous Matters

5.1 This chapter contains key issues discussed during the 2013-2014 budget estimates hearings for cross portfolio Indigenous matters pursuant to Resolution of the Senate of 26 August 2008.¹ The following portfolio departments were in attendance:

- Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
- Health and Ageing
- Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

5.2 The committee heard evidence from portfolio departments on Friday 7 June 2013. Areas of the portfolios were called in the following order:

- General Matters
- Closing the Gap
- Stronger Futures
- Health Issues
- Indigenous Land Corporation
- Indigenous Business Australia
- Employment and Economic Development
- Indigenous Housing

*General Matters*²

5.3 Discussion under general matters began with a return to questions around the resignation and reappointment of Indigenous Land Corporation CEO Bruce Gemmill. Senator Scullion tabled a letter from the minister to the former Chair of the Indigenous Land Corporation concerning processes around CEO appointments. The committee then discussed the Commonwealth's role in the provision of municipal services,³ before moving to questions around a particular grant directed to putting on a cultural festival in Alice Springs.⁴

1 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 22, 26 August 2008, p. 683.

2 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 7 June 2013, pp 4–11.

3 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 7 June 2013, p. 7.

4 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 7 June 2013, p. 9.

Closing the Gap and Stronger Futures⁵

5.4 Discussion commenced with questions about the review process for the National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA). FaHCSIA officers noted that the review was conducted through COAG processes and that results of the review could be found on the COAG website.⁶ The committee then had questions around the latest Closing the Gap Report, including around life expectancy, and the breakdown of data. The department confirmed that the next set of life expectancy data published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics would be able to be broken down by remoteness region.⁷ The committee also discussed Closing the Gap literacy and numeracy targets,⁸ before moving to a discussion of early childhood education targets and early intervention programs.

5.5 The committee's questions under stronger futures focused on referrals to income management through the current Northern Territory Alcohol and Other Drugs Tribunal. The Northern Territory Government announced its proposal to disband the tribunal in May, and there was a general discussion around what the process around income management referrals will be once the Tribunal is disbanded.⁹

Health Issues¹⁰

5.6 The committee asked officers from the Department of Health and Ageing to provide an update on the negotiations around renewing the National Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes.¹¹ The committee was interested in the progress of implementation plans and agreements with the Northern Territory on which some components of Commonwealth health funding were contingent,¹² such as some funding for community health organisations.

5.7 The committee then asked a range of questions about efforts to curb indigenous smoking.¹³ The committee inquired into funding and evaluation for the program and into the in-school component for the anti-smoking program.¹⁴

5 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 7 June 2013, pp. 11–18.

6 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 7 June 2013, p. 11.

7 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 7 June 2013, p. 12.

8 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 7 June 2013, p. 14.

9 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 7 June 2013, p. 17.

10 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 7 June 2013, pp. 18–45.

11 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 7 June 2013, p. 18.

12 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 7 June 2013, p. 23.

13 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 7 June 2013, p. 25.

14 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 7 June 2013, p. 27.

5.8 The committee's discussion of indigenous mental health focused particularly on measures to prevent suicide amongst indigenous Australians.¹⁵ There was then an extended discussion of renal services.¹⁶ Officers of the Department of Health and Ageing provided the committee with some detail about the movement of unexpended funds to support work in this area.¹⁷ The committee expressed concern over the potential for funds directed to renal services to be lost, as state and territory governments hold responsibility for renal service provision, and extra services directed to dialysis are contingent on agreements between the Commonwealth and the particular state or territory.

5.9 The committee also had questions about the government's discussions with the Northern Territory around the Alcohol Mandatory Treatment Bill,¹⁸ and measures directed to combatting petrol sniffing, particularly around storage facilities for low aromatic fuel in Darwin and other areas.¹⁹

Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC)²⁰

5.10 There was a discussion with the ILC and officers of FaHCSIA around the processes for providing answers to questions on notice.²¹ Senator Scullion then moved to questions around the legislative criteria governing the makeup of the ILC board, and other questions about governance of the Agency.

Indigenous Business Australia (IBA)²²

5.11 Senator Scullion began by congratulating the IBA on actions to improve the employment outcomes of the investments held by the Agency.²³ There were then questions for the agency about additional funding for certain investments,²⁴ and the legal obligations of the Agency in relation to its involvement in the Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park.²⁵ At the end this session, Mr Chris Fry, CEO, tabled a letter from himself to the committee which addressed a matter reported in the media with reference to Mr Fry's role as CEO in appearing before the committee during Senate Estimates.

15 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 7 June 2013, p. 29.

16 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 7 June 2013, p. 33.

17 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 7 June 2013, p. 34.

18 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 7 June 2013, p. 40.

19 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 7 June 2013, p. 43.

20 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 7 June 2013, pp 46–52.

21 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 7 June 2013, p. 47.

22 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 7 June, pp 52–56.

23 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 7 June 2013, p. 52.

24 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 7 June 2013, p. 54.

25 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 7 June 2013, p. 55.

Employment and Economic Development²⁶

5.12 There was a wide ranging discussion on the Remote Jobs and Communities Program (RJCP), including around the announcement of providers approved for the program, and plans in place for these organisations to be operational commencing 1 July 2013. Officers of the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations provided an explanation of the allocation of funding among RJCP regions.²⁷ There was also a discussion of the application process for the program, including around selection criteria for applications.²⁸ Other items discussed included:

- Community Action Plans (CAPs);
- Community Development Fund (CDF);²⁹ and
- the Indigenous Youth Careers pathway program.³⁰

Indigenous Housing³¹

5.13 The final item on the program commenced with a discussion around the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP), focusing on elements around the wind-up of this program, such as the number of people who completed apprenticeships or training under the SIHIP.³² The committee also discussed the Home ownership on Indigenous Land Program,³³ and the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH).³⁴ Officers of FaHCSIA provided the committee with a copy of the latest review of the NPARIH, and answered questions about land tenure reform, and work to achieve leasing in the Northern Territory.

Senator Claire Moore Chair

26 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 7 June 2013, pp 56–71.

27 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 7 June 2013, p. 58.

28 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 7 June 2013, p. 61.

29 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 7 June 2013, p. 68.

30 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 7 June 2013, p. 70.

31 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 7 June 2013, pp 71–77.

32 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 7 June 2013, p. 73.

33 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 7 June 2013, p. 74.

34 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 7 June 2013, p. 77.