

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

Outcome Number: 7

Question No: 445

Topic: ANAO Report

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Scullion asked:

The ANAO performance audit report Australian Government Coordination Arrangements for Indigenous Programs said that;

- 'FaHCSIA...has not been strongly proactive in exercising it's lead agency role'
- 'Overall coordination efforts are not generally resulting in more integrated delivery of services to indigenous people...fragmentation of activity on the ground remains an issue'
- 'FaHCSIA is not tracking, monitoring and reporting on the full picture of indigenous expenditure. There is considerable scope for the department to enhance its financial reporting'.

Could the department provide it's response to these serious deficiencies on its performance for Indigenous Australians?

Answer:

The ANAO did not find that there are serious deficiencies in FaHCSIA's performance.

The ANAO report acknowledges the significant challenge associated with effectively coordinating multiple policies across multiple agencies and levels of Government and it identifies areas where there may be opportunities to improve the effectiveness of coordination.

The report also highlights the work FaHCSIA is undertaking to strengthen its strategic oversight role and to improve coordination arrangements across Australian Government agencies.

The ANAO finds that there are comprehensive governance and accountability arrangements in place. This effort includes working with other Secretaries through the Secretaries Committee on Social Policy, with senior executives from other agencies through the Executive Coordination Reform for Indigenous Affairs and with state and territory governments through the COAG Working Group on Indigenous Reform.

With regard to the coordination of service delivery, the report finds that services are being integrated but that service integration continues to be a challenge for all levels of government and there are opportunities to improve outcomes in this area.

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

The report highlights examples of service integration that have already occurred in the Northern Territory, South Australia and Queensland. FaHCSIA will continue its effort to better integrate services on the ground where it is sensible and where there is a clear benefit in doing so.

Reporting expenditure and outcomes in areas that cut across levels of government and policy sectors is an issue for all jurisdictions, including the Commonwealth.

To address this issue, the Council of Australian Governments established the COAG Reform Council to provide independent, evidence-based assessments of the performance of Australian governments, including in relation to the performance under the National Indigenous Reform Agreement.

COAG has also committed to reporting transparently on expenditure on services to Indigenous Australians and in 2008 established the Indigenous Expenditure Report Steering Committee under the auspices of the Ministerial Council for Federal Financial Relations.

The inaugural Indigenous Expenditure Report (IER) was released on 28 February 2011 and provided comprehensive and comparable information on expenditure by the Australian, State and Territory Governments on Indigenous services. The second report was released on 4 September 2012.

FaHCSIA welcomes the ANAO report and has agreed to all of its recommendations.