Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES - 18 OCTOBER 2012
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Human Services Portfolio

Topic: Staff in APY Lands

Question reference number: HS 25

Senator: Siewert
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Question:

Senator SIEWERT: ….. How many additional staff have you put on APY Lands to deal with the rollout of income management there?

Mr Tidswell: I would have to check on the specific details, but I think it varies. Again, the normal processes are the implementation, the merchant side, the engagement with the community and then those staff involved in the actual interviews. In relation to putting on new staff versus bringing them in, I think I would have to—

Senator SIEWERT: Perhaps I can rephrase that. Do you have new staff, or have you brought in additional staff—and how many additional staff have you brought in?

Mr Tidswell: We have weekly visits to the APY Lands. Obviously because of location Alice Springs is the logical location for a hub—to move people south into the APY Lands, that is the natural hubbing point. In fact, people move north from the APY Lands for hospital care and other things. So it is a natural connection. We have moved some people into Alice Springs from the rest of the country. As you know, the Northern Territory is a hard place to retain labour, so we have had some extra staff who have come in, and we are moving through a normal rotation cycle for staff to provide those services in the APY Lands. I am searching at the moment to find out exactly how many staff we have deployed in there. Somebody might be able to give me that figure shortly; I just do not think I have it with me at this stage.

Senator SIEWERT: Maybe while they are looking for that figure we could work out how many of those social workers—

Mr Tidswell: We will check to see if we have that. Ms Ramsey might have that.

Ms Ramsey: Senator, was your question about staff generally, or about social work staff in APY?

Senator SIEWERT: Both. I am after the number of new staff, the number of existing staff who have been redeployed and the number of additional social workers.

Ms Ramsey: The numbers will vary. When we introduce income management, the teams go in to do the talking about what income management is about, to meet with communities and to have community meetings. There are currently four teams in the APY Lands, each with three or four staff, depending on which sites they are going to.

They are doing quite an intensive lot of visiting at the moment in relation to the introduction to income management and talking to people about what it is about and how it works—how the Basics card works, et cetera. Once that phase is completed, which will happen over about eight weeks, we will go back to the normal visiting schedule of three to four weeks schedule, depending on how many sites they go to and what the populations are. So it changes. I will need to take this on notice, but I can give you a more descriptive example of the actual schedules. It varies according to what stage we are in.

Senator SIEWERT: Thank you.

Answer:

Prior to September 2011, the Department usually had two staff from the hub in Alice Springs delivering departmental services in the APY Lands. This included the equivalent of one part-time (0.25) Social Worker.

During the initial implementation phase of Income Management, the Department has 12 staff from the hub in Alice Springs delivering departmental services in the APY Lands. This includes two to three Social Workers. These additional staff have been temporarily relocated to Alice Springs from other parts of the Department for the initial implementation phase.

Following the initial implementation phase of Income Management, the Department will have four staff from the hub in Alice Springs delivering departmental services to the APY Lands on an ongoing basis. This will include one full-time Social Worker.