

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES 2010-2011

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Question: PM18

Topic: Ministerial Council for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

Asked By: Senator Siewert

Type of Question: written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 15 April 2011

Number of pages: 3

- 1. Why was the Ministerial Council for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and dissolved?**
- 2. Can you give a summary of the work up-to-date of the Council?**
- 3. Can you outline which tasks remained incomplete at the time that the Council was dissolved?**
- 4. Which body is now responsible for the completion of each of those tasks?**
- 5. Has this body received additional resources to undertake these tasks?**

Specifically:

- a. Who is now responsible for the six targets of the National Indigenous reform agreement?**
 - 1. Close the life expectancy gap within a generation**
 - 2. Halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade**
 - 3. Ensure all Indigenous four year olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education within five years**

- 4. Halve the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing, numeracy within a decade**
 - 5. Halve the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020**
 - 6. Halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade.**
- b. Who is now responsible for the associated National Partnership Agreements?**
 - 1. National Partnership on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes**
 - 2. National Partnership on Remote Indigenous Housing**
 - 3. National Partnership on Indigenous Early Childhood Development**
 - 4. National Partnership on Indigenous Economic Participation**
 - 5. National Partnership on Remote Indigenous Public Internet Access**
 - 6. National Partnership on Remote Service Delivery**
 - 7. National Partnership on Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory**

Answers:

1. The Ministerial Council for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (MCATSIA) has not yet been formally dissolved. COAG agreed that MCATSIA will continue to function as a ministerial council until 30 June 2011. COAG has taken the view that Indigenous reform is best progressed after that date through Standing Councils, National Agreements and National Partnerships and through the Working Group on Indigenous Reform.
2. In its 2008-09 and 2009–10 reports to COAG, MCATSIA indicated that it had:
 - considered the findings of its population projects and of research from the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research exploring the dynamics and regional geography of Indigenous population and socioeconomic change; and
 - provided advice to the Working Group on Indigenous Reform on operational guidelines for service delivery to Indigenous people and options for strengthening Indigenous corporate governance.

3. MCATSIA will formally continue until 30 June 2011.
4. No work has been transferred from MCATSIA to another body at this time. Over the period to 30 June 2011, the Chair of MCATSIA has been asked to take the lead in examining the current work of MCATSIA and determine how it can be ceased, completed before 30 June 2011 or transferred to another group, such as the Working Group on Indigenous Reform or an officials group.
5. No work has been transferred from MCATSIA to another body at this time.
 - a. The Commonwealth, states and territories that signed up to the National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA) are collectively responsible for the six Closing the Gap targets under the NIRA. MCATSIA has not been responsible for the targets.
 - b. The responsible Minister in the jurisdictions which are signatory to the National Partnerships will continue to be responsible for their administration and implementation.