

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Additional Estimates 23-27 February 2015

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
Outcome/Program: Outcome 2: Indigenous
Topic: Closing the Gap

Senator: Senator Rachel Siewert
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Type of question: Written
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Question:

Will the Minister consider recognising the importance of water rights for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in the Closing the Gap strategy?

Answer:

The Government recognises the importance of both land and water rights to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and supports actions that assist Indigenous Australians to leverage their land and water rights for economic development and job opportunities. Economic development and employment are fundamental to drive progress to close the gap in Indigenous disadvantage.

The National Water Initiative (NWI) commits state and territory governments to recognise Indigenous needs in relation to water access and management. The NWI requires that potential native title rights are accounted for and that water plans may need to allocate water to native title holders. However, outside of native title, it is up to each jurisdiction to establish specific policy or legislative initiatives for Indigenous access to water.