

**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:** Forrest Review

**Senator:** Senator the Hon Jan McLucas

**Question reference number:** 148

**Type of question:** Written

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 10 April 2015

**Number of pages:** 2

**Question:**

1. In October 2014 the department indicated that it was working to organise stakeholder meetings as part of the feasibility assessment of the Forrest Review. How many meetings have been held to date and with whom?
2. Has the department been given a timeline to feed advice through to the Indigenous Advisory Council sub-committee?
3. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister has given a public guarantee that a Government response will be forthcoming before the year is out. Has the department has been given some indication of when this advice might need to be received?
4. Have any areas of assessment been completed?
5. The Government has been reported to be in talks with banks about the Healthy Welfare Card. Who is leading this process? Is this part of the feasibility assessment being conducted by the relevant departments?
6. What is the role of the Minister for Indigenous Affairs in this feasibility assessment process?

**Answer:**

1. Following the public release of the *Creating Parity – the Forrest Review* (the Review) consultations to obtain feedback were held in Alice Springs, Kununurra, Wilcannia, Cobar and Cairns as well as Darwin, Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. There was a teleconference with Tasmanian stakeholders. Eighteen meetings were held and a total of 300 people attended these. In addition to this, over 220 written submissions were received from organisations and individuals. Feedback was also sought from other Commonwealth agencies.
2. Over the course of the development of the Government's response to the Review, there were regular consultations with both the Employment Working Group of the Indigenous Advisory Council (IAC) and the full Council. The Government continues to seek advice from the IAC as it works through the Review's recommendations.

3. On 17 March 2015 the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion, announced two new Indigenous employment and business development initiatives as part of the Government's initial response to the Review. These reforms aim to increase the number of Indigenous employees in the Commonwealth public sector and leverage the Commonwealth's \$39 billion procurement spend to build Indigenous businesses and boost Indigenous employment. A target has been set for the Commonwealth to have three per cent of its procurement contracts with Indigenous suppliers by 2020. The Government will also increase its own Indigenous workforce to three per cent by 2018 across the Commonwealth public sector.

Also in response to the Review, on 20 March 2015 the Government announced it would work with large Australian companies through the new Employment Parity Initiative resulting in 20,000 additional Indigenous Australians being employed in the private sector by 2020.

In addition to these measures, responses to other Review recommendations are already in train or will be progressed through other processes. For example, school attendance was a key recommendation of the Review and is being addressed through the Remote School Attendance Strategy in New South Wales, South Australia, Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory. Similarly, in line with the Review's recommendations there have been major reforms of employment services for job seekers in remote Australia.

The Government is continuing to carefully consider and assess the feasibility of the Review's recommendations and will roll out more reforms as part of its ongoing response.

4. Assessing the feasibility of recommendations is an ongoing process, involving continuing collaboration with other agencies as well as key stakeholders, including state and territory governments. Testing the feasibility of recommendations is therefore expected to continue as the Government considers the roll out of future reforms in response to the Review.
5. No decision has been made to implement the Healthy Welfare Card recommendation. However, the Government is talking with the banking, financial and retail industry to consider the feasibility of a new debit card that would prevent the purchase of alcohol and gambling. This work is currently being undertaken by the Department of Social Services.
6. The Minister for Indigenous Affairs has a dual role which includes:
  - a. working collaboratively with other Ministers to progress consideration of the Review's recommendations; and
  - b. direct portfolio responsibility for implementing the government's response for matters that fall within the Indigenous Affairs portfolio.