

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Finance and Public Administration, 27 February 2015

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Northern Land Council
Outcome/Program: 2 – Indigenous
Topic: Financial Management

Senator: Dean Smith

Question reference number: 57

Type of question: FPA, Friday 27 February 2015, page 7

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

Number of pages: 2

Question:

Senator SMITH: Obviously being a CEO you knew that there would be a heavy requirement to be abreast of financial matters. I understand from the evidence that the previous annual report was late as well. When did you discover that the previous annual report had been lodged late?

Mr Morrison: On arrival in the position.

Senator SMITH: On arrival. But over the course of that 12 months, knowing that the previous annual report had been lodged late, the next annual report under your leadership was still lodged late?

Mr Morrison: Yes. Can I just say that the previous annual report was delayed, as we understand and maintain, because the staff of the local auditing firm, Merit Partners, had gone on recreation leave.

Senator SMITH: Mr Morrison, it is not my place to encourage you about how you should do your job, but that is not an excuse when it comes to the expenditure of money. That is not an excuse. Mr Morrison, can you confirm to me that the other members of the audit committee were aware of this Australian National Audit Office report?

Mr Morrison: I would have to take that on notice.

Senator SMITH: Is anyone else able to confirm that other members of the audit committee did?

Ms Liddle: I am unable to answer that question.

Senator SMITH: Is the governing council of the Northern Land Council, which you described in your opening evidence, aware of this report?

Mr Morrison: Again, we would have to take that on notice.

Answer:

The draft wording of for the NLC related extract of the *2013/14 ANAO Report – Audits of the Financial Statements of Australian Government Entities* for the period Ended 30 June 2014 was received (by NLC Corporate Services Manager Steven Lawrence) from the ANAO on 08/12/2014.

It was emailed to the members of the Audit Committee, including the Chief Executive on 09/12/2014.

This activity occurred during the period of the 109th Full Council at South Alligator Resort in western Arnhem Land.

The NLC subsequently received the final *ANAO Report* (embargoed) on December 17, prior to tabling in Parliament on 18 December 2014.

Because the NLC Full Council met two weeks earlier (Full Council 109th Meeting) than the release of the *ANAO Report*, the next opportunity for discussion is at the next Full Council meeting, scheduled for 8 – 12 June 2015.