

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates 20-24 October 2014

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
Outcome/Program: Outcome 1: Prime Minister and Cabinet
Topic: Remote Community Advancement Network

Senator: Senator the Hon Jan McLucas

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Type of question: Written

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Question:

1. The department indicated that the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly and the Kimberley are being considered as early adopters of the Remote Community Advancement Network.
 - a. How were these regions selected to be considered for early adoption of the new regional PMC structure?
 - b. When does the department expect an early rollout to be implemented?
 - c. What is the current PMC structure that services these areas?
 - d. What changes is the department making to the number, roles and organisation of staff in these regions?
2. The Remote Community Advancement Strategy will be rolled out over 12 months from 1 July 2014.
 - a. Is this correct?
 - b. Has the department developed a timeline for the rollout of the new regional model? If not, when is this plan due to be finalised?
 - c. Is the department developing an implementation plan for the rollout? How advanced is this plan?
3. The department indicated that “more senior officials [will be] closer to communities and more decision making delegated to those senior officials” (p.9 Finance and Public Administration Estimates transcript, 24 October 2014).
 - a. How will senior officials be closer to communities?
 - b. Given that office locations will not change, what practical changes will be implemented to bring this into effect?
 - c. What is the APS level required for a “senior official?”
 - d. How will these senior officials be sourced? Will senior officials be transferred from Canberra? Is promotion being considered by the department to fill senior positions from existing staff within the Network?

- e. Which senior officials will have decision making powers in each region?
- f. What decision making powers will be delegated to senior officials?
- g. Will decision making authority be delegated to officials who are employed at the same APS level as the decision maker from which authority will be delegated?
4. What powers, authority and discretion do Regional Managers have? Can Regional Managers change procedures, redirect funding, alter existing funding agreements, request audits or program evaluation?
5. How many staff will be allocated to each region and how will this number be determined?
6. Will staff be required to travel to more closely engage with communities within their region? If so, have these travel costs been accounted for in the total roll out cost?
7. What is the role of the Indigenous Advisory Council in the rollout of the regional network?
8. Why is the implementation period for the Remote Community Advancement Network longer than the rollout of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy, which the Network will implement and monitor?
9. How many applications were received for the position of National Director?
10. To whom is the National Director accountable?

Answer:

1.
 - a) These are two areas that self-identified as being interested in early adoption of the new model. Final arrangements for the rollout of the new model in these areas, including timing, are currently being finalised.
 - b) In the first quarter of 2015.
 - c) State and Territory based offices with staff in regional centres, small towns and some Indigenous communities.
 - d) The numbers, roles and organisation of staff is currently being finalised in consultation with staff in the Network.
2.
 - a) Yes.
 - b) Yes.
 - c) Yes. Elements of the implementation are subject to consultation with staff and stakeholders.
3.
 - a) With the move to a Regional Model, there will be a greater senior officer presence close to, or in the communities they engage with.
 - b) While existing office locations will not be moved during the initial phase, the new Regional Network model reflects a change in approach and focus to regions rather than the existing State-based model.
 - c) 'Senior Officials' in this context are those staff that will engage with communities and drive local collaboration between the Commonwealth, the communities and local service providers.

- d) The appointment of Regional Managers will draw on Senior Executive staff currently working in PM&C, including the Network, and through advertised positions where vacancies remain.
- e) Delegations of authority for senior officials in the Regions are still being considered.
- f) The decision making powers delegated to senior officials are yet to be determined.
- g) Refer to answers in 3(e) and 3(f).

4. Refer to answers in 3(e) and 3(f).

5. Staff numbers and locations within regions are under consideration. Existing staff numbers in each location are a starting position.

6. Yes.

7. The Indigenous Advisory Council will continue to have an advisory role in the roll out of the new Regional Network model.

8. The timeframe for implementation of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy is impacted by grants funding and contracting considerations. The timeframe for the roll out of the PM&C Regional Network reflects the need to develop the appropriate organisational and staffing strategies in moving to a regional structure and allows some time for transition to fully implement the Government's policies.

9. There were 35 applications received for the position of National Director of the PM&C Regional Network.

10. The National Director will report to the PM&C Deputy Secretary, Indigenous Affairs.