

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2016 - 2017

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
Outcome/Program: Outcome 2: Indigenous
Topic: Empowered Communities

Senator: Siewert, Rachel

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Number of pages: 4

Question:

1. What status does the report entitled “Empowered Communities: Empowered Peoples”, submitted to the Government in March 2015, have within the Government?
 - a) Does the Government have an official response?
 - b) Is Empowered Communities an official Government program?
 - c) Is there a section within PM&C responsible for the implementation of the Empowered Communities program?
 - d) What is its role, staffing and what is its budget?
 - e) What consultation process was undertaken with the broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community on the program?
 - f) If consultation was undertaken, please provide details on the process, including who was consulted, where, when and the outcomes of the consultation.
 - g) What was the total budget across all Government agencies for Empowered Communities in 2015-16? Please provide details.
 - h) What is the budget for 2016-17? Please provide details.
 - i) What is the relationship between the Government and the CYI and the Jawun Corporation in the development of the Empowered Communities program? Please provide details of funding allocations and reporting.
 - j) Of the 63 recommendations in the report, how many have been adopted by the Government?
 - k) How and where are they being implemented?
 - l) The report recommends an opt-in approach by communities to participate in the Empowered Communities program. Which, if any, communities have opted-in to the program?
 - m) What process is available to communities to consider whether they want to opt-in or not?
 - n) What criteria need to be satisfied before a community can opt-in?
 - o) Who determines whether a community has met the criteria?
 - p) What happens to communities who do not meet the criteria or decide not to participate?

Answer:

1. The “Empowered Communities: Empowered Peoples” design report (the Report) was developed by Indigenous leaders from eight regions across Australia and submitted to Government in March 2015.
 - a) Yes. The Government responded to the Report in early December 2015. The Prime Minister, the Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP, wrote to the Indigenous Empowered Communities (EC) co-chairs, Noel Pearson and Sean Gordon, on 7 December 2015, committing to implementing a regionally focused response, including collaboration on regional planning and investment in the eight EC sites. This would be based on a genuine commitment to transparency and a partnership that enables Indigenous ownership and responsibility, particularly in critical areas such as school attendance and attainment, economic development and employment and community safety.
 - b) No. While the Government is committed to the regional roll-out of EC, EC is an Indigenous-led initiative, with Government supporting the Indigenous leaders to implement EC in their regions.
 - c) The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) has established a small team within the Indigenous Affairs Group to support implementation.
 - d) The key role of the team is to drive and coordinate the Government’s implementation effort, including policy oversight and support for PM&C’s Regional Network who are the primary engagement points for EC in their regions. Since it has been established in early 2016, the EC team has had between seven to 10 staff. The costs are met from within PM&C’s existing resourcing.

The team’s work includes other projects, including supporting other place-based activities.

- e) The consultations with the broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community during the development of the EC initiative was led by the Indigenous EC leaders and supported by Jawun Indigenous Corporate Partnerships (Jawun).
- f) The consultation process is detailed in the Report (page 110).
- g) The Government’s costs of implementing EC are being met from within existing resourcing and programmes.

Specific support to enable operations of ‘backbone organisations’ in seven of the eight EC regions has been provided under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy - \$14.4 million over three years from 2015-16.

- This provides critical capability and support for Indigenous leaders as they work with their communities and partner organisations on priorities and long term development agendas.
 - Funding for ‘backbone organisations’ in 2015-16 and 2016-17 was \$0.7 million and \$4.5 million, respectively.
- h) Refer to (g).

- i) The Government supported the development of the EC model.

The design work was overseen by a Steering Committee consisting of Indigenous leaders, Commonwealth and State/Territory governments (NSW, WA, QLD and NT) and private sector. It was co-chaired by Noel Pearson and Liza Carroll, then Associate Secretary, Indigenous Affairs Group, PM&C.

Jawun Indigenous Corporate Partnerships (Jawun) supported Indigenous EC leaders and regions in this work, including consultations and engaging regional co-ordinators.

The Cape York Institute (CYI) was one of the organisations involved in the design of EC. CYI engaged consultants and experts to lead and work in the Design Working Group, and provided administrative support to the Design Working Group.

The Government committed up to \$5 million to support the development of the EC model:

- Approximately \$3.3 million was provided to Jawun for the employment of regional coordinators to engage with Indigenous communities, leaders and organisations, and other consultations and secretariat costs.
- Approximately \$1.3 million was provided to CYI for the engagement of consultants and experts to lead and work in the Design Working Group, and for associated administrative costs.
- Reporting for this funding has been in accordance with the terms of PM&C's standard funding agreements.
- In addition, approximately \$0.096 million was spent on the Steering Committee costs.

- j) Rather than addressing specific recommendations, the Government has committed to implement a regionally-focussed response, including working with EC leaders to jointly agree on priorities and regional investment which goes to the underlying principles of empowerment, self-determination, and changing the relationship between Government and Indigenous people articulated in the Report.

While the Government did not agree to the broader national policy and governance elements of the EC proposal, the Prime Minister, the Hon Malcolm Turnbull's response indicated these could be considered further once the regional implementation is embedded and outcomes can be measured.

- k) EC is currently being rolled-out in seven of the eight EC regions:

- Cape York, Qld
- Central Coast, NSW
- Inner Sydney, NSW
- Goulburn-Murray, Vic
- East Kimberley, WA
- West Kimberley, WA
- NPY Lands, NT, SA and WA

In the eighth region, North East Arnhem Land, Indigenous leaders are yet to determine what approach they wish to take.

Since responding to the report, PM&C has:

- Put in place ‘senior Commonwealth sponsor’ arrangements to support regional implementation
- Provided three-year funding for backbone organisations for seven EC regions
- Provided comprehensive data packages to seven EC regions, including demographic and outcome data and Commonwealth expenditure.
- Engaged with EC leaders to co-design a joint decision making framework, and
- Supported EC leaders and PM&C’s Regional Network to embed an adaptive learning (‘learn and adjust as you go’) approach.

l) There are currently eight regions taking part in EC (see paragraph (k) above). Indigenous EC leaders are engaging with communities and organisations in their regions to determine their willingness and readiness to participate in EC, in accordance with the opt-in principles detailed in the Report.

m) Communities within the current eight EC regions who wish to participate in EC need to engage with the EC leaders in their regions to determine whether they meet the opt-in criteria in that region.

There is no established process for other areas to become an EC region. The Report indicates that such process could be created in the future, and that ‘postponing the addition of new regions will provide an opportunity to test and refine the EC model and avoid overburdening the system by trying to achieve too much, too soon’.

n) As set out in the Report, EC leaders and opt-in organisations across the current eight EC regions have developed their own opt-in criteria suitable to their circumstances. There are some common features including a strong role for Indigenous leadership and a track record of successfully driving development, as well as commitment to the EC principles and social values/norms.

o) Refer to (m) and (n).

p) All communities continue to have access to Commonwealth Government support, services and funding, irrespective of whether or not they participate in EC.

In addition, PM&C’s Regional Network is working with a number of non-EC communities and regions who also wish to partner with Government, to support them to identify and address priorities and aspirations (for example, Murdi Paaki and Ceduna).

PM&C will also support communities with lower levels of readiness to help build capacity at the individual, leadership and organisational levels.