

**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:** Review on Homeland/Outstation Assets and Access.

**Senator:** Siewert, Rachel

**Question reference number:** 210

**Type of question:** Written

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 2 December 2016

**Number of pages:** 4

**Question:**

In March 2015, the Commonwealth and Northern Territory Governments contracted the Centre for Appropriate Technology (CAT), located in Alice Springs, to conduct a review on Homeland/Outstation Assets and Access.

1. Has that report been completed?
2. If so, when was it completed and when was it received by the Minister?
3. Why hasn't the Minister released that report to the public?
4. When will he do so?
5. What were the terms of reference of the contract, what was the total cost of the review and how was the contract awarded?
6. What does the Minister propose doing with the report and what will be the impact of the report on future funding for homelands and outstations in the Northern Territory?
7. What was the total population of the homelands identified in the report and how many communities were identified in the report as having a permanent population?
8. What is the Government's policy position in regard to supporting the development of homelands in remote Australia?
9. What is the present Government's policy regarding the future funding of homelands/outstations in remote Australia?
10. What is the estimated population of homelands across the remote and very remote areas of Australia?
11. Has the Government withdrawn funding to homelands since the 2014 Budget?
12. How much and where from?
13. What funding is now available to homeland communities under the Government's current policies and programs?
14. What Commonwealth programs exist for, and how much has been spent on, homeland communities across remote Australia during the 2015-16 financial year?
15. How much has been allocated specifically for homelands in the 2016-17 financial year? Provide detailed budgets.

**Answer:**

1. Yes.
2. The report was completed in February 2016. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet briefed the Minister's Office on 10 March 2016.
3. The report was prepared by the Centre for Appropriate Technology (CAT) and released on its website on 7 October 2016.
4. See response to Question 3.
5. CAT undertook the review as a component of an existing funding agreement to provide technical advisory support across housing and infrastructure. The terms of reference for the review states the overall objective is to guide future strategic investment in homelands and outstations by collecting information on:
  - a) water security available to each homeland/outstation
  - b) state of infrastructure in occupied and unoccupied remote homelands/outstations
  - c) access to education and opportunities for employment and development
  - d) cultural significance of each homeland/outstation to resident population
  - e) population of each homeland/outstation and demographics.

The review was jointly funded by the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory Government. The cost of the review was \$1,080,000, with the Commonwealth contributing \$775,000 and the Northern Territory Government contributing \$305,000.

6. The Commonwealth is using the report to help guide investment of the \$40 million Aboriginals Benefit Account Homelands Project.
7. As identified in the report, homelands' populations fluctuate throughout the year for a variety of reasons. The report states there were 4,746 people reported by residents as staying in homelands/outstations in the Northern Territory. This can fluctuate between 11,174 and 4,532 people (see report, section 'Survey results: Population and occupancy').
8. The Commonwealth respects the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to live on their traditional lands and acknowledges the profound connection many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have with their homelands.

The Commonwealth is guided by the National Indigenous Reform Agreement, National Investment Principles in Remote Locations. Municipal and essential services in remote Indigenous communities are a state, territory and local government responsibility.

The Commonwealth has allocated \$40 million from the Aboriginals Benefit Account for infrastructure in homelands in the Northern Territory. In addition, funding is available for remote Indigenous communities through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy.

9. See response to question 8.

10. The most recent data (June 2011) from the Australian Bureau of Statistics states the population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians living in remote and very remote areas of Australia is 142,923. The Census undertaken in 2016 will have more up-to-date information when released.

11. Funding for homeland communities across Australia is available under the Commonwealth's Indigenous Advancement Strategy and the Aboriginals Benefit Account (for the Northern Territory only). The Commonwealth does not specifically report on funding for homeland communities.

Under agreements negotiated with Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland, Victoria, Tasmania and the Northern Territory, the Commonwealth provided one-off up-front payments in exchange for state and territory governments accepting responsibility for the delivery of municipal and essential services in remote communities, as follows:

<b>State</b>	<b>Payment</b>	<b>Date of transfer</b>
Queensland	\$10.3 million	1 October 2014
Victoria	\$15 million	1 October 2014
Tasmania	\$15.9 million	1 October 2014
Western Australia	\$90 million	1 July 2015
South Australia (areas outside APY Lands)	\$15 million	1 July 2015
Northern Territory	\$154.8 million	19 September 2015

In addition, the Commonwealth has allocated \$40 million from the Aboriginals Benefit Account for infrastructure in homelands across the Northern Territory.

On 24 September 2015, the Commonwealth provided an additional \$5.5 million to the Northern Territory Government for infrastructure to support the transition of municipal and essential services by addressing priority infrastructure needs and Indigenous employment outcomes. \$2.5 million of this funding was specified for morgue infrastructure in remote areas.

12. See response to Question 11.

13. Funding for homeland communities across Australia is available under the Commonwealth's Indigenous Advancement Strategy and the Aboriginals Benefit Account (for the Northern Territory only). The Commonwealth does not specifically report on funding for homeland communities.

Information about Commonwealth expenditure and programmes is available in the Portfolio Budget Statements.

14. See response to Question 13.

15. See response to Question 13.

Detailed planning is currently underway to commence the \$40 million Aboriginals Benefit Account homelands project in 2016-17 in consultation with the ABA Advisory Committee.