

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates 11-14 February 2013

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Outcome/Program: 1.1.1 Domestic Policy

Topic: PM's Closing the Gap Speech

Senator: Senator Ryan

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Type of Question: FPA, P90

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 2 April 2013

Number of pages: 2

Question:

Senator RYAN: That is all I have on that. I would now like to turn to the Prime Minister's speech about Closing the Gap. In this speech the Prime Minister referred to statistics on the positive impact of the former Northern Territory Labor government's banned drinker's register and called upon the Northern Territory government to reintroduce it, as I understand it. In defence of the register the Prime Minister claimed that there was a drop in alcohol related assaults in Darwin, Palmerston, Katherine and Alice Springs while the register was in place. She also maintained that since its abolition there were five alcohol related deaths around Alice Springs over the Christmas-New Year period and a rise in admissions at the emergency department in Alice Springs. Were you or the department involved in the preparation of that speech?

Mr Ronalds: Yes, we were.

Senator RYAN: Who sourced the statistics for that speech?

Mr Ronalds: If you are referring to those particular statistics, I will need to take that on notice.

Senator RYAN: Okay. Is there anyone here who could discuss those statistics?

Mr Ronalds: I do not think so, Senator. Those statistics would be managed by FaHCSIA.

Senator RYAN: Where in PM&C would this speech have been prepared?

Mr Ronalds: It was in my division. I have a team dedicated to Indigenous issues that worked with FaHCSIA to help prepare that speech. Each of the facts is sourced from the department that has policy responsibility.

Senator RYAN: So they came from FaHCSIA?

Mr Ronalds: Yes, or potentially the Attorney-General's Department, which is why I wanted to take it on notice to find out exactly who would own those facts.

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Senator RYAN: Could you take on notice where those statistics were sourced from in particular, because I would like the opportunity to chase those up?

Mr Ronalds: Yes.

Answer:

The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) provided the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet with input for the Prime Minister's speech. The input was based on the Northern Territory Department of Attorney-General and Justice's Northern Territory Quarterly Crime Statistics (September Quarter 2012) and advice received by FaHCSIA officials.