

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates Hearing 27 May-6 June 2013

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Outcome/Program: 1.1. Prime Minister and Cabinet

Topic: COAG – Indigenous Health Reform

Senator: Senator Payne

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Question:

Senator PAYNE: I want to ask some questions around some of the specific reform areas, if I may, starting with some concerns which have been raised around Indigenous health reform, in particular. These questions have been raised both publicly and by stakeholders. Indigenous health reform was not on the agenda for the last meeting, on 19 April, nor was it at the three 2012 meetings, but it is one of the areas listed by the CRC as one with its reform time frame at risk. Can you tell the committee, please, the last time that Indigenous health reform was part of the COAG meeting agenda?

Ms Cross: I would have to check that for you, Senator. It probably is worth noting that there is a consultation process under way at the moment on the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan. That is the framework within which Indigenous health reform would sit. That consultation process is under way. The first council that would look at that would be the Standing Council on Health. If they felt there was a need for that to come to COAG, that option would be available to them. But, again, if what is in the plan is largely agreed at the ministerial council level, those sorts of items do not necessarily have to come to COAG. Those councils are part of the COAG framework, so they are still taking place under the auspices of COAG, even if it stays at the ministerial council level rather than coming to COAG per se.

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Answer:

COAG agreed the National Indigenous Reform Agreement and National Healthcare Agreement, which both set targets for Indigenous health reform, on 29 November 2008. Indigenous Health Reform has been on the agenda for COAG on several occasions since then, as part of wider discussions on health reform or Indigenous policy issues:

- On 19 April 2010, COAG noted progress made on Indigenous health issues since the 2008 National Healthcare Agreement;
- On 18 August 2011, COAG discussed priorities for Mental Health Reform and noted the importance of attending to the mental health needs of Indigenous Australians; and
- In July 2012, COAG agreed revised performance indicators under the National Indigenous Reform Agreement, which includes performance indicators on the health outcomes of Indigenous Australians.