

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

Question reference number: 35

Type of Question: p. 97

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 12 July 2013

Number of pages: 2

Question:

Senator PAYNE: Thank you very much for that, Ms Cross. What is the relationship, then, between the consultation on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan—which is, I believe, what you were just referring to—and the announcement made in April by the Prime Minister, and by Minister Macklin and Minister Snowdon, about the \$770 million in Commonwealth funding for a renewed three-year NPA on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes? What is the status of the relationship with those two?

Ms Cross: My recollection is that that was an announcement of the funding—that the funding would be continued in the budget. I believe the specifics of exactly how it will be spent are still under consideration, but I will take that on notice. It may well be that it is in part taking into account the health plan, in terms of deciding what the priorities for that expenditure are. But I will take that on notice. I think the announcement really was that the funding was going to continue rather than the details of the actual national partnership.

Answer:

The former Prime Minister wrote to all First Ministers on 20 April 2013 initiating negotiations for a renewed National Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes (the NPA). The former Prime Minister also announced \$777 million in Commonwealth own-purposes expense funding over three years to continue programs provided by the Commonwealth under the current NPA. Negotiations with states and territories on a renewed NPA are currently underway. The NPA is an important mechanism that will help the Commonwealth, states and territories, through COAG, to achieve intended health outcomes over the long term through improved intergovernmental co-ordination.

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The Commonwealth announced the development of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan (the Health Plan) on 3 November 2011. There have been extensive consultations with stakeholders as part of this development, including a series of public consultations in 2012. The Health Plan is currently being developed by the Department of Health and Ageing.

The Health Plan replaces the National Strategic Framework on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, which was agreed by the Commonwealth, states and territories in 2003 and is due to expire in December 2013.

The Health Plan will provide high-level guidance for policy and program development over the next ten years, as well as for future government investment in Indigenous health, such as the \$777 million of Commonwealth funding announced as part of the renewal of the NPA.

Both the NPA and the Health Plan are strongly aligned with the Closing the Gap Strategy, and will contribute to meeting the Closing the Gap targets of halving the gap in infant mortality by 2018 and closing the gap in life expectancy within a generation.