

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 29 May 2003

IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

(105) Output: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission

Senator Ludwig (L&C 388) asked:

In relation to the National Aboriginal Health Strategy, do you have a couple of examples where you can say that in the last six months you have had an application to fix a pump or fix a bore, and this is what you have done?

Answer:

The National Aboriginal Health Strategy (NAHS) program is only one stream of ATSIC's Community Housing and Infrastructure (CHIP) program.

Under NAHS, ATSIC delivers capital works projects, targeting larger scale environmental health and infrastructure need, including priority housing. As such, projects usually have an associated budget of around \$2 million and are supported by contracted program and project managers, who provide the necessary technical support. Projects with an associated cost of less than \$300,000 are not considered for NAHS funding, however, they can be considered for other streams of CHIP funding.

Water, sewerage and power supplies, including the fixing of a pump or bore have been completed under NAHS, however, this work usually forms part of a much larger project.

The NAHS process is not based on submissions from Indigenous organisations but on the results of a Health Impact Assessment (HIA). The HIA involves an independent assessment of community infrastructure against standard criteria by a contracted program manager.

NAHS projects to date have been identified and delivered in three tranches as a result of Health Impact Assessments conducted in 1996, 1999 and 2001 which prioritised projects on the basis of need.

Two examples of emergency fix projects that were attended to using ATSIC CHIP Remote Area Essential Services Program in Western Australia are noted as follows:

- 1/ Womali community in the Malarabah Region reported to the Kimberley Regional Service Provider (KRSP) on 10 April 2003, that they had no water. The problem was thought to be the failure of the bore pump. KRSP contacted the program manager who gave approval for remedial action. KRSP inspected the bore and found the pump motor to be unserviceable.

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(106) Output: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission

Senator Scullion (L&C 390) asked:

In relation to CHIP, do you have a broad understanding of the requirements in terms of design? What percentage of the cost of a house would ATSIC spend on design and approvals for architects?

Answer:

In 1999, ATSIC as part of a collaborative initiative with the Department of Family and Community Services and State /Territory governments adopted a national framework to improve Indigenous housing. Elements of this initiative included:

- National principles for the design, construction and maintenance of Indigenous housing; and
- A National Indigenous Housing Guide

The implementation of the National Indigenous Housing Guide has significantly improved the quality and appropriateness of constructed Indigenous community housing, particularly in respect to environmental health and living conditions for community residents. A further benefit from the increased focus on design is an expectation for a longer asset life and hence a better return on the government's investment in community housing.

There have been recent initiatives in Central Australia and other regions to adopt standard designs.

Currently a three bedroom house in a remote community in the Northern Territory generally costs in the range of \$200,000 to \$215,000. Under NAHS where projects include a housing component, architectural design costs are typically about 3% of construction costs. For a single house project, architectural design costs may increase to about 5%.

A well designed house can reduce the overall construction and operating costs.

There have been occasions when architects have been used as project managers however the project manager usually has an architect as part of the team to provide advice on design.

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(107) Output: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission

Senator Crossin (L&C 391) asked:

Where you do not have any agreement with the state government and major projects break down or do not work, nobody seems to be able to come up with the cash to fix the problem; yet everybody seems to be pointing the finger at ATSIC because it was you who originally put the major infrastructure in.

Have ATSIC looked at this?

Are they reviewing this aspect of their operations?

Answer:

ATSIC has for a number of years been negotiating with State and Territory governments to increase the level of State/Territory government coverage/responsibility of Indigenous community infrastructure.

Success has been most noticeable in Western Australia where the State under an Essential Services Agreement has incrementally increased the number of communities it accepts responsibility for from 48 in 1996 to 72 today.

ATSIC and the West Australian Government are also jointly funding a Town Camp Regularisation program where essential services infrastructure in town camps will be progressively bought up to standard to enable it to be taken over by State utility agencies.

In South Australia, ATSIC and the State Government are negotiating a new Essential Services Agreement. ATSIC anticipates the State increasing its responsibility beyond the current 18 communities.

In the Northern Territory improving the take up of responsibility by the Territory Government has been very difficult to negotiate. The recent corporatisation on NT Water Power has not assisted, as ATSIC was not advised that this would occur. However negotiations are currently in train for the Northern Territory to take up responsibility for infrastructure within some Town Camps. Negotiations are also underway between ATSIC and the Northern Territory Government to establish a combined housing and infrastructure or essential services agreement.

It is difficult to identify a major project that has not worked or has broken down. The key issue in every state is that there are not good environmental health management

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(108) Output: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission

Senator Crossin (L&C 392) asked:

Can you provide a copy of the Community Participation Agreements guidelines when they are finished?

Answer:

A copy of the Implementation Plan for the Community Participation Agreements initiative will be provided to the Committee as soon as it becomes available, early in the 03/04 financial year. ATSIC is shortly seeking final comments from other agencies.

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IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

(109) Output: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission

Senator Crossin (L&C 392) asked:

In relation to the Community Participation Agreements (CPAs):

1. provide the background on the five projects in Western Australia; and
2. a list of the five communities in Queensland.

Answer:

1. The five communities involved in the Tjurabalan Project in Western Australia are Billiluna, Mulan, Kundat Djaru (Ringers Soak), Balgo and Yagga Yagga. A contract has been signed by a consortium of contractors led by the Lingiari Foundation to work with the communities on the planning and development phases of the CPA projects in these communities.
2. It is envisaged that up to eight Queensland communities may become involved in the CPA initiative in the near future. They are Hopevale, Kowanyama, Old Mapoon, Lockhart River, Aurukun, Coen, Napranum and Yarrabah.

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(110) Output: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission

Senator Crossin (L&C 393) asked:

In relation to CPAs, can you provide a breakdown of the expenditure and commitments for this financial year?

Answer:

The breakdown of the estimated actual expenditure for the 2002-03 financial year is:

	\$m
CPA/Capacity Building Initiative Development and Support	0.631
Development of evaluation strategy	0.010
Tjurabalan Projects	0.077
West MacDonnells Projects	0.060
Contribution to the evaluation of the Meeting Challenges, Making Choices package to assist in the future implementation of CPAs in Deed-of-Grant in Trust communities in Queensland.	0.040
Consultations – Darwin	0.006
Total	0.824

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IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

(111) Output: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission

Senator Crossin (L&C 394) asked for a list of the twelve Indigenous Employment Centres and where they are.

Answer:

There are currently twelve IECs in operation:

Bungala Aboriginal Corporation, Port Augusta SA
Nirrumbuk Aboriginal Corporation, Broome WA
Redfern Aboriginal Corporation, Sydney NSW
Brisbane Council of Elders Aboriginal Corporation, Brisbane QLD
Ngunnawal Aboriginal Corporation, Canberra ACT
Goulburn Valley CDEP Aboriginal Co-operative Ltd, Shepparton VIC
PEEDAC Pty Ltd, Perth WA
Workforce Aboriginal Corporation, Launceston TAS
Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation, Windang NSW
Central Queensland Regional CDEP Ltd, Rockhampton QLD
Nooda Ngulegoo CDEP Aboriginal Corporation, Kalgoorlie WA
Darwin Regional CDEP Inc, Darwin NT

As of the 1 July Nirrumbuk Aboriginal Corporation will no longer be running a CDEP (due to the establishment of a new regionalised CDEP). However, DEWR has indicated they will still be contracting this organisation to deliver IEC services for the new Regional CDEP.

DEWR are in consultation with a number of organisations which run CDEPs to establish further IECs. These are expected to be progressively contracted and commence operations over the coming months.

IEC contracts with the following CDEP organisations have commenced:

- Youloe-ta Indigenous Development Association Incorporated (Newcastle) (contract commencement date 30 May 2003);
- Bunjum Aboriginal Co-operative Ltd (Ballina) (9 June 2003);
- Bama Ngappi Ngappi Aboriginal Corporation (Cairns) (4 June 2003);
- Burrandies Aboriginal Corporation (Mount Gambier) (12 June 2003)
- Cairns Regional Community Development and Employment ATSI Corporation (4 June 2003);
- Townsville/Thuringowa Indigenous People's Community Employment

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(112) Output: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission

Senator Ludwig (L&C 395) asked:

1. Who decided to suspend Mr Johnstone and what, if any, discussions were held about that;
2. Were you involved in the decision;
3. Was there an independent investigation; if there was, when did it begin and when did it conclude; what were the findings of that and could they be made available to the committee;
4. Was Mr Johnstone advised about the independent investigation when he was first contacted and did he understand that it was going on; was he advised of the findings and was he given an opportunity to respond?
5. Apart from Mr Johnstone, can you advise who else was spoken to by the investigator, if there was an investigator?
6. Were there any commissioners or other people involved in the issue? If not, was it only confined to Mr Johnstone?
7. Does ATSIC have procedures for dealing with those sort of matters and, if it does, do you have a copy of the guidelines that would be used? Can you advise whether those guidelines were followed? If they were not followed, why weren't they followed, or if they were departed from, why were they departed from?
8. Can you advise us of the investigator's report and what conclusion it came to?
9. In relation to the contract of employment, how was Mr Johnstone advised that he was a non-ongoing employee?
10. Can you advise how he was advised that his non-ongoing status would come to an end? Was it by letter, and from whom? Were any reasons provided in the letter? If not, would it have been normal practice to advise – given that if his status was not on-going it may not have been, but I am sure you will be able to clarify that?
11. Is it the case that shortly before that event you posted a notice on the ATSIC intranet site on the same day announcing changes to the media and marketing section and renaming it the communications branch?
12. In addition, when did the change of the media centre to a communications branch first occur? When was it contemplated that you would be

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(113) Output: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission

Senator Ludwig (L&C 395) asked:

Can you advise if an audit was conducted by ATSIIC's office of evaluation and audit into the operations of the media and marketing area?

If so, has that audit been completed and can you provide a copy of the audit when it is available?

Answer:

An audit of the Public Information output within the Commission's Communications Branch (previously known as the National Media and Marketing Office) was conducted between December 2002 and January 2003. The final report was issued on 28 April 2003.

In summary, the audit indicated that, with the exception of the work area not having an Operational Plan, which had the effect of there being a lack of clarity in the roles and responsibilities of staff and objectives within the unit, the functions and administration within the unit were managed satisfactorily.

Internal audit reports are internal working documents issued as AUDIT-IN-CONFIDENCE to the Commission as a service to management and are not otherwise available for release. In this instance the audit report contains references to business affairs, including consultancies, in the communications arena where disclosure could be reasonably expected to unreasonably adversely affect the Commission in respect of its business affairs.

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(114) Output: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission

Senator Crossin (L&C 398) asked:

In relation to the 1,000 CDEP places targeting family violence and substance abuse, explain how ATSI can do this without somehow reducing funds from other programs or other areas?

Answer:

Funding of every CDEP position has two components. Firstly, there is the component provided for wages and secondly, a component allowed for the Oncosts incurred by the CDEP organisation in administering the program. The wages component is a direct offset against welfare payments and is essentially budget neutral. The Oncost component forms an additional part of the CDEP appropriation and is included in the normal budgetary process.

In the normal course of events, CDEPs occasionally operate below their ceiling allocation, resulting in a relatively small accumulation of unspent funds against the wages allocation in any given financial year. ATSI is able to retain from these unspent funds, 2% of the original total program budget. This retained funding is available for distribution to supplement CDEP Oncosts in the following financial year. Any amount above the 2% is returned to Treasury.

In the case of the additional 1000 CDEP places, there has not been provision for Oncost funds. However, as an indication of the strong support the Commission has for this initiative, ATSI has agreed to provide Oncost funding during the term of this initiative from the 2% of retained program savings from the respective previous year. The balance of the retained savings will be distributed to CDEPs through the normal process.

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(115) Output: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission

Senator Crossin (L&C 399) asked for an updated breakdown of the number of CDEP participants per ATSI zone as well as the amount of administration costs allocated to each zone.

Answer:

As at 30 April 2003 there were 35,908 participants nationally on CDEP, and CDEP program expenditure of \$499,717,230. A breakdown of participants by ATSI zone and administration costs, including CDEP Oncosts and Wages is attached.

The next import of participant data from CDEP organisations will not incur until 7 July 2003 at which time figures for the 2002-03 financial year can be provided.

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IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

(116) Output: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission

Senator Crossin (L&C 399-400) asked:

Are you able to tell me if there are any Indigenous people on CDEP that are employed by federal government agencies and how many places are available within these agencies?

Answer:

CDEP participants are being employed, on a part-time basis, by various Departments and Agencies throughout Australia, these include Centrelink and the Department of Education and Workplace Relations and others.

ATSIC's Employment and Training Branch has recently examined CDEP participation data and advised that although there are over 80 participants involved in various State and Commonwealth government agencies there are less than twenty CDEP participants in total, placed within Commonwealth Departments or agencies. The majority of these are with Centrelink.

The breakdown of participants per federal agency is:

Centrelink	12
DEWR	6

It needs to be emphasised that this information relates only to recorded activities by CDEP organisations, without checking with the relevant individual agencies, it is difficult to get a more accurate figure.

In regard to how many places are available, there is no set allocation; again you would need to direct this question to individual agencies. In regard to the types of work performed and individual outcomes from placements you would also need to direct your questions at the appropriate agencies.

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(117) Output: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission

Senator Crossin (L&C 400) asked for the number of people who may have been on CDEP and have moved into casual, part-time or permanent work.

Answer:

It is estimated that approximately 3000 CDEP participants moved into employment on a full-time, part-time and/or seasonal basis during 2001-02.

The above estimation is conservative as the tracking of CDEP participants who leave is problematic. During 2001-02, 22 523 participants left the scheme, 9205 without providing reasons. Of those who did provide reasons, 11.3 per cent moved into mainstream employment, 0.8 per cent left to take up training positions, 1.41 per cent returned to full-time education and 0.99 per cent accessed Job Network placements and IEP incentives.

The next import of participant data from CDEP organisations will not incur until 7 July 2003 at which time figures for the 2002-03 financial year can be provided.

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(118) Output: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission

Senator Scullion (L&C 403) asked:

The nature of the payments in CDEP in relation to lump sum payments of several weeks at once over periods such as Christmas;

1. Is there a capacity to try and make the payments more periodic, or is there some way of dealing with that?
2. What would be the time line on examining a restructure of the administrative dispersal of those funds?

Answer:

1. CDEP organisations receive a Wages Grant for payment of participant wages. The CDEP Wages Grant is calculated on an actual participation basis. The payment of wages to the participant is determined by the CDEP organisation and is usually done on a weekly basis. A majority of CDEPs pay the participants weekly so as not to disadvantage individuals and families, and to facilitate weekly budgeting and prevent financial hardship.

Most CDEPs close over the Christmas period and keep paying participants on a weekly basis, often via electronic transfer, however, this is determined by the CDEP organisation and is often the result of agreement between the organisation and the participants as to the most suitable and efficient arrangements over this period. Some organisations may pay participants their holiday pay in advance to cover the additional expenses of the Christmas period, or indeed other periods of leave.

The dispersal of CDEP wages by Grantee organisations is at their discretion, provided that the payment of wages to the participant complies with all relevant awards and any requirement under State/Territory and/or federal legislation.

ATSIC is currently responding to Noel Pearson's similar proposals, contained within the *Cape York Substance Abuse Strategy* report, that the issue of advancement of CDEP wages be considered more fully. ATSIC will have input into FaCS' and the Secretaries Group's deliberations concerning this report and is about to commence a major program of CDEP policy reform. ATSIC's involvement in Cape York, CPAs, CDEP and welfare reform will also consider this issue within the broader policy reform program being undertaken by ATSIC.

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(119) Output: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission

Senator Ludwig asked:

North Galalundja Association

There have been allegations that more than \$200,000 has disappeared without authorisation from a bank account held by the North Galalundja Association in the Northern Territory.

1. Are you familiar with these allegations and has an investigation been ordered into their veracity?
2. What is the outcome of these investigations?
3. Are you also aware of allegations that some royalty payments payable eventually to the North Galalundja Association may have been misused in order to transport people to a funeral without the prior permission or approval of the Association?
4. If you are familiar with these allegations, has an investigation been ordered into their veracity?
5. What is the outcome of these investigations?

Answer:

1. ATSIC officers are not familiar with these allegations and, not having any grant agreement with North Galalundja Association, has taken no investigative action. The North Galalundja Association has not been funded by ATSIC for approximately six years and ATSIC is not privy to its financial affairs.
2. ATSIC has not undertaken any investigation.
3. See 1 and 2 above.
4. ATSIC officers are not familiar with the allegations.
5. See 4 above.