

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 1 November 2005

IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

(245) Output 3.1: Whole-of-Government Coordination of Policy Development and Service Delivery for Indigenous Australians

Senator Siewert asked:

Effectiveness measures and results for Outcome 3 (p240 DIMIA report)

“Provide strategic coordination and leadership on policies, programs and services to reduce disadvantage and promote Indigenous wellbeing”

Note that the measure of the achievement of this outcome focuses entirely upon the satisfaction of the Minister and her office with arrangements – there is no evaluation involving other stakeholders listed in the Annual report in regard to these outcomes.

1. Is relying on the satisfaction of the Minister’s office considered to be a necessary and sufficient measure of the effectiveness of policies, programs and services that aim to reduce Indigenous disadvantage?
2. Is this an interim measure in the transition to the mainstreaming of Indigenous services, or will DIMIA continue to evaluate and report the effectiveness of its policies, programs and services in its Annual Report based purely on the response of the Minister’s office?

Answer:

1. The satisfaction of the Minister and her office is a measure of the effectiveness of the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination’s (OIPC’s) ‘strategic coordination and leadership on policies, programs and services’, not the effectiveness of those policies, programs and services.
2. As noted in response to Question 1, the satisfaction of the Minister and her office is not a measure of the effectiveness of policies, programs and services that aim to reduce Indigenous disadvantage. Evaluating and reporting on the performance of policies, programs and services for Indigenous people is performed by a range of agencies, including OIPC. These include:
 - audits and evaluations by independent authorities such as the Office of Evaluations and Audit (Indigenous Programs) in the Finance portfolio and the Australian National Audit Office;
 - departmental sponsored audits and evaluations of the mainstream and Indigenous-specific programs and services that each is responsible for; and
 - performance monitoring and reporting mechanisms, such as the *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage* Report and the annual Reports on Government Services from the Review of Government Service Provision.

In respect of OIPC's whole-of-government work in assessing government policies, programs and services for Indigenous people, the DIMIA Annual Report (at p.248) indicates that OIPC has developed an evaluation plan covering three broad areas:

- the way in which policies and programs at the national level join to achieve outcomes for Indigenous people;
- the way in which governments and their programs work with/in local communities and how they can be made more responsive to the needs of those communities; and
- continuously improving the way agencies are implementing the Government's policies and programs.

In accordance with this plan, OIPC has commenced evaluations of: 'red tape' in selected Indigenous communities; and the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Indigenous coordination trials. OIPC also expects to commence reviews of individual Shared Responsibility Agreements in early 2006. The small number of other Indigenous-specific programs for which OIPC is responsible will also be reported on and evaluated over time.