QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 1 November 2005

IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

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

Senator Evans asked:

1. What was the process that led to the signing of the Ngaanyatjarra RPA?
2. What are the roles of the different agencies involved?
3. What are the expected outcomes with regards each of the agencies?
4. Can you provide a breakdown by agency of the funding contributions?

Answer:

1. The Australian Government, Western Australian Government, the Shire of Ngaanyatjarraku, and the Ngaanyatjarra people through the Ngaanyatjarra Council worked together over a five month period to develop the Regional Partnership Agreement (RPA) and three related Shared Responsibility Agreements (SRAs).

   The Ngaanyatjarra Council on behalf of 12 Ngaanyatjarra communities approached the Australian Government and asked that we develop an RPA together that addresses key issues for Ngaanyatjarra people. The Ngaanyatjarra Council had also expressly sought a new and better relationship with governments and saw the RPA as a way of achieving that.

   Negotiation meetings between the parties occurred in Perth, Kalgoorlie and on the Ngaanyatjarra lands, including Australian Government representatives attending community meetings at Warburton and Blackstone. The key Ngaanyatjarra priorities and objectives were written into the agreement to guide the future relationship between the governments and the communities.

   Australian Government agencies collaborated on the development of the agreement and demonstrated their united support for the agreement and the new relationship that has been developed by the State Managers of the Department of Employment Workplace Relations, Department of Education, Science and Technology, the Department of Family and Community Services, Department of Health and Ageing, Centrelink, Department of Communication Information Technology and the Arts, and the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination attending the signing of the agreement in Warburton with the communities.

   The content of the RPA was negotiated in response to the Ngaanyatjarra communities' priorities which include improving municipal and essential services and providing better opportunities for Ngaanyatjarra people.

2. The Australian Government's new approach to Indigenous affairs promotes cooperative and coordinated effort between its agencies.

The RPA establishes two formal mechanisms that provides for coordination between State and Federal Government agencies, local Government, and communities. The mechanisms regularly bring all parties to a single table:

- Regional Partnership Committee – meets quarterly to oversee implementation of agreements and monitor how parties are working together. Australian Government members include the OIPC State Manager, Kalgoorlie ICC Manager and the Australian Government State Managers Group which is representative of all relevant agencies and statutory authorities in Western Australia;
- Agreement Coordinators Group – meets monthly on the implementation of agreements. Australian Government members include the Kalgoorlie ICC Manager and solution brokers from agencies which contributed to the RPA and its related SRAs.

3. All Agencies will benefit from the framework that the RPA provides for coordinated and strategic effort in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands. It enables agencies to deliver on their respective portfolio agendas and feel confident that all investment is appropriate to meet needs identified by the Ngaanyatjarra communities.

As examples of the benefits of the RPA for agencies, specific agency benefits include:

FaCS: have an agreement under the RPA to move to the normalisation of essential and municipal service provision in the communities. That agreement assists to meet FaCS policy objectives and will bring about better services to communities through mainstream providers playing a greater role in the region.

DEST: Negotiations have commenced on the development of a comprehensive education agreement for the Ngaanyatjarra Lands under the RPA framework. This initiative will lead to better outcomes and will tie the State and Commonwealth into a localised partnership with communities where the community also focuses on doing better.

DCITA will use the RPA to negotiate new arrangements for improving the operation of arts centres in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands.

DoHA will meet its environmental health objectives through partial funding of a nutrition training centre under the related SRA at Wanarn.

OIPC: The agreement settles representative arrangements for liaising with Government in the Ngaanyatjarra communities – this assists all agencies but meets a specific objective for OIPC.

4. Over the three year period of the RPA, Government is funding the core capacity and capability of the Ngaanyatjarra Council to be a representative organisation and also to coordinate community engagement with Government, as well as running and coordinating a number of key programmes including the Municipal Services Program :

- OIPC will contributed $2 million
- FaCS will contribute $2 million.

Related to and signed at the same time as the RPA are three SRAs:

i. The first SRA is aimed at improving essential and municipal services in the Ngaanyatjarra communities and includes existing program funding for municipal services including meeting the costs of power generation. FaCS took the lead for the Australian Government in that agreement with a contribution of $4.2 million. This SRA also outlines a process for normalising power generation and usage throughout 11 of the communities and provides a guarantee for funding to meet fluctuating fuel prices.
ii. The second SRA supports young adult education in the Warburton community and includes an additional $137,000 of investment through DEST. Under this agreement young adults will re-engage in education and support the efforts of the community to set a good example for school aged children.
iii. The third SRA enables development of a new community store, training centre and youth drop in centre at the Wanarn community. Subject to business planning outcomes the Australian Government will provide $300,000 under this agreement through DoHA ($150,000) partially meeting the costs of a nutrition training centre linked to the new store, IBA partial grant ($100,000) and OIPC ($50,000) with the community paying for the development of a youth drop in centre and re-paying an interest free loan from the Australian Government (through IBA).