

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS  
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

**Program 1.5**

**Question No. 67**

**Senator Wright asked the following question at the hearing on 18 October 2011:**

I refer to:

- Recommendation 1 of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner's '2009 Social Justice Report' that the Australian Government, through COAG, set criminal justice targets that are integrated into the Closing the Gap agenda;
- Recommendation 2 of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs' June 2011 report, 'Doing Time – Time for Doing: Indigenous youth in the criminal justice systems' that the Commonwealth Government endorse justice targets developed by the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General for inclusion in COAG's Closing the Gap strategy; and
- the summary of decisions contained in the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General Communiqué of 21-22 July 2011 which states that the Ministers agreed to refer to COAG the possible adoption of justice specific Indigenous closing the gap targets.

Given it is now almost 2 years since the ATSI Social Justice Commissioner first highlighted the need for justice targets to be included in COAG's Closing the Gap Strategy, please advise:

1. whether or not SCAG has developed and endorsed specific justice targets for proposed inclusion in COAG's Closing the Gap strategy; and
2. whether or not the possible adoption of justice specific Closing the Gap targets is included on the agenda for the next COAG meeting.

**The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:**

At the July 2011 meeting, the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General (SCAG) Ministers discussed the unacceptable rates of incarceration of Indigenous Australians and the *Doing Time – Time for Doing* Report, and agreed:

- (a) to significantly reduce the gap in Indigenous offending and victimisation and to accurately track and review progress with a view to reviewing the level of effort required to achieve outcomes, and
- (b) to ask First Ministers to refer to COAG the possible adoption of justice-specific Indigenous Closing the Gap targets, acknowledging that in many instances their relative occurrence are due to variable factors outside the justice system.

Following this decision, on 25 October 2011, the Hon John Rau MP, as the current Chair of SCAG, wrote to the Prime Minister, as the Chair of COAG, requesting that justice-specific Closing the Gap targets be included for consideration on the COAG agenda.

On 24 November 2011, the Australian Government tabled a written response to the *Doing Time—Time for Doing* report of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs.