

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Inquiry into Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Written Question on Notice, 1 October 2021

PDR Number: IQ21-000260

AusTender CN3815841 - Indigenous Remote Communications Association public relations services

Written

Senator: Katy Gallagher

Question:

With reference to CN3815841 placed on AusTender by the Department of Health:

1. What "Public Relations services" will Indigenous Remote Communications Association Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Corporation provide under the contract?
 - a.) Has Indigenous Remote Communications Association Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Corporation previously been engaged by the Department to provide these services? If yes, please provide AusTender reference(s).
 - b.) What was the public relations brief given Indigenous Remote Communications Association Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Corporation?
 - c.) Please provide a breakdown of the cost of the contract, and what each output costs.
 - d.) What is the timeline for rolling out this campaign?
 - e.) The limited tender explanation of the contract is "extreme urgency or events unforeseen", please provide further explanation of this given the need to vaccinate first nations people did not begin in September 2021.
 - f.) How many COVID-19 public relations campaigns aimed at Indigenous Australians have been agreed by the Department?
 - g.) What is the total spend by the Department on COVID-19 public relations campaigns aimed at Indigenous Australians?

Answer:

1. The AusTender number quoted is for services undertaken by the Consumers Health Forum of Australia, not the Indigenous Remote Communications Association. The Department does have however contract CN3814705 with the Indigenous Remote Communications Association.
 - a. On 14 September 2021, the Commonwealth Department of Health engaged First Nations Media Australia (Registered as Indigenous Remote Communications Association) to provide Public Relations services. The AusTender reference is CN3814705.
 - b. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of Health has prepared a range of public communication assets for national distribution. The department requires the services of the Supplier to produce and distribute a package of culturally appropriate public relations content to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples about COVID-19, in particular the vaccine rollout, to extend the reach of these assets. First Nations Media Australia has worked with their members to meet these requirements and the contract deliverables.
 - c. The total cost of the contract is \$385,000[^] (GST Inclusive). Specific output costs vary depending on the local PR content produced and distributed by the First Nations media organisations. A contract variation was executed 16 January 2022, increasing the contract by \$110,000 to a total of \$385,000 (GST Inclusive) and extending the end date of the contract to 28 February 2022.

Due Date	Milestone Description	Total Price GST Exclusive	GST Component	Total Price GST Inclusive
Execution	Contract execution	\$150,000	\$15,000	\$165,000 (Paid)
November 2021	Second payment instalment	\$65,000	\$6,500	\$71,500 (Paid)
December 2021 – February 2022	Monthly payment instalment invoices, which must not exceed the limits of the total amount of \$148,500 (GST Inclusive).	\$135,500 (total available funds)	\$13,500	Up to \$148,500 (total available funds)

- d. Public relations activities will take place between 16 September 2021 to 28 February 2022.
- e. The emphasis of public relations activity is in areas of South Australia, Western Australia, Queensland, Northern Territory and New South Wales aligned with 30 priority locations agreed as part of the Indigenous vaccine acceleration plan announced by Minister Hunt on 14 September 2021. This activity is to increase vaccination and reduce the gap in vaccine uptake between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the general population.

The government's partnership with First Nations Media Australia supports the vaccine rollout, aims to broaden the conversation around vaccinations, address misinformation and build positive sentiment and intention toward vaccination by using local and trusted voices and sharing positive local stories.

- f. To date, the Department has delivered 11 campaigns aimed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people which Indigenous Remote Communications Association Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Corporation has assisted to disseminate. These campaigns have run in parallel to mainstream campaigns and include: Boosters, 5-11 year olds, For All of Us, More Reasons, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Adults, Protect Yourself, Building Trust in Health Advice, Indigenous COVID-19 Information, How to stay informed, Keep our Mob Safe. The first campaign commenced in March 2020.

In addition, the Department ran a COVID-19 Mental Health Campaign aimed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people called Keep your Spirit Strong at the end of the first year of the pandemic from November 2020 in response to the mental health impacts that the coronavirus was having on this community.

- g. Since the start of COVID advertising in 2020, the Department of Health has spent \$3,328,550 on Indigenous media, partnerships, translations, dispatch of assets for this community.