

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2012-2013, 17 & 19 October 2012

Question: E12-380

OUTCOME 1: Population Health

Topic: VISION 2020 AUSTRALIA COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Number of pages: 3

Senator: Senator Fierravanti-Wells

Question:

The Federal Government has for the past 7 years funded Vision 2020 Australia under various programs as a peak organisation of the Eye Care sector, something a number of organisations dispute. Vision 2020 has spent significant resources on staff dedicated to lobbying, expensive information materials and functions such as the Parliamentary Friend's Dinner.

- a) For what is Vision 2020 funded, what objectives, KPI's and reporting is linked to this funding?
- b) What processes have been introduced to monitor the achievement of these requirements?
- c) Why has access to these funds not been available to other organisations that are better able to represent their member's interests?
- d) Has Commonwealth funding been used for activities, e.g. travel, dinners, lobbying, rather than in accordance with the funding agreement?

Answer:

- a) Vision 2020 Australia received Commonwealth funding up to 30 June 2012 to support national secretariat activities to facilitate efficient and effective consultation between the Australian Government and the Australian eye health sector.

The funding agreement included objectives relating to policy, consultation and representation, information dissemination and governance.

The policy objectives were to:

- develop well informed policy advice and positions on a range of eye health issues, particularly Government policy, taking account of a range of views through consultation with Vision 2020 Australia members and other relevant stakeholders;
- provide policy leadership on behalf of the eye health and vision care sector; and
- contribute to international policy development on eye health.

The consultation and representation objectives were to:

- represent the interests of people with vision related conditions, their carers, health professionals, service providers, people with special needs and other relevant stakeholders;
- maintain effective links and availability to other organisations for consultation and representation and work on joint projects in partnership with other related organisations; and
- provide a conduit for government departments to access views of people with vision impairment and related conditions, carers, special needs groups, service providers and other relevant stakeholders.

The information dissemination objectives were to:

- contribute to community awareness and understanding regarding eye health and vision care issues; and
- provide assistance to member organisations and government in the development and implementation of communications policy and information resources.

The governance objectives were to:

- provide a well-managed and accountable community based organisation; and
- maintain an effective and representative national peak body.

The Funding Agreement required Vision 2020 Australia to regularly submit progress reports and a final report, including audited financial statements. The reports were required to detail progress against key performance indicators in the broad areas of policy, consultation and representation, information dissemination and governance.

- b) The Department of Health and Ageing followed standard Departmental procedures to manage the funding agreement to assess deliverables and determine overall achievement of the project objectives, in accordance with the Financial Management Act 1997 and the Commonwealth Grant Guidelines.
- c) Vision 2020 Australia has received funding for national secretariat services in its capacity as a national peak body representing over 60 member organisations involved in local and global eye care, and its role as part of Vision 2020: The Right to Sight, a global initiative of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness. The organisation is also responsible for facilitating the implementation of the global initiative for the elimination of avoidable blindness in Australia and the Asia Pacific region.

There have been opportunities for other organisations to apply for funding under the Government's new flexible funding arrangements, introduced on 1 July 2011. The first grant rounds under the new flexible funds were completed in mid-2012. A number of eye health organisations submitted applications. For example, one of the successful applicants was the Macular Degeneration Foundation, which entered into a three year funding agreement from July 2012.

Future opportunities under the flexible Funds will be advertised on the Department's website and will be subject to the Guidelines for a particular Fund. Further information on the flexible Funds, including Fund Guidelines, is available at www.health.gov.au/flexfunds

Organisations seeking funding are also encouraged to monitor the Government's GRANTSlink website for information on grants and funding rounds.

- d) Commonwealth funding has been used in accordance with the requirements of the funding agreement.