

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Additional Estimates 2015 - 2016

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
Outcome/Program: Outcome 2.1 Indigenous
Topic: Children and Family Centres

Senator: Siewert, Rachel

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Question:

Senator SIEWERT: Just on the centres, do you have any overview of those now, and are you able to give us an update now—since they have been constructed and the initial funding has run out—on who, from across the states and territories, has taken on responsibility for funding some of those and what those arrangements are?

Ms Hefren-Webb: We can give you an update. It is different in each state and territory, but we can—

Senator SIEWERT: Yes. I am after the overall view, because there are different arrangements. Are you able to take that on notice to give us a run-down on all of them and your current understanding of the status of those?

Ms Hefren-Webb: Absolutely.

Senator Scullion: That would have to involve the different services that are being provided, which was always the intention. So in each of the family-and-children centres we will have a different organisation running different things. Some run child care; there will be an organisation that runs child care. Is that the sort of breakdown you are looking for?

Senator SIEWERT: Yes.

Senator Scullion: As best as we can, we will certainly provide that on notice.

Answer:

As at 11 March 2016, all 38 Children and Family Centres (CFCs) are operational and delivering a range of services to their communities.

Under the National Partnership Agreement (NPA) the then Commonwealth Government paid around \$300 million for the construction of the centres from 2009 to 2014.

Centres were built in NSW - Mt Druitt, Campbelltown, Doonside, Toronto, Ballina, Nowra, Gunnedah, Brewarrina and Lightning Ridge; QLD - Ipswich, Mackay, Logan, Rockhampton, Mareeba, Cairns, Palm Island, Doomadgee, Mornington Island and Mt Isa; SA - Christies Beach, Whyalla, Ceduna and Pukatja; WA - Swan Region, Kununurra, Halls Creek, Fitzroy Crossing and Roebourne; VIC - Whittlesea and Bairnsdale; TAS - Bridgewater and

Geeveston; ACT - West Belconnen; NT - Palmerston, Maningrida, Gunbalanya, Ngukurr and Yuendumu.

With the expiry of the NPA, there is no requirement on state and territory governments to report to the Commonwealth on the operations of the CFCs or their arrangements for supporting them. In 2009, the Commonwealth Government did not provide or allocate any ongoing operation funds because it expected the states and territories to fund them. The Commonwealth relies on publically available information and advice from state and territory governments and CFC operators.

The arrangements for supporting the operational aspects of the CFCs vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. In some jurisdictions (South Australia, Tasmania and the ACT) the centres are run by the relevant government department and are fully integrated into the state/territory suite of child and family centres. In the other jurisdictions the CFCs may be operated by a non-government organisation with funding provided by the state/territory government. Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory have made public announcements committing ongoing resources to their CFCs. In addition, Western Australian is converting its five CFCs into Child and Parent Centres, which is WA's preferred model for integrating early childhood services. New South Wales and Victoria have not made public announcements about their ongoing resourcing commitment to their CFCs beyond existing funding agreements with current service providers.

The Commonwealth supports the sustainability of the CFCs through the provision of funds for services that can be delivered at or through the centres. Funding is being provided through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy for specific early childhood services, and via the child care payment system for those centres delivering approved child care services.