

Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2016 - 2017, 3 March 2017

Ref No: SQ17-000113

OUTCOME: 2 - Health Access and Support Services

Topic: Aboriginal Representation on PHN Boards

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Dodson, Patrick

Question:

Senator DODSON: A very quick one. Minister Wyatt made a press release the other day on improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through appropriate representation on the PHN boards. Can the government expand on the intent to proceed with this objective?

Ms Cole: PHNs are non-profit organisations funded by the government under various contracts and so forth. As they are non-profit organisations with their own constitutions we can only strongly encourage appropriate representation as opposed to demand appropriate representation but a number of the PHNs in recent times, with that encouragement, have increased either their membership or their board representation appropriately.

Senator DODSON: Is that number five? I think it is five Aboriginal controlled representatives on, is it 31 PHNs?

Ms Cole: I will have to get back to you on notice with the specifics on that one.

Answer:

Primary Health Networks (PHNs) have reported the following Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on their Boards:

- There are 16 people who identify as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin across 13 PHN Boards; and
- Six PHNs have Board members who have experience in Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services within their region.

PHN governance structures also include a number of committees, including GP-led Clinical Councils (CCs) and representative Community Advisory Committees (CACs), to report to the Board on locally relevant issues. Across the 31 PHNs, there are at least 137 members of CCs and CACs who identify as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin, including 71 representatives of Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations. In line with the *Primary Health Networks and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations – Guiding Principles* (<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/PHN-Accho>), a number of PHNs have also established specific Advisory Groups with their local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health sector to ensure advice from the sector is provided directly to the PHN.