

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Budget Estimates 26 May-6 June 2014

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

**Department/Agency:** Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

**Outcome/Program:** 1.1 Prime Minister and Cabinet

**Topic:** Closing the Gap

**Senator:** Senator Cory Bernardi

**Question reference number:** 243

**Type of Question:** Written

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 11 July 2014

**Number of pages:** 2

**Question:**

1. Can you explain how the Northern Territory Land Councils are funded? Where are they funded from? Who approves the funding?
2. How much funding do the Northern Territory Land Councils receive each year?
3. Has that amount grown over the last five years? If it has grown, what was the percentage increase?
4. Can you provide similar information on receipts going into the Aboriginals Benefit Account that funds the Land Councils?
5. How does funding growth for administration of Northern Territory Land Councils compare to funding trends for other Commonwealth Departments or Agencies? What was the reason for any funding growth?

**Answer:**

1. The Northern Territory Land Councils are funded in accordance with the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* (Land Rights Act). Under subsection 34(1) of the Land Rights Act, the Federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs approves annual Budget Estimates for each of the four Northern Territory Land Councils to undertake their core functions under the Act.  
  
Land Council budget funding is drawn from the Aboriginals Benefit Account (ABA) pursuant to subsection 64(1) of the Land Rights Act.  
  
The Northern Territory Land Councils may also receive government and non-government grants and program funding, rental income, and fees for services.

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2. In 2013-2014, it is anticipated that funding that the four Northern Territory Land Councils will receive under s64(1) of the Land Rights Act be \$36.39 million.
3. Funding for Northern Territory Land Councils provided under subsection 64(1) of the Land Rights Act increased by 38 per cent over the last five years, from \$27.61 million in 2008-09 to \$38.19 million in 2012-13.
4. Receipts credited to the Aboriginal Benefits Account (ABA) have decreased by 53 per cent over the last five years, from \$218.52 million in 2008-09 to \$103.57 million in 2012-13. The fluctuation in income is due to the direct relationship of ABA receipts to the demand and price of commodities which in 2008-09 was at historic highs. It is anticipated that final receipts to the ABA for this current financial year will be in excess of \$150 million.
5. While generally, ABA funding for administration of Northern Territory Land Councils has grown, it is not possible to directly compare this to funding trends of other Commonwealth Departments or agencies where funding profiles and trends will vary markedly.

The budgets of the Land Councils reflect funding agreed by government to support the Land Councils to manage their core responsibilities under the Land Rights Act. This includes funding to infrastructure, facilities and specific projects that support economic and community development.