

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: Boarding schools

Senator: Senator Cory Bernardi

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Question:

In 2008 the former government pledged \$28 million to open three Aboriginal boarding schools in the Northern Territory.

1. Of the 3 boarding hostels in the Northern Territory for which the former government pledged \$28 million, how many have been built?
2. When did the hostel at Wadeye actually become operational? How long was it from the announcement to when it became operational? If there was a delay, why was there a delay?
3. What was the original cost estimate?
4. How much did the facility finally cost? If the costs were over-budget, what was the reason for the cost blowout? Did the Department fail to factor in the cost of staff housing?
5. How many residents are there?
6. How many residents at the facility are from Wadeye itself?
7. What improvements have there been in academic outcomes for the residents?
8. What security arrangements are in place?
9. Who operates the hostel and what is the cost?
10. What is your view of the long-term viability of the Wadeye hostel? What is the status of the other proposed two hostels?

Answer:

1. One, the Wadeye Boarding Facility, Kardu Darrikardu Numida Hostel.
2. The Wadeye Boarding Facility became operational from the commencement of the 2013 school year. Funding was appropriated through the 2008 Budget. Delays

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occurred due to the complexity of the community consultations, site selection, land surveys, feasibility studies, technical feasibility studies, land leasing arrangements, tendering and the complexities of construction in this very remote location.

3. \$12.1 million.
4. \$14.3 million. The increased costs included additional funding for building construction, building fees and levies and necessary staff housing.
5. 32 (at 13 June 2014).
6. 25 (at 13 June 2014).
7. The boarding facility is responsible for the safety and wellbeing of its residents and for providing an environment that supports students to pursue their schooling goals, but has no direct accountability for the academic or social progress of resident students. Resident students attend the local school, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Thamarrurr College.
8. The boarding facility is staffed during daylight hours and a number of staff members are resident on site. Night security is provided through the provision of two guards and a dog.
9. The facility is operated by Aboriginal Hostels Limited. Over the first two full years of operation a total of \$3.36 million has been provided in operational funding.
10. The Wadeye hostel has an operational contract in place to the end of 2014. The Government will not proceed with the previous Government's plan for a boarding hostel in either Garrthalala or the Warlpiri Triangle.