

**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:** Registrar of Indigenous Corporations

**Outcome/Program:** Registrar of Indigenous Corporations

**Topic:** LawHelp

**Senator:** Senator Cory Bernardi

**Question reference number:** 278

**Type of Question:** Written

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**Question:**

1. I note that ORIC started LawHelp. Can you tell me why this service was established?
2. Please explain what LawHelp does.
3. How many lawyers or law firms participate?
4. What type of matters does LawHelp deal with?
5. What is its impact?

**Answer:**

1. More than 60 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations are located in remote or very remote parts of Australia and do not have ready access to quality legal services. LawHelp was started by the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations and volunteer lawyers in response to this lack of access.
2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations registered under the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* (CATSI Act) can apply for and access legal help free of charge through the LawHelp service.

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3. The following twelve law firms contribute their time and expertise free of charge to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations:
  - Allens
  - Ashurst
  - Australian Government Solicitor (AGS)
  - Castledine Gregory Law & Mediation
  - Clayton Utz
  - DLA Piper Australia
  - HWL Ebsworth Lawyers
  - Jackson McDonald
  - Lipman Karas
  - Minter Ellison Lawyers
  - TressCox
  - Bradley Allen Love Lawyers
4. Through LawHelp, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations can obtain high quality legal assistance in relation to interpreting the law; contract drafting, negotiation and management; employment issues; basic tax issues; how to comply with laws applying to the corporation, consumer protection and trade practices issues; legal issues relating to information and communication technology, intellectual property arrangements and real property matters.
5. Sixty-two Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations have applied for assistance through LawHelp since the service was launched in November 2010. To date 15 applications have been received during 2013-14. The legal assistance provided has contributed to building the capacity and governance of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations that have accessed the service. It has ensured that the directors of the corporations were able to make legal and proper decisions.