

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2016 - 2017

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
Outcome/Program: Outcome 2: Indigenous
Topic: Development of Special Skills in PM&C

Senator: Siewert, Rachel

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Type of question: Written

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Number of pages: 2

Question:

In an oration given by Fred Chaney in December 2014, he said ‘I ask you also to consider what sort of skills are required to carry out some of the admirable intentions, to engage with communities to negotiate and implement tailored local solutions, providing as the government says elsewhere opportunities for communities to contribute to the design and delivery of local solutions to local issues. The skills required for this difficult work are largely absent from the APS and there is no training program to learn those skills’. Does the Minister and the Department accept that special skills will need to be developed within PM&C if the policy intentions of government are to be successfully implemented?

- What actions have been taken to develop that capacity within the Department?
- What has been the rate of staff turnover within the Indigenous Affairs area of PM&C during the last 2 financial years? For example, how many of the SES officers working in positions relating directly to Indigenous Affairs within PM&C have been moved from one position to another during the last 2 financial years?
- What is the present position within PM&C in relation to the establishment of a regional network to deliver Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs?
- What is the administrative cost of the regional network? Please provide budgets.

Answer:

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) agrees that special skills are required for staff to successfully engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to design, negotiate and implement tailored local solutions to local issues. To build on staff expertise and complement existing training, the Indigenous Affairs Group is developing a capability pathway to map critical learning in Indigenous Affairs, from induction to specialisation. The pathway will provide a framework to empower, retain and support staff to shape their careers in Indigenous Affairs. The aim is to balance the corporate and APS core skills training with targeted community development skills. It will be implemented through a mix of on-the-job experience as well as formal training through accredited courses. A group of staff from across the Indigenous Affairs Group (including

Network staff that perform an engagement role) participated recently in a pilot of the University of Queensland's Advanced Indigenous Development Programming short course to provide evaluations to determine whether the short course would help support community development learning for staff.

Staff turnover within the Indigenous Affairs Group for the last two years combined is an average of 18.5 per cent for ongoing and non-ongoing employees, including SES. This figure indicates separations from PM&C.

The PM&C Regional Network was established on 2 March 2015. It comprises of 12 regions and serves urban, regional and remote locations. The cost of employees and suppliers in the PM&C Regional Network for the 2015-16 financial year was a total of \$77,303,011.89.