

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 1: Prime Minister and Cabinet
Topic: City Deal – Townsville, Launceston and Western Sydney

Senators: McCarthy, Malrindirri

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Question:

Senator McCARTHY: When was contact first made with Townsville City Council about the city deal?

Dr Kennedy: Shortly after the government was re-elected there was a meeting that the Prime Minister and the assistant minister attended in Townsville, with the mayor. But I will take on notice the precise date. We had begun talking to our colleagues in the state government before that meeting. But it was, essentially, after the government had been returned.

Senator McCARTHY: The deal was announced on 13 June 2016 by Angus Taylor and Ewen Jones, but at that stage no-one had talked to Townsville City Council about a city deal?

Dr Kennedy: I cannot comment on what the minister or advisers did through that period—I can take that on notice. But of course it was not appropriate for us, through that period, to be pursuing a policy that was being announced in the course of an election.

Senator McCARTHY: Your sense is that, by the time the meeting took place in the weeks after the election, someone had been in contact with Townsville. Had someone been in contact with the Queensland government?

Dr Kennedy: I will have to take that on notice. I am just not sure—

Senator McCARTHY: Please take on notice when contact was first made with Townsville City Council in relation to the city deal and when contact was first made with the Queensland government.

Dr Kennedy: For the Queensland government, this policy was announced prior to the election period, so there had been contact. I will take it on notice to give you the precise details—not on those particular deals you are referring to but on the cities policy more broadly.

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Senator McCARTHY: Similarly, when was contact first made with the Launceston council in regard to the city deal?

Dr Kennedy: To get you the precise date, I would have to take that on notice. We reached out to the relevant state and local governments in the period after the government was returned. But I will provide you with those dates and contacts for all three city deals.

Senator McALLISTER: In relation to Launceston, I would be interested in first contact with the University of Tasmania and first contact with the Tasmanian state government. Given that

the purpose of a city deal is to encourage growth across an economic region, were the West Tamar, Meander Valley and other surrounding councils contacted about the city deal?

Dr Kennedy: I will take that on notice. I myself have not met with those councils. I have met, with the minister, with the Launceston council. I am aware that there are potentially six other councils in the surrounding area that may be interested in how this city deal process works—which is, I have to draw out, quite different from the Townsville case, where there is a single council that we are dealing with. It will also be the case in the Western Sydney city deal process that we are likely to be dealing with multiple councils. Perhaps we could indicate when we made contact and to which councils we have spoken, if that helps.

Senator McALLISTER: That would help. What is the timeline for completion of the Launceston city deal?

Dr Kennedy: I will defer to my colleague, Mrs Wiley-Smith. I do not know off the top of my head.

Mrs Wiley-Smith: We expect that the city deal for Launceston will be signed and agreed early in 2017.

Senator McALLISTER: In the first quarter?

Mrs Wiley-Smith: Yes.

Senator McALLISTER: Just for clarity, can I confirm that you will undertake to get back to us on which councils have been contacted about the Western Sydney city deal, who made that contact and when that first occurred?

Dr Kennedy: I will. I also point out that some of the contact with councils has been made through the state governments, so I will attempt to capture that—not always directly by the Commonwealth. We have tried to work constructively through the state governments. So I will attempt to answer that question more broadly if you like, too, by asking my state colleagues to talk about what contacts they have made as well.

Senator McALLISTER: Okay. When was the New South Wales government first contacted?

Dr Kennedy: The precise date I will take on notice as well, but we have been working with the New South Wales government, again, in that period since the government has been re-elected.

Answer:

- First contact with Townsville City Council in relation to the City Deal was made on 26 July 2016. Contact was first made with the Queensland Government on 1 April 2016.
- The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) first made contact with the Launceston City Council on 16 August 2016.
- PM&C first made contact with the Tasmanian Government on 13 July 2016.
- PM&C first made contact with the University of Tasmania on 17 August 2016.
- The Mayors of the George Town, Northern Midlands, Meander Valley and West Tamar Councils were contacted about attending a Launceston City Deal Roundtable held on 25 August 2016.

On 21 October 2016, the Commonwealth and New South Wales Governments signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), formalising governance arrangements to support delivery of City Deals in NSW, including collaboration across the three tiers of government.

The MoU established the Western Sydney City Deal as the first priority, and established the geographic area of the deal, and therefore the local governments who would be engaged to partner in the City Deal.

The Commonwealth and New South Wales Governments are holding a Mayoral Roundtable for all eight local governments on 8 December 2016, chaired by the Assistant Minister for Cities and Digital Transformation, the Hon Angus Taylor MP.

This builds on a program of direct engagement with local governments through state and commonwealth governments, which commenced following resolution of the 2016 NSW local government elections.

The delivery of City Deals in NSW, including the Western Sydney City Deal, is also supported by a senior group of state and Commonwealth officials. This group first met on 14 October 2016.