

**SENATE EMPLOYMENT, WORKPLACE RELATIONS AND EDUCATION
LEGISLATION COMMITTEE**

**2005-2006 BUDGET SENATE ESTIMATES HEARING
30, 31 MAY and 3 JUNE 2005**

EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS PORTFOLIO

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Outcome 3: Increased workforce participation
Output Group 3.1: Working Age Policy
Outputs 3.1.1: Working Age Policy and Legislation
Question Number: W106-06

Question:

Senator Carr provided in writing:

What practical improvements have resulted from the COAG trial? Have any new initiatives been implemented that would not have happened other than in the context of the COAG Trial?

Answer:

Shepparton

A number of initiatives have been implemented as a result of the COAG trial. Key initiatives include:

- The Youth at the Centre project. This project aims to increase young people's participation in community initiatives. Fifteen young people are now gaining the opportunity to develop skills in community asset mapping and community consultation.
- The Education Pathways Strategy. This strategy is the first of the 12 strategic priorities identified by the community to be comprehensively developed. The strategy covers the years prior to school through to young people leaving school to go into further training, education or employment. Initial components of the strategy include:
 - Developing individual education plans for Aboriginal students in government primary and secondary schools;
 - Achieving a better understanding of why some students are not attending school regularly, followed by the development of strategies to address these issues; and

- Establishing a Koorie Early Childhood Network that will oversee the development of preschool to school transition support and the establishment of supported playgroups.

Other actions to be implemented in 2005 include:

- Transition support for young people leaving school;
 - Increasing opportunities for young Aboriginal people to work part time while at school; and
 - Schools developing two year plans in collaboration with the Aboriginal community to support Aboriginal students.
- The Ladders to Success initiative. This is a *Structured Training and Employment Project (STEP)* involving local employers, schools, training organisations, government agencies and community members and is designed to improve the transition of young Aboriginal people into work. The project involves 100 places and 80 local employers and has already resulted in 65 job placements.
 - Greater Shepparton City Council STEP project. This STEP project has placed seven Aboriginal job seekers with the Council and has resulted in five of those people having employment with the Council after their STEP placement.

Cape York

The COAG trial in Cape York has improved the Whole-of-Government approach to engagement with communities, businesses, regional organisations and the Indigenous people of Cape York Peninsula. Since October 2002 the Department as “lead agent” for Cape York Peninsula has provided senior Departmental staff in Cairns to progress the COAG agenda. The Department has worked closely with other Australian Government agencies and the Queensland State Government in the COAG trial and many of the initiatives and activities are across both levels of government. The COAG trail has resulted in the Australian and State governments working together on the ground to respond to community identified needs resulting in joint initiatives and improved responses to needs. This is an enhanced way of servicing communities and provides a framework which extends beyond the Cape York COAG site.

The intention of the COAG trials is to continue Government business while improving coordination and delivery of government services. The lead agent facilitates this coordination and linkages. The COAG work has focussed on supporting existing activities to be successful.

The practical improvements based on the COAG strategic framework that would not have happened without COAG are outlined below.

Australian Government agencies and the Queensland State Government working together in a whole of government approach to respond to community needs. This joint work spans a range of initiatives and examples include:

- Investing in community leadership and governance initiatives through the:

- undertaking of the Cape York Strategic Leaders programme to improve leadership and communication between government staff and community leaders;
 - supporting the establishment of the Cape York Institute of Policy and Leadership; and
 - capacity building and improving governance in communities through facilitating better links between mentors, Indigenous Community Volunteers and training.
- Support delivery of practical measures developed in conjunction with Cape York communities including:
 - tailoring Government programmes and services based on identified community priorities including relating to drug and alcohol diversionary activities in Lockhart River and Aurukun;
 - enterprise development;
 - youth strategies/programmes in Aurukun, Wujal Wujal and HopeVale;
 - planning for welfare reform based Shared Responsibility Agreements in Aurukun, Mossman Gorge, Coen and HopeVale communities;
 - the Australian Government being actively involved in each ‘Negotiation Table’ which is part of the Queensland Government’s Partnerships Queensland initiative that incorporates an agency head as a ‘Government Champion’. This joint representation allows both governments to negotiate with the community and better co-ordinate the government response.
 - coordination and negotiated flexibilities to improve complementarity of programmes and delivery between Australian and Queensland State Governments such as joint funding for the Weipa Multi-Purpose facility. Greater flexibility in the provision of Indigenous Employment Programmes on Cape York and alignment with Queensland Government infrastructure development;
 - establishment of the Education Transition Unit to assist Cape York Indigenous students at schools outside Cape York communities; and
 - developing a Cape York Indigenous Employment Strategy that focuses on improving the economic base and employment opportunities in Cape York for Indigenous people.
 - Co-location of senior Departmental staff with the Queensland Government’s Cape York Strategy Unit (a State whole of government unit).