

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Additional Estimates 8-11 February 2010

Question: PM88

Topic: NAA – closure of offices

Type of Question: written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 March 2010

Number of pages: 1

Question:

Senator Scullion:

On November 2 the Federal Government announced that as part of its Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO) statement, the National Archives would be required to find budget savings of \$700,000 in 2009-10, and \$1.4m for the following three financial years.

- a) Why is the Federal Government allowing the closure of these offices if it contravenes the NAA's Service Charter?
- b) Why is the Government contradicting its mandate to 'close the gap' by removing a culturally-sensitive service for Indigenous clients in the Northern Territory, South Australia and Tasmania, in particular members of the Stolen Generation?
- c) Who designed the consultation procedure and why were so few local historians consulted?
- d) Were any objections received during the consultations?
- e) How many letters of objection has your office received in relation to the closures?
- f) Why weren't the public given an opportunity to provide a submission on the proposed closures?
- g) Were there other areas of the NAA's business operations, for example exhibitions and publications, which were considered for budget cuts?
- h) What arrangements are in place for the transfer of records from the offices which the Government proposes to close?
- i) What are the operating costs of the Darwin, Adelaide and Hobart offices?
- j) Where does the NAA propose to move the records from each of the offices?
- k) How much will it cost to expand storage capacity in the buildings where the records will be moved?
- l) How much will it cost to transfer the records?
- m) How much will it cost and how long will it take to digitise the records?
- n) How does the NAA plan to address the issues of online accessibility in the areas which will be affected by the closures?
- o) How does the NAA plan to compensate and accommodate local historians who will lose material essential to their work?
- p) How does the NAA plan to overcome the potential for censorship as more records are digitised?

- q) There is no other purpose-built facility to store records in the Northern Territory. What will the building be used for and is there an opportunity to co-locate the NT Archives collection with the national collection?

Answer: On 23 February 2010 the Cabinet Secretary, Senator the Hon Joe Ludwig announced that Archives will maintain a local presence in each state and territory. Instead of closing the Archives offices in Darwin, Adelaide and Hobart they will remain open until a permanent solution involving co-location with a local organisation has been found.