

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Budget Estimates Hearings 2005-2006, 23 and 24 May 2005

Question: PM60

Outcome 1, Output 4.2

Topic: Cabinet Implementation Unit – programmes being monitored

Written

Senator Carr asked:

- 1. What specific programs or reforms is the Unit currently reviewing or supporting the implementation of?**
- 2. When were these issues referred to the CIU? What is the expected length of CIU's involvement in each area?**
- 3. What is CIU's role in resolving emerging implementation problems and/or reviewing progress in relation to each program or set of programs it is involved with?**
- 4. Has the Cabinet Implementation Unit (CIU) provided any advice to the Government or the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination (OIPC) in regard to resolving emerging problems in the implementation of the new Indigenous affairs arrangements?**
- 5. If so, at what stage did the CIU become involved? How was the decision made that CIU should become involved?**
- 6. Is the CIU still involved in overseeing or providing advice on the implementation of the new arrangements?**
- 7. What was/is the nature of its involvement? To whom has it provided advice and on what areas/issues?**
- 8. Has the Unit done, or is it planning to do, a review of the implementation of the Indigenous affairs arrangements or the COAG Trials?**
- 9. If so, when is this planned to be done? If it is currently underway, when will it be completed? Will it be done in stages to provide an ongoing assessment of the implementation process?**
- 10. Have any of the quarterly implementation reports included information on the progress in implementing the new Indigenous affairs arrangements?**

Answer:

General response: The role of the Cabinet Implementation Unit (CIU) was discussed at a committee hearing on 4 November 2003. On that occasion, Senator Murray commented that he did “not think it necessary, or probably proper” to “go into the content” of the broad strategic areas within which the CIU is involved (p. F&PA 84, Hansard of 4 November 2003). The CIU’s work involves the identification of issues and development of advice on them to be provided to Cabinet. In line with long-standing convention the Department is not in a position to provide detailed

answers on those elements of Senator Carr's question which go to the advice provided to cabinet.

In general, the Unit assists agencies in preparing implementation plans for significant new government initiatives, identifying among other things the important milestones in the implementation process. The Unit does not seek to follow-up every decision that is taken by the Government, but focuses on the delivery of particular programmes and measures selected on the basis of criteria that reflect the degree of implementation risk. Short reports on progress against milestones are then prepared by the agencies responsible for implementing the selected initiatives and the Unit works with the agencies to compile a quarterly 'traffic light' report for the Prime Minister to present to Cabinet.

Where difficulties are identified in the implementation of an initiative included in a quarterly report, the nature of the problem will be presented to Cabinet through a quarterly report or to the Prime Minister through separate briefing. This advice will generally include information on what is being done to resolve the issue. The Unit may, at times, propose discussions at ministerial or departmental level or particular remedial action that could usefully be undertaken by the department or departments involved.

If remedial action for difficulties identified in a quarterly report is undertaken, the action and its outcomes will be reported to Cabinet in later quarters. The CIU will often be involved with the responsible agencies in developing responses to difficulties that will be reported back to Cabinet. The close integration of the CIU's reporting into the cabinet system will usually make it impossible to discuss particular cases, or the CIU's activity in particular policy areas, without disclosing the deliberations of Cabinet in a way that would be contrary to the conventions of cabinet government.

1. The CIU is monitoring and reporting to Cabinet on some initiatives in Indigenous affairs but the Department is not in a position to specify the initiatives for the reasons set out above.
2. The CIU began monitoring each initiative around the time the Government decided that the initiative be implemented. It will report on the implementation of each initiative until the implementation phase is complete, ie, until the last major milestone identified in the implementation plan has been reached.
3. See general response above.
4. to 10. The CIU is currently monitoring the implementation of specific initiatives in Indigenous affairs, not the implementation of the full set of new arrangements. In respect of the details of the CIU's involvement, see general response above.