

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government

Budget Estimates 25 May 2011

Question: 29

Topic: Taskforce References on Departmental Website

Asked By: Senator HUMPHRIES

Type of Question: Written

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The Department's website mentions:

"One of the main aims of the Taskforce is to ensure that the recovery effort takes account of local community engagement and input; balances concepts of betterment with the need for timely reconstruction and value for money; leverages available funding, and coordinates existing Commonwealth strategies and investment."

- On the point of local community engagement and input – what benchmarks will the taskforce use and how will these aspects be enforced?
- Noting the Prime Minister's assurance that local labour would be used where possible in reconstruction (Question Time, 10 February 2011), what sort of benchmarks has the taskforce set for itself in ensuring that local labour is used and local communities are engaged in the reconstruction effort?

Answer:

The National Disaster Recovery Taskforce and the Australian Government Reconstruction Inspectorate have been working with the Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA) to establish and implement a Value for Money framework, which includes an assessment of a number of elements, including local engagement and input and the proportion of local labour to be utilised. Local governments are encouraged to submit a Local Plan and a medium to long term plan for the recovery and reconstruction of disaster affected communities, as part of the assessment process.

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In order to develop the Local Plan, local governments undertake a process that involves their local communities and other stakeholders to ensure that the unique characteristics, local assets, capability and priority needs for each local government area are captured. Priorities will be set by local entities to ensure that the specific community needs are recognised and addressed. The Authority will consider these priorities in the context of the state program to recognise overall constraints on labour and material inputs and to identify opportunities for improving value for money outcomes.

The QRAs Value for Money assessment process includes a review of each local government's procurement plan, including a review of local labour procurement processes, to ensure that local labour will be used where available.

The Taskforce has commenced discussions with Victoria, following their signing of a National Partnership Agreement on 10 May 2011, to implement processes which will include consideration of Value for Money, incorporating the issues of local engagement and input and use of local labour.