

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Budget Estimates Hearing 21-24 May 2012

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

**Department/Agency:** Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

**Outcome/Program:** 1.1.3 Support Services for Government Operations

**Topic:** Equity strategy

**Senator:** Senator Di Natale

**Question reference number:** 133

**Type of Question:** Written

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 6 July 2012

**Number of pages:** 3

**Question:**

1. How does the Department ensure that the Government's Access and Equity Strategy is implemented in its entirety and in relation to all Departmental activities?
  - a. How does the Department acknowledge the multicultural character of the Australian society, in terms of the services and programs you provide?
2. How do you measure your success against Access and Equity goals? What evidence do you have that the Department is actively implementing the Government's Access and Equity policy?
3. What changes will you implement over the next financial year to ensure your programs and services are more accessible to Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities?
4. What is your Department doing to ensure it has a culturally competent workforce?

**Answer:**

The Government's Access and Equity strategy aims to build cultural diversity considerations into Government service delivery. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's primary output is policy advice and administrative support to Government rather than service delivery. Two areas where the Department has some direct engagement with service to citizens are the provisions of Community Cabinet meetings and the administration of the Volunteer Management Program.

1. Community Cabinet was established in 2008 as part of the Government's commitment to ensure close consultation with the Australian people. The meetings offer members of the public an opportunity to raise and discuss matters and provide the Government with valuable, first-hand information in relation to emerging issues to the Australian public.

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Meetings are generally held in local schools in states across Australia. Through Stakeholder liaison, staff members of the Section gain an understanding of the cultural diversity in the area. In addition, the Department works with the local MPs office to determine whether there are particular cultural or linguistic groups. As part of the 'Welcome to Country', the Department works with local indigenous elders. Registration and venue selection involves close attention to the needs of the community including mobility and access requirements. The Department provides a number of alternative methods for registration for the event. This includes online registration, an 1800 (toll free) phone line and TTY services. At registration, members of the Community are asked whether they have any special requirements in attending the meeting. Attendees with an identified need of assistance are fully supported by the Section.

Volunteering is an essential part of a socially inclusive society in which all Australian people feel valued and have opportunities to fully participate in community life. The National Volunteering Strategy, released in November 2011, aims to ensure that by 2021 volunteering is encouraged, supported and recognised by all Australians.

Organisations funded under the Volunteer Management Program are required to provide assistance to all members of the community they serve who wish to engage in volunteering. Funding agreements require that assistance is specifically provided to people with a disability, people who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

2. Public interest in Community Cabinet remains strong and positive. A recurring theme from members of the public is their appreciation that ministers would come to their community and be accessible to ordinary people. Individuals, organisations and parliamentarians continue to write to the Prime Minister asking for a Community Cabinet meeting to be held in the area.

Organisations funded under the Volunteer Management Program are required to report to the department annually on the achievement of outcomes, including the number of people who are assisted towards volunteering. Annual performance reporting includes assistance provided to people with a disability, people who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

3. A Communication Strategy is being developed to guide improvements to community engagement opportunities prior to, during, and following Community Cabinet meetings. New activities could include the enhanced use of online engagement and social media

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to enable a broader demographic to engage with the government through Community Cabinet.

New funding agreements are being introduced with enhanced reporting on individualised assistance provided to members of particular groups, including people with a disability, people who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

4. The Department has a Workplace Diversity Strategy, Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) and provides cultural awareness training to staff. The Department also promotes and holds, or participates in, events that encourage and foster acceptance of cultural diversity, such as Harmony Day, Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week. All employment guidelines and processes reflect the APS Values and comply with legislative requirements regarding diversity in the workplace.