

Finance and Public Administration Legislative Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Australian Public Service Commission

Estimates 2004-05 – Supplementary Written Questions November 2004

Question: PM 6

Topic: Policies and Programs re Indigenous employment in the Public Service

Senator Carr asked:

Employment profile

1. What is the staffing profile across the APS for indigenous staff? Is it true that most are in relatively junior positions? Please provide detailed data for the years 1996-2004 inclusive, for all departments and agencies.

Indigenous employment strategy

2. Is there currently, or has there been since 1996, a public service-wide initiative to increase and encourage the employment of Indigenous persons within the service and other Commonwealth agencies? Can details of any such strategy, including targets and performance against those targets with respect to each department and agency, be provided?

3. In particular, is it right that the Tax Office participated in the development of an indigenous recruitment strategy as part of a public service wide initiative, with a Second Commissioner of the Tax Office a senior participant in the development of the strategy? If so, what has the Tax Office done about implementing the recommendations of that recruitment strategy?

Scholarships and cadetships

4. What programs are in place, with respect to all Commonwealth departments and agencies, to provide scholarships or cadetships (or similar) for Indigenous employees or prospective employees to undertake education or training? Please provide details, including funding for each program and the numbers of persons who have benefited under the program or programs for all years 1996-2004. (If any programs of this kind have been discontinued, please provide information as to the rationale for these decisions.)

5. In previous years the Tax Office has offered a Commissioner's undergraduate Aboriginal Scholarship to enable its indigenous staff to obtain an undergraduate degree. The Scholarship has assisted Tax Office indigenous staff who may not otherwise have been able or had the confidence to seek a tertiary qualification. The scholarship has not been offered for any indigenous staff member to study in 2005. Why is that? Was any formal evaluation of the program conducted or discussed with any indigenous staff in the Tax Office before the scholarship was withdrawn? Has any other development opportunity for indigenous staff been offered in place of the scholarship?

6. Isn't it therefore anomalous when the Tax Office is supposed to be promoting equality of employment opportunity that the only significant development opportunity for its indigenous staff is withdrawn?

7. With respect to what other departments or agencies have Indigenous scholarships or cadetships not been awarded or available for 2005? Why?

Answer:

1. The following table shows the number of ongoing Indigenous Australians employed in the APS as a percentage of total ongoing staffing numbers.

| 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 2.5% | 2.6% | 2.7% | 2.7% | 2.5% | 2.5% | 2.5% | 2.4% | 2.3% |

The following table shows the number of ongoing Indigenous Australians employed by classification in the APS as a percentage of total ongoing employees at those classifications for selected years.

| Classification | 1995 (%) | 2003 (%) | 2004 (%) |
|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| APS 1-2 | 3.7 | 4.2 | 3.7 |
| APS 3-4 | 3.2 | 3.1 | 3.1 |
| APS 5-6 | 1.7 | 2.2 | 2.0 |
| Executive | 0.6 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| SES | 0.7 | 1.4 | 1.3 |
| Trainee | 16.6 | 12.7 | 8.8 |
| Graduate | 2.9 | 3.3 | 2.7 |
| Other | 1.7 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 2.5 | 2.4 | 2.3 |

2. The APS Commission has identified Indigenous employment as a strategic priority and has established a cross-agency Steering Committee at Deputy Secretary level, chaired by the Public Service Commissioner, to oversight the strategy.

The Commission is working in partnership with APS and non-APS Commonwealth agencies, and other relevant organisations to examine and implement measures to improve Indigenous employment rates. Initiatives include:

- the establishment of a partnership between a number of agencies to provide entry-level employment and accredited training to a group of unemployed Indigenous people through a traineeship program leading to ongoing employment;
- the establishment of an exchange program to provide Indigenous employees with access to more diverse working areas to increase their levels of experience and expertise;

- a longitudinal study of a group of Indigenous trainees to provide better information about why Indigenous people leave the public sector;
- examining the feasibility of an APS-wide Indigenous graduate recruitment program; and
- examining the feasibility of a school-to-work program for Indigenous secondary students.
- Specific targets have not been established for the employment of Indigenous Staff in the APS.

3. The APS Commission cannot comment on this question. The question has been referred to the Australian Taxation Office for response directly to Senator Carr.

4. The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations administers the following programs:

- The National Indigenous Cadetship Program, which provides opportunities for indigenous Australians to gain the professional qualifications needed for employment opportunities in both the public and private sectors. It assists in matching students who intend on studying full time in an undergraduate degree, diploma/advanced diploma at university, TAFE or accredited tertiary institution with employers who can give them work skills and professional employment experience.
- The Structured Training and Employment Project, is designed to achieve more jobs for Indigenous Australians by providing funding for packages of tailored assistance, including structured and accredited training, that enable employers to provide long-term jobs.
- Wage Assistance, provides a subsidy to Australian employers who give an ongoing job to an eligible Indigenous job seeker.

The question has been referred to the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations for response directly to Senator Carr, particularly in relation to funding and participation numbers.

5. The question has been referred to the Australian Taxation Office for response directly to Senator Carr.

6. The question has been referred to the Australian Taxation Office for response directly to Senator Carr.

7. The Commission does not offer Indigenous scholarships or cadetships in relation to its own workforce, however, the Commission recruited Indigenous graduate employees in 2002, 2003 and 2004 and, while not recruiting Indigenous graduates in 2005, plans to undertake an Indigenous recruitment program for 2006.

The APS Commission does not maintain centralised records of APS agency scholarship and cadetship programs.