

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Supplementary Budget Estimates 18-21 October 2010

Question: PM74

Asked By: Senator Payne

Topic: Status of NHHN negotiations

Type of Question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 3 December 2010

Number of pages: 2

In relation to ongoing negotiations regarding the National Health and Hospitals Network:

- a) **Please provide an update on progress, if any, towards an agreement with Western Australia on the NHHN reforms.**
- b) **Have officials from Western Australia indicated that they will participate in the multilateral discussions on implementation currently being held between the Commonwealth and the other states and territories?**
- c) **Given that six months of negotiations have not yielded an agreement, what is the contingency plan for a situation in which an agreement with WA is not reached?**
- d) **Has there been discussion with WA Ministers or senior health department bureaucrats regarding the prospect of the Commonwealth offering additional inducements to WA in order to reach an agreement?**
- e) **Given that changes to Intergovernmental Agreements cannot occur without the unanimous agreement of all parties, has there been discussion of alternative arrangements that may be required due to the failure of Western Australia to agree to the National Health and Hospital Network reforms?**
- f) **If so, what arrangements have been discussed?**
- g) **What has been decided as the most appropriate course of action?**

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h) Has the Ministerial Council on Federal Financial Relations met yet to discuss finalising the financial arrangements for funding the NHHN? Have these been agreed?

Answer:

- a) Western Australia has not signed the NHHN Agreement. Discussions about the NHHN Agreement are continuing between the Commonwealth and Western Australian governments.
- b) The Commonwealth has issued an open invitation to Western Australia to attend all multilateral discussions about the NHHN Agreement. Western Australian officials have participated in some multilateral discussions on NHHN implementation but have generally declined attending these meetings.
- c) The Commonwealth Government is committed to implementing the NHHN reforms and providing Western Australia's share of additional funding to deliver better health services for the benefit of the people of Western Australia. To this end discussions are continuing between the Commonwealth and Western Australian Government.
- d) Questions relating to discussions between Commonwealth and Western Australian health department bureaucrats or health ministers should be referred to the Department of Health and Ageing.
- e) Questions e), f), g) and h) should be referred to the Treasury as it is responsible for administering the Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations and the Ministerial Council for Federal Financial Relations.