

Senate Finance and Public Administration Standing Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES HEARINGS

PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET PORTFOLIO

Department/Agency: Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government

Outcome: 2

Topic: Indian Ocean Territories

Senator: MACDONALD

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

Senator MACDONALD: How are the arrangements going with Western Australia to take over the services of the Indian Ocean territories? I know they supply most of the teachers and doctors, but, as I understand it, there was some move to more formally move the territories services to Western Australia. Is that progressing at all?

Ms Beauchamp—I will have to ask one of the other officers here responsible for that division to provide an answer.

...

Mr Yates—Certainly, Senator. I am the first assistant secretary of the territories division. I came into that specific role in March this year whilst I was in the Attorney-General's Department. Prior to that, I was the assistant secretary of territories west, which includes the Christmas and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands. So in terms of your question about Western Australia, the arrangements that have been in place for a considerable period of time are that we purchase a wide range of services off the Western Australian government through 40 service delivery arrangements, where they deliver service essentially to the same standard as what is done in remote Western Australia. At this stage, from the Commonwealth's perspective, there are no discussions regarding the Indian Ocean territories going into Western Australia. On that point, I note there are some constitutional steps that would have to be taken before any adjustment of state boundaries. We have had no formal communication from Western Australia regarding any change. All the discussions that we have had with them indicate a high level of satisfaction with the current arrangements.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—I suppose it is a bit early to ask you whether that is a goal of the minister to more formally transfer—

Mr Yates—That would be a matter for the government.

Senator Sherry—And we will take that on notice for the minister.

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Answer: The Government has no intention of altering the governance arrangements for the Indian Ocean Territories.