

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

Program 1.6

Question No. 81

Senator Humphries asked the following question at the hearing on 22 February 2011:

Senator HUMPHRIES—Okay. I understand there is money in the department's budget for training officers at local government level in managing emergency situations. How much money?

Mr Wilkins—I am not sure; I would have to take that on notice.

Senator HUMPHRIES—Can you give me any information on how much has been spent in recent years from that allocation?

Mr Wilkins—I will have to take that on notice too. I think the idea is that we are trying to provide, particularly for rural councils and councils that are not wealthy, an explicit subsidy—it used to be implicit—in relation to training at Mount Macedon. I will check that out and give you a proper response

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Senator HUMPHRIES—Could you provide us with a list of those entities, whether people or organisations, which have been trained using the Commonwealth's money over each of the last, say, four years, please?

Mr Wilkins—We can provide you with a list of the projects that the states will be using the money for. That is how it works.

Senator HUMPHRIES—So you do not actually know, when they have a project, who is being trained under that project?

Mr Wilkins—The idea of this and the whole idea of national partnership agreements is to say: 'These are the outcomes. We want better training for local government officials. We want money expended. That is the outcome we want. Now, states, you tell us how you plan to achieve that. We are not going to tell you how to do it.' They will give us a plan and we can make that available to you, Senator.

Senator HUMPHRIES—I appreciate that, but you still do not know what proportion, for example, of local government bodies in a particular state end up being trained using Commonwealth money.

Mr Wilkins—We can probably give you that information. What I am saying is that it is a state project but, yes, we are interested in that and we can give you information about the AEMI, the Australian Emergency Management Institute, and its programs as well, which may be similarly of interest in terms of training local government officials.

Senator HUMPHRIES—What I am trying to get at is: if the Commonwealth is investing in preparedness of local government personnel, how well has our investment dealt with that issue? That is the question I am trying to get at.

Mr Wilkins—Okay.

Senator HUMPHRIES—So anything you could provide that would assist in that regard would be useful.

The answer to the Honourable Senator's question is as follows:

The Department administers the Natural Disaster Resilience Program (NDRP), \$110 million over four years. This funding is provided directly to States and Territories under a National Partnership Agreement (NPA). Priorities for spending through this program rest primarily with the States and Territories.

The States and Territories utilise some of this funding for local, regional, and national training both through the Department's Australian Emergency Management Institute (AEMI) in Mount Macedon, Victoria, and their jurisdictions. The education emphasis at AEMI is on cross-agency, cross-

jurisdictional, all-hazards aspects of national emergency management, and is based around the agreed national principles of Prevention, Preparedness Response and Recovery. The education program is presented in a national security and disaster resilience context.

AEMI records indicate that over the past four years 1,276 Local Government Officers have attended residential courses. This includes 289 people from 10 municipalities in Victoria, 308 people from 36 municipalities in Western Australia, 152 people from 30 municipalities in New South Wales, 47 people from five municipalities in the Northern Territory, 244 people from 25 municipalities in Queensland, 79 people from 25 municipalities in South Australia, and 157 people from 20 municipalities in Tasmania.