

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 24 MAY 2011

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(BE11/0760) Program 6.1: Multicultural and Citizenship Services

Senator Mark Furner (written) asked:

How does the policy ensure the government is monitoring access and equity matters in Australia?

Answer:

The current whole-of-government Access and Equity Strategy, coordinated by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, provides a framework for and encourages all government agencies to deliver services and programs that are responsive to the needs of Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Australian Government agencies and state and territory governments also report against the Access and Equity Strategy biannually. The most recent report was tabled in Parliament on 15 June 2011 and covers the period 2008-2010.

The Government's new multicultural policy released in February 2011 included, as a key initiative, a strengthened access and equity framework. The initiative stated that the Government will:

- ask the new Australian Multicultural Council to manage the access and equity strategy to strengthen the independence of access and equity reporting from government and provide for a more robust reporting framework; and
- conduct an inquiry into the responsiveness of Australian Government services to clients disadvantaged by cultural or linguistic barriers to better understand how existing services are performing and how they could be improved.