

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 1 November 2005

IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

(293) Output 3.1: Whole-of-government coordination of policy development and service delivery for Indigenous Australians

Senator Evans asked:

1. Please give a brief explanation of the application/approval process for grant funding from the ABA. Including:
 - Who do people apply to?
 - What are the criteria for assessing applications?
 - Does the Minister give the final approval?
 - How soon after approval should the funds be available?
 - Why are some applications not put through the advisory committee?
 - Who makes the decision as to why?
2. Can the Department provide a basic timeframe/timeline for each step in the application/approval process?

Answer:

1. The ABA's 2004-2005 annual report (tabled in the Parliament at page 9)) provides an explanation of the application/approval process for payments from the ABA under subsection 64(4) of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976.

Written application can be made to the Minister or the ABA Secretariat (based in the Office of Indigenous Policy Co-ordination in Darwin).

The criteria for assessing applications include whether:

- the funding proposal falls within the ABA's funding priorities
- there are measurable outcomes
- the proposal will benefit indigenous Territorians
- there is a long term benefit
- the host organisation is able to manage the funding and the project
- the proposal duplicates other agency program funding
- the budget items are reasonable
- there are contributions from the community, proponent and other sources

The Minister gives final approval. Subject to a funding agreement being reached with the organisation receiving the approved funds and any conditions on the Minister's approval that go

to specific actions being carried out before funds can be released, funds are generally available after the Minister's approval.

Nearly all applications are put before the ABA Advisory Committee. There have been a small number of applications where because funding is required urgently, it has not been possible to wait for the next meeting of the ABA Advisory Committee to consider the application. In those instances, the agreement of the Chairperson of the Advisory Committee and the relevant Land Council is sought before putting any advice before the Minister.

2. It has not been possible to build a timeframe for each step in the application/approval process. Many of the applications go to economic development and require comprehensive viability assessments which may take longer than requested because information is not available. Processing applications is also dependent on when meetings of the Advisory Committee are arranged and it is not possible to have standard times for when the Committee meets.