

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

Inquiry into Welfare Reform and Reinstatement of the Racial Discrimination Act

Canberra Hearing, Thursday 4 February 2010

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Question No: WR11

Topic: Financial management support services

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Senator Siewert asked:

Could you provide us with detail on what additional services are being provided, how many and in which areas in the Northern Territory?

Answer:

The Government has allocated \$53 million over four years, commencing from 2010-11 to continue and expand financial management services to support the new scheme of income management in the Northern Territory. This is in addition to ongoing funding under the Financial Management Program.

The additional funding will support financial counselling and money management education services to help people build their financial capability and deal with financial stress. It will also fund matched savings payments for people on compulsory income management who complete an approved money management course who have a savings pattern over at least 13 weeks.

The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs is working with existing service providers to determine their capacity to deliver services to additional areas from 2010-11. The Department will undertake a selection process to support areas that cannot be serviced by the existing providers.

Money management education services are currently available from 11 central hubs: Darwin, Palmerston, Alice Springs, Galiwinku, Kalano, Katherine, Maningrida, Nguiu, Wadeye, Tennant Creek and Yirrkala. These services are contracted to provide support to a further 64 locations through a mix of staff located in 'satellite' sites and through outreach services. Commonwealth Financial Counselling services are delivered by four service providers covering East and West Arnhem, North West Top End, Katherine, Darwin and Central Australia. A telephone financial counselling service and an additional face-to-face financial counselling position will commence as soon as funding arrangements are finalised. Emergency Relief is also available in 87 locations across the Northern Territory.

In addition, mobile money management education units will soon start visiting communities, outstations and town camps offering culturally appropriate hands-on, fun activities targeted at children, teenagers, young adults and parents.

To further build practical money management skills and make it easier for people to access services, Money Management workers will also deliver practical on-the-spot money management information to support shoppers in Outback Stores and ALPA stores.