

SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON REGIONAL AND REMOTE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Questions on Notice

Perth, 09 October 2009

Department of Indigenous Affairs Western Australia

| QoN No. | Hansard Page Reference | Senator | Question |
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| 1 | 102 | Adams | <p>Senator ADAMS—When are we going to see these houses physically on the ground?</p> <p>Mr Walker—From memory, I think the plan is to try to complete something in the order of 70 houses before the end of this financial year, and a number of refurbishments as well. They are ambitious targets but we will be doing everything that we can at a state level, as I said, acknowledging those issues around heritage and also issues around native title. But there is certainly a commitment to add some encouragement and incentive given what might have happened across the border.</p> <p>ACTING CHAIR—With those 70, we must then be on the verge of commencing them.</p> <p>Mr Walker—I think some work has already commenced. That is right; I am conscious we are in October now and I know that the Director-General of Housing is as well. I think with the targets themselves, talking generally through that initial five-year period, there is a serious effort to meet the key targets that were established. Having said that, the risk we run here is that the actual principles, the very principles embodied in the COAG arrangements that talk about genuine engagement and involvement of Aboriginal people in the design and delivery of services to them, in a way run counter to the quick production of numerous houses. This is, if you like, a policy service delivery tension that governments have. I guess our general view would be that if we were to err on the side of general engagement—getting the design right, getting the ownership and providing transitional opportunities where people can move from welfare to economic participation—then certainly we would be encouraging, I guess, a hasten slowly approach rather than our traditional practice, which has been to provide houses and then to visit the location not many years later and reflect on what</p> |

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| | | <p>remains.</p> <p>Senator ADAMS—As far as employment goes, do the contracts involve a certain percentage of Indigenous employment?</p> <p>Mr Walker—There are principles embodied that Mr Ord talked about. Certainly there are well established aspirations within the Ord-East Kimberley national partnership and there are general targets within the national partnerships. At the same time, there is what is called the Indigenous Economic Participation National Partnership, which requires states, territories and the Commonwealth to ensure that, in our case, our state procurement processes and policies and also our workforce participation arrangements encourage and maximise the potential for Aboriginal people to get involved in these capital works. Once again it is a countertension in a sense to producing a whole group of houses overnight. You can do that but chances are if you do it quickly, you are not going to seriously involve and engage Aboriginal people in the right way.</p> <p>ACTING CHAIR—Do we know where the 70 are? It makes a big difference if they are east of Newman.</p> <p>Mr Walker—I do not know where they are, but we could probably get some indication of that for the committee from the Department of Housing.</p> |
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Answer to Question on Notice Taken by the Department of Housing WA

Question: Do we know where the 70 are? It makes a big difference if they are east of Newman.

Supplementary Information Provide by the Department of Housing

The Department is scheduled to construct 71 new houses by 30 June 2010. Twenty houses have already commenced with six of these due to be completed by 31 December 2009. An additional 151 houses are scheduled to be refurbished by 30 June 2010, of which, 71 have commenced.

The new housing is planned for communities in the Kimberley, Pilbara, Goldfields and Murchison – Gascoyne regions of Western Australia. The complete program, however, is yet to be approved by the Commonwealth Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

With regard to Indigenous employment, the *National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing* (NPA), represents a significant opportunity to engage Aboriginal people in remote communities in the management, construction and repair and maintenance of community housing. The NPA establishes a 20% target for local Indigenous employment and an *Employment and Workforce Development Framework* is currently being developed by the Department of Housing in order to maximise opportunities for Indigenous involvement in the housing program.

It should be noted that protracted negotiations between the State and the Commonwealth regarding new Commonwealth land tenure requirements and housing management reforms, together with ambitious construction targets in the NPA, provide particular challenges in achieving meaningful Indigenous involvement and employment outcomes in the initial construction program.