

**Estimates Hearing: Questions on Notice
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs**

Can you tell me what auditing systems are in place to assess expenditure, hours worked, disbursements, by the administrators?

The Minister and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs monitor the performance of administrators through administrators' written monthly reports to the Minister and the NSWALC.

Instruments by which the Minister appoints administrators to Local Aboriginal Land Councils specify the rates of remuneration and a maximum amount of remuneration that an administrator is entitled to claim for performing their functions during the term of the appointment.

Section 222 of the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act* 1983 (ALRA) provides that administrators are to be paid out of the funds of the NSW Aboriginal Land Council (NSWALC).

Neither the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs nor the Department of Aboriginal Affairs is responsible for assessing expenditure, hours worked or disbursements by administrator.

Administrators invoices are forwarded directly to the NSWALC. Section 224(2) of Schedule 1 and Section 49 of Schedule 4 of the Act provide the NSWALC with the discretion to pay administrators remuneration additional to that provided for in an Instrument of Appointment if the NSWALC is satisfied such additional remuneration is reasonable.

Would it be possible for you to table the report of the Darkinjung administrator?

The administrator's report is provided for the members of the Darkinjung LALC, it is not a public document. Should the Committee wish to obtain a copy of the report, it is suggested that the administrator be approached directly.

Every member of the Darkinjung LALC (~ 700 people) receives a hard copy of the administrator's monthly reports and through this are kept comprehensively informed of the administration of the Land Council.

What are you doing to increase the role of Aboriginal educators within the education department? We have a real disconnect between AEAs moving through and becoming teachers and we need our home-grown Aboriginal teachers within those communities to provide the leadership and the continuity. What are your thoughts and goals to help achieve that?

Enhancing the participation of Aboriginal people as educators is an important component of improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal people.

The Department of Education and Training (DET) supports increasing the number of Aboriginal teachers through the Aboriginal Teacher Education Scholarship Scheme. Over 50 Aboriginal people are recruited each year to this scholarship scheme. The participants in the scheme who are in service also receive generous study leave entitlements.

Additionally there are a number of training and development initiatives specifically designed for Aboriginal Education Assistants (AEA).

Aboriginal Education Assistants are provided with special leave to undertake block release teacher training courses. They are also supported to undertake temporary teaching engagements after completion of teacher training. DET provides these Aboriginal Education Assistants with the right to return to their AEA position and the maintenance of all AEA service entitlements whilst they undertake their temporary teaching engagement.

More information about these programs is included in the DET Aboriginal Human Resource Development Plan 2006 – 2008 and the NSW Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy 2006 - 2008.

Through *Two Ways Together* the Government created a new scholarship scheme for Aboriginal students with the capacity to award 160 scholarships. This program built on the previously existing scholarship program available for school-age Aboriginal students in NSW.

Currently there are a number of AEA positions which are in part supported through funding from the Australian Government's Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) program. The Federal Government abolished CDEPs in a number of urban and regional centres in NSW from 1 July 2007.

The Department of Aboriginal Affairs has previously sought to identify the number and location of AEAs supported through CDEPs, however this information has not been forthcoming from the federal Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. As such, there is a real risk that many of these valuable AEA positions will be jeopardised.

What has been the largest payout from the Aboriginal Trust Fund Repayment Scheme?

The largest payout from the Aboriginal Trust Fund Repayment Scheme as at the 22 October 2007 has been \$30,005.

Has the Aboriginal Trust Fund Repayment Scheme undertaken any community education and awareness raising in the past 12 months?

A number of community education and awareness raising activities have taken place in the last 12 months. These activities include advertising regarding descendant claims in both the Koori Mail, and the National Indigenous Times as well as information and briefing sessions for a number of pro bono law firms and community organisations including:

- Gilbert and Tobin Lawyers
- Allans Arthur Robinson Lawyers
- Ebsworth Lawyers
- Freehills Lawyers
- Public Interest Advocacy Centre
- NSW Elders Gathering Liverpool
- Yabun Aboriginal Celebration Broadway
- Stolen Wages Forum HEROC
- Aboriginal functions at Port Macquarie and Cootamundra

A number of organisations have participated in exhibition talks & tours of the "In Living Memory" photo exhibition which included discussions and information on the ATFRS. Organisations that have participated in these tours include:

- Tranby College
- Mt Druitt Aboriginal Women's Resource Centre
- Yarradamarra TAFE Centre, Dubbo
- UTS School of History
- UNSWEora College
- National Native Title Tribunal
- Dept of Commerce
- Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council, Department of Attorney-General
- Edith Cowan University
- Aged Care, Aboriginal Medical Service, Redfern
- Kurrnulla Aboriginal Corporation, Sylvania
- Tranby College
- DAA regional officers

The ATFRS Link Up worker has also attended a number of community meetings to publicise the Scheme. These meetings have been held in a number of communities including:

- Tweed Heads,
- Maclean and Yamba,
- Bathurst,
- Wagga Wagga,
- Griffith,
- Deniliquin,
- Albury/Wodonga
- Condobolin, and
- Parkes

Presentations were also made to regional council members from around NSW at the State Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council meeting in Port Macquarie and at the National conference of Link Up Services.

Can you detail the gaps and overlap of services that have been assessed under the Two Ways Together plan so far and how have those discrepancies been addressed?

Many of the actions in the *Two Ways Together* Action Plans were developed to overcome potential service delivery gaps. These plans are publicly available on the Department's website.

A good example is the Aboriginal Early Years program including identifying successful transition to school strategies through The Schools in Partnership program. This program includes preparation of protocols to assist preschools and childcare services to prepare Aboriginal children to enter school. Further examples are the numerous initiatives relating to Aboriginal children's oral health which have resulted in partnerships with the Department of Education and Training and NSW Health. Another excellent example is in the screening for Otitis Media which has been regularly reported to this Parliament.

The NSW Government has developed the State Plan to ensure the effective coordination of services across Government agencies. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs holds regular workshops of all agencies involved in delivering specific Aboriginal services.

Under the State Plan Priority F1, arrangements have put in place to ensure that existing Aboriginal programs are included under 13 different Priority Development Plans. This arrangement will ensure that each program is coordinated by the most appropriate lead agency and that there is no overlap in service delivery responsibilities.

A recent report has confirmed that indigenous people living in remote communities have a significantly larger rate of dementia than other Australians. The report shows dementia is up to five times more prevalent in the remote indigenous population when compared to general Australian community. Since you have responsibility for both Aboriginal Affairs and mental health, what action is your department taking to address this very serious problem?

The Department of Aging, Disability and Home Care (DADHC) funds Aboriginal Aged Care services and has advisory phone lines to assist Aboriginal people with dementia and their families. DADHC advisory phone services are located throughout NSW (28 services in total), including rural and remote areas which have high proportions of Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal mental health issues are addressed by the NSW Aboriginal Mental Health and Well Being Policy 2006 – 2010 and the NSW State Plan Priority S3: Improved health through reduced obesity, smoking, illicit drug use and risk drinking.

The NSW Aboriginal Mental Health and Well Being Policy specifically addresses the needs of elders and older aboriginal people. Strategies include support for grief and loss programs with a particular focus on the needs of members of the stolen generation and training of staff to recognise the possible early onset of dementia and age related mental health needs.

There is some evidence that the higher prevalence of dementia in Aboriginal communities is linked to higher levels of alcohol misuse and its impact on the brain. Strategies to ensure better coordination between mental health and drug and alcohol services are being implemented under the NSW State Plan (Priority F3). Services will include the trialling of new treatments for methamphetamine addiction and building the capacity of the four established Cannabis Clinics. The specific needs of Aboriginal clients with substance use problems and co-occurring mental health problems are addressed in the Aboriginal Mental Health and Well Being Policy.

Recurrent funding of \$1.1 million is providing sixteen Aboriginal mental health workers in a range of rural and regional and metropolitan Aboriginal Controlled Community Health Services across NSW. This is an expansion of a successful program run in Far West Area Health Service.

Have any resources been allocated to the significant region of the Murray-Darling Basin for people who might fall into that general category of traditional owner, despite the legal problems?

There are a number of initiatives targeted towards traditional owners in the Murray-Darling Basin.

The Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN) is a traditional owners group representing the Aboriginal Nations of the Murray Darling Basin. MLDRIN is funded by the Murray Darling Basin Commission, and the NSW Government is a member of the Commission and contributes financially to its work.

The Department of Aboriginal Affairs has undertaken a Community Capacity Building in Environmental Management project with Aboriginal communities, including Traditional Owners, in Deniliquin and Balranald. The NSW Environmental Trust provided \$200,000 for this project, and other NSW Government agencies have committed to the long-term sustainability of this project.

The NSW Government is committed to Aboriginal Ownership of conservation reserves and other means for Traditional Owners to be involved in the joint management of public lands (national parks, state forests and Crown lands). In the Murray Darling Basin, joint management activities are occurring in the Willandra Lakes World Heritage Area (Mungo National Park), and in the Ramsar-listed wetlands along the Murray and Murrumbidgee Rivers. Joint management provides employment opportunities and creating roles for traditional owners in protecting and recognising the cultural significance of the lands in nature conservation reserves.

Could you look at the suitability of the Brewarrina Village building as a potential venue for children and women within that community, and how much it would cost?

Services that address the needs of women and children are very important and care must be taken to ensure that services are tailored to the needs of individual communities.

The matter concerning the suitability of Brewarrina Village as a potential venue for such a service however is more appropriately addressed by my Ministerial colleague, the Hon. Kevin Greene MP, Minister for Community Services.

When is the State Plan publicly reported on?

The State Plan reports will be publicly available quarterly six weeks after the end of each financial year quarter. That is in mid November, February, May and August of each year.

In the previous budget estimates the previous Minister was asked about Government support for the provision of housing for Arakwal elders in the Byron Bay area. At that point the Arakwal Aboriginal Corporation was applying for registration with the New South Wales housing office as an Aboriginal community housing provider and apply for funding for new houses. Can you update the Committee on this matter?

This matter falls within the portfolio responsibilities of my Ministerial colleague, the Hon. Matt Brown MP, Minister for Housing.