

DEPARTMENT OF INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS — MAPPING PROJECTS

775. Hon HELEN BULLOCK to the Minister for Indigenous Affairs:

I refer to the minister's comments during debate on a non-government motion on 8 September 2011 in the last sitting week about two projects that the Department of Indigenous Affairs has undertaken. One relates to a mapping exercise of programs running in remote Indigenous communities, and the other is a visitors mapping project.

- (1) When will the mapping exercise of every state and federal program existing in remote Indigenous communities in Western Australia be completed?
- (2) When will the visitors mapping project including recommendations be completed?
- (3) Will the minister undertake to table the documents relating to these two projects; and if not, why not?
- (4) If the mapping exercise reveals a number of duplicated programs, will the minister have the courage to ignore political correctness and cut funding to save taxpayers' money from those repeated programs?

Hon PETER COLLIER replied:

I thank the member for the question. Is it without notice?

Hon Helen Bullock: Without notice, yes.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Can I get a copy of that question? I hardly heard a word the member said.

Hon Helen Bullock: Sure.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Thanks for the question.

- (1)–(4) To put time lines on anything with regard to particular programs in Indigenous affairs is fraught with problems—I tell the member that right now. That is one thing that I have learnt in the short space of time—almost nine months—I have been Minister for Indigenous Affairs. The programs in Indigenous communities, as the honourable member would be well aware, are disparate and diverse. The needs in various regional centres, particularly with regard to the Indigenous community, are quite diverse. I spoke about the mapping exercise when I made my contribution to debate on the non-government motion and I am proud of that mapping exercise—I really am. For the first time we are getting to the point of bringing all the threads together. I have spoken and continue to speak with the Department of Indigenous Affairs to ensure that we get it right.

Having said that, the member's questions are pretty much generic in the sense that the four parts of the question pretty much ask the same thing: when are we actually going to get the thing done? I cannot give the member a time frame on that, I am sorry, and I am not prepared to. I do not think that is an indication of failure. It is only appropriate when we are doing something like this, which is in essence one of the greatest challenges at the moment for overcoming the disparity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous members of the community, that we make sure we get it right.

In answer to the fourth part of the question—that is, if the mapping exercise reveals a number of duplicated programs, whether I will have the courage to ignore political correctness—with all due respect I do not think the tone in that part of the question is necessary. Duplication exists in a number of areas of Indigenous affairs and, as I said, another thing I did when I took over the portfolio was note the evidence of a massive duplication of programs at the federal and state levels and at the state and local government levels. That is why I had an overall mapping exercise done. Currently I have pages and pages listing existing programs that have been rolled out for the Indigenous community, some worth millions of dollars and some worth tens of thousands of dollars. I am not prepared to go in and advocate for new programs until I am personally assured that each one of those programs is providing positive outcomes for Aboriginal people. Again, that is a long process; it is an elongated process, but I think ultimately it will provide positive outcomes for Aboriginal people.