

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

WRITTEN QUESTION

Mrs Lambley to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs:

Aboriginal Affairs

1. How many people are employed in the Northern Territory Office of Aboriginal Affairs as of 1 June 2017?
2. How many people are employed in the Northern Territory Office of Aboriginal Affairs as of 1 June 2016?
3. How many people are employed in the Northern Territory Office of Aboriginal Affairs as of 1 June 2015?
4. How many people are employed in the Northern Territory Office of Aboriginal Affairs in Alice Springs as of 1 June 2017?
5. How many people are employed in the Northern Territory Office of Aboriginal Affairs in Alice Springs as of 1 June 2016?
6. How many people are employed in the Northern Territory Office of Aboriginal Affairs in Alice Springs as of 1 June 2015?
7. What are the current projects being undertaken by the Northern Territory Office of Aboriginal Affairs?
8. What is the current budget of the Northern Territory Office of Aboriginal Affairs as of 1 June 2017?
9. What was the budget of the Northern Territory Office of Aboriginal Affairs as of 1st June 2016?
10. What was the budget of the Northern Territory Office of Aboriginal Affairs as of 1 June 2015?
11. Has there been a change in focus of the Northern Territory Office of Aboriginal Affairs since the change in the Northern Territory Government in August 2017? If so, please list in detail exactly what those changes are.
12. Is there a reason why an Aboriginal person has not been appointed as Northern Territory Minister for Aboriginal Affairs?
13. What is your commitment to a treaty for Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory?
14. What major projects are planned in the Northern Territory Office of Aboriginal Affairs over the next 3 years?

15. What is the funding allocation for each of these projects?

16. What will the Office of Aboriginal Affairs be doing to address Housing needs of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory?

17. What will the Office of Aboriginal Affairs be doing to address the health needs of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory?

18. What will the Office of Aboriginal Affairs be doing to address the educational outcomes of Aboriginal children in the Northern Territory?

19. What will the Office of Aboriginal Affairs be doing to address child safety and protection issues of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory?

20. What will the Office of Aboriginal Affairs be doing to address the economic development of Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory?

21. What will the Office of Aboriginal Affairs be doing to address the aged care needs of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory?

22. What will the Office of Aboriginal Affairs be doing to address the disability needs of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory?

Answer:

1. As of 1 June 2017, nine staff are employed in the Office of Aboriginal Affairs (OAA), with recruitment be undertaken for four additional positions.

Staff supporting the Community Champions program previously located in the Office of Aboriginal Affairs are now part of the Regional Network Group within the Department of the Chief Minister.

The Community Champions Program has been refocused to support all remote Aboriginal communities, not just some, in a range of programs with an emphasis on Local Decision Making.

Staff within the Office of Aboriginal Affairs who worked in support of the 13 Community Champions locations, continue their work as Regional Development Officers in the DCM Regional Network Group, contributing to the development of Local Decision Making across all of the communities within the regions they work in. They continue to consider themselves and work as 'champions' of all the communities they work with.

2. As of 1 June 2016, there were 25 staff employed in the former OAA across the Northern Territory (based on former Department of Local Government and Community Services (DLGCS) 2015-16 Annual Report).
3. None. OAA was first established in September 2015 within the DLGCS.

4. As of 1 June 2017, four staff of the Office of Aboriginal Affairs (OAA) are located in Alice Springs, with recruitment being undertaken for a fifth position. Temporary staff previously employed as Community Champion Liaison Officers, and based in the OAA Alice Springs in June 2016, now work in re-titled and permanent positions as Regional Development Officers (RDO's) within the DCM Regional Network Group. These three RDO's are based in the same Alice Springs office of DCM with OAA, with a further RDO based in Tennant Creek.
5. Eight staff.
6. None. OAA was first established within DLGCS in September 2015.
7. See question 14 for details.
8. OAA budget for 2016-17 is \$2.418 million.
9. Due to machinery-of-government changes, effective 1 July 2016, questions relating to the period prior to 2016-17 should be referred to the Minister for Housing and Community Development.
10. OAA was established within DLGCS as of September 2015.
11. With the change of government in August 2016, OAA transferred to the Department of the Chief Minister to establish new policy directions, build momentum and enable greater coordination of the Aboriginal Affairs agenda across Government.

OAA has taken on a strong policy role leading whole-of-government strategic advice on current and emerging Aboriginal affairs matters, at both a local and national level, enabling Local Decision Making across all remote and regional areas of the Northern Territory, supporting development of Treaty discussions and an promoting increased focus on land and sea development aspirations of Aboriginal Territorians.

The Community Champions Program, formerly under OAA, has been refocused from 13 specific communities to all remote communities and transferred to the Regional Network Group within the Department of Chief Minister. This will enable staff previously supporting the Community Champions program, now known as Regional Development Officers, to focus on developing Local Decision Making for all communities in their region, not just some.

The First Circles Program has been refined and continues to target and support emerging leaders in remote communities. The group will continue to meet with Cabinet to discuss solutions and opportunities for government and will work with communities to build skills.

12. Recognising the importance of the Aboriginal Affairs agenda, the Chief Minister has taken the portfolio to drive initiatives across government to create improved social and economic outcomes for Territorians in our regional and remote communities.

13. Government has committed to progressing discussions around Treaty that will be developed in consultation with Aboriginal Territorians to reflect the aspirations of our Aboriginal community and build a stronger Northern Territory. This is a key priority for the Office of Aboriginal Affairs.
14. Some of the major projects identified for Office of Aboriginal Affairs to focus on include:
- refresh of the Aboriginal Affairs Strategy;
 - participation in national discussions, negotiations and consultations around Aboriginal Affairs agenda through COAG Closing the Gap Framework and other national forums;
 - providing secretariat support to the Aboriginal Affairs Sub-Committee of Cabinet;
 - Treaty discussions in the Territory;
 - Local Decision Making – in partnership with the DCM Regional Network;
 - establishment and management of a five year funding agreement with the Aboriginal Peak Organisations of the NT (APO NT) to ensure they are resourced to work in partnership with Government to co-design and inform Government policy;
 - work in collaboration with the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice to develop Aboriginal Justice Agreements;
 - working with other NT Government agencies on projects and initiatives to provide improved social and economic outcomes for Aboriginal people;
 - established a Senior Officers' Working Group to improve coordination and drive policy development across government;
 - strengthened the relationships with the Commonwealth Government through the establishment of a Bilateral Coordination Group with Prime Minister and Cabinet that meets bi-monthly. This group is providing strategic leadership and improved collaboration and coordination across Commonwealth Government and NT Government policies, programs and services; and
 - support NT Government presence and community participation at events such as the Garma Festival and NAIDOC Week;
15. Funding is budgeted for OAA to meet all priorities.

16-22.

OAA is focused on a refresh of the Aboriginal Affairs Strategy, which involves coordination across government on a range of matters including housing, health, education, child safety and protection and economic development. A range of initiatives will link into the strategy, focused on improved social and economic outcomes for Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory.

On an ongoing basis the Department of the Chief Minister, including OAA and the Regional Network Group, continues to work collaboratively across government on projects contributing to improved outcomes for Aboriginal Territorians.