

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Environment portfolio

Question No: 135
Hearing: Supplementary Budget Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 1
Programme: Corporate Strategies Division (CSD)
Topic: Recycled Paper Policy
Hansard Page: 19
Question Date: 19 October 2015
Question Type: Spoken

Senator Xenophon Nick asked:

Senator XENOPHON: Let me put these questions on notice. I would like to know when the government's department procurement officers, and external stakeholders and the public were informed, if they were at all, that the policy was ceasing. The second supplementary, within my one-minute, Chair, is if they are aware of recent comments from the company Australian Paper and the Australian Forest Products Association's media release, which is quite scathing of the policy and the \$90 million investment at the Maryvale mill? Thirdly, Minister, I'll put this to you: your coalition colleague Darren Chester said that he found it 'appalling' that government workplaces do not buy Australian made paper.

Senator Birmingham: In terms of when people were aware that the policy would be ceasing, my understanding is the plan was entitled the Sustainability Plan 2010–15. I assume that anybody who picked the document up from the time of the publication in 2009 or 2010, or thereabouts, would have been aware that it ceased in 2015.

Answer:

1. The ICT Sustainability Plan 2010-2015 was completed as planned in July 2015. Stakeholders participated in the development of the Plan, and were aware that it was to run from 2010 to 2015.
2. Yes. The Australian Government strongly supports recycling and sustainable use of any products to prevent valuable material going to landfill through the National Waste Policy.
3. The Department of the Environment only buys 100% recycled copy paper and encourages other agencies to do the same.

Minister Hunt has written to other Ministers to ask that, wherever possible, agencies use 100% recycled paper.

The Whole-of-Government Digital Transition Strategy has been underway since 2011 with increasing reliance on digital record systems in compliance with National Archives requirements. The roll-out of digital records systems is expected to have a significant effect on agencies' use of copy paper.