

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2017

Department of Agriculture and Water Resources

Question Number: 112

Division/Agency: Landcare Australia Limited

Topic: Funding announced in budget for Landcare

Proof Hansard Page: Written

Senator McCARTHY asked:

Senator McCARTHY: Is the funding announced in the budget for Landcare enough to restore the cuts announced in the 2014 budget?

Ms Jakszewicz: I need to quickly explain Landcare Australia. We are independent of government. We are a not-for-profit organisation. We have an independent board. We are not part of a government department. So, in answer, I think the question you are asking is one more for the department. From a Landcare Australia perspective, given the climate and the fiscal environment that we are in, some people in the Landcare movement were relatively okay with the announcement. What we are keen to see is the allocation of funding under that bucket. There are many elements to the National Landcare Program, ranging from the reef, to Landcare as we know it, to over 20 million trees and so forth. What we do not know yet is the allocation to those specific projects, and that is what we are keen to find out.

Senator McCARTHY: Mr Quinlivan, is the funding announced in the budget for Landcare enough to restore the cuts announced in 2014?

Mr Quinlivan: I will get Mr Thompson to explain the funding decision in the budget.

Mr Thompson: I am not in a position to immediately compare it to the level in 2014, but there is almost \$1 billion over seven years for the National Landcare Program.

Senator McCARTHY: You can take the question on notice.

Mr Thompson: To do the actual comparison we will have to, because the actual appropriations are to Environment.

Senator McCARTHY: Just take the question on notice.

Question Number: 112 (continued)

Answer:

In the 2016 Budget the Government confirmed an allocation of \$1.1 billion from the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) over seven years from 2016-17 to 2022-23 to fund a new National Landcare Program (NLP). The funding includes two components; \$1 billion over five years from 2018-19, when the current program finishes, to 2022-23; and a further \$100 million announced in the 2016 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook over four years from 2016-17 to 2019-20.

The main funding component for the NLP in the 2016 Budget is similar to current levels, approximating \$200 million per year over five years, plus the additional \$100 million over four years. Overall, this funding represents a small reduction compared with the previous four years funding for the NLP, noting that in recent years the government has also utilised further Natural Heritage Funds to fund other Natural Resource Management priorities within the Environment and Agriculture portfolios (for example approximately \$15 million per year is being spent on the eradication of biodiversity incursions and the implementation of Commonwealth marine reserves).

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2017

Department of Agriculture and Water Resources

Question Number: 113

Division/Agency: Landcare Australia Limited

Topic: Review of the National Landcare Program

Proof Hansard Page: 88 (24.05.2017)

Senator McCARTHY asked:

Senator McCARTHY: Who conducted that review?

Mr Thompson: A range of people participated in the review. There was material prepared by the department, there was input by the Fenner School at ANU, there were some reports prepared by the National Landcare Advisory Committee and there was a survey done of Landcare participants. All of that fed into the report and into the government's consideration of the review.

Senator McCARTHY: But who conducted the report? Who carried it out?

Mr Thompson: The review was led by the departments—the environment department and the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources.

Senator McCARTHY: How much did that review cost to conduct?

Mr Thompson: I would have to take on notice the exact cost of the review because there were some costs associated with some consultancies. There was a consultancy done on the finances of the program, for example. We have those numbers; I just do not have them to hand at the moment. The internal departmental costs were just born out of existing resources. It was part of our people's job in reviewing the program as it neared its end.

Senator McCARTHY: You could take that question on notice.

Answer:

The Review of the National Landcare Program was jointly undertaken by the Department of the Environment and Energy and the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources. Both departments drew upon internal resources for the review. To date, additional costs have totalled \$113,827 (GST exclusive), of which the Department of the Environment and Energy has contributed \$89,032 (GST exclusive) and the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources \$24,795 (GST exclusive).