

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: 157

Division/Agency: Service Delivery Division

Topic: Ranger Program

Proof Hansard Page: 52 (24.05.2017)

Senator BROWN asked:

Senator CAROL BROWN: So that \$200 million is now \$189 million. I am going to go quickly through my list because I do not want people to go and I have missed one. I do not think it is in this area, but who would I ask about the \$12.4 million to boost Indigenous ranger groups?

Unidentified speaker: Not biosecurity.

Senator CAROL BROWN: Yes, I know.

Ms O'Connell: There is a biosecurity ranger program, and we administer that.

Senator CAROL BROWN: These are the programs that were announced in the white paper.

Mr Quinlivan: You are in the right territory. Mr Padovan will respond.

Senator CAROL BROWN: Again I am wanting to know where we are in terms of the funding. Was that over four years?

Mr Padovan: That is correct.

Senator CAROL BROWN: How much have we spent? Over those four years is \$12.4 million going to be expended, or will it be reduced or be more?

Mr Padovan: At this point in time we are largely on track with that expenditure. There are a couple of aspects that are contingent on third parties. For example, we are doing a lot of joint work with the states in terms of diagnostic equipment, lab facilities and those sorts of things, so we are working across jurisdictions. Certainly the bulk of the money has been expended as per the plan.

Senator CAROL BROWN: What do the budget papers say?

Mr Padovan: I will have to come back to you.

Question Number: 157 (continued)

Answer:

The original allocation of funding for this program, and subsequent Movement of Funds, is detailed in Table 1:

TABLE 1: ORIGINAL FUNDING ALLOCATION FOR THE INDIGENOUS RANGER INITIATIVE

Budget	2015-16 (\$'000)	2016-17 (\$'000)	2017-18 (\$'000)	2018-19 (\$'000)	Total (\$'000)
Departmental	182	475	478	481	1,617
Administered	2,600	3,200	2,500	2,500	10,800
	2,782	3,675	2,978	2,981	12,417
Movement of Funds	- 1,321		1,321		-
Total Available Funds	1,461	3,675	4,299	2,981	12,417

Expenditure as at 30 June 2017 is shown in Table 2:

TABLE 2: EXPENDITURE FOR THE INDIGENOUS RANGERS INITIATIVE

	2015-16 (\$'000)	2016-17 (\$'000)	2017-18 (\$'000)	2018-19 (\$'000)	Total (\$'000)
Departmental Expended	182	475			
Administered Expended	1,279	2,944			
Total Actual Expenditure	1,461	3,419			

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: 158

Division/Agency: Service Delivery Division

Topic: Ranger Program

Proof Hansard Page: 53 (24.05.2017)

Senate BROWN asked:

Senator CAROL BROWN: The \$12.4 million that was announced by the minister was all the Commonwealth government component?

Mr Padovan: That is correct, noting that there is a broader government program around rangers. Ours is very biosecurity specific. The focus of the ranger work has been on bringing additional ranger groups on board, so we brought a further 28 ranger groups on board, and developing training packages for the ranger groups. We are working through NAILSMA to develop a training program for rangers around biosecurity. We have also begun a process of emergency response training, which is a separate training program, and we spent around a million dollars equipping these groups with the tools that they need in order to undertake biosecurity tasks. That gives us very broad coverage from a surveillance perspective up in the north, so around 10,000 kilometres of coastline is now well covered through these ranger groups.

Ms O'Connell: It is a fabulous program in terms of the significant addition of the number of ranger groups involved through this funding. It is terrific to see, and that increase happened very quickly on the commencement of the program. We are confident the spend is underway and in the right direction.

ACTING CHAIR: Could you provide the information to the committee where all these ranger groups are.

Ms O'Connell: Yes, we can provide you with an interesting map showing the northern coastline and the ranger groups that are there, and it is pleasing to see the expansion in the activity for the Indigenous rangers.

ACTING CHAIR: Brilliant; well done.

Senator CAROL BROWN: How much have we expended so far?

Mr Padovan: Apologies: I do not have that number at hand.

Senator CAROL BROWN: If you could take that on notice, that would be good. Do we know whether it is going to be ongoing past this initial—maybe I should ask the minister—\$12.4 million that has been provided?

Question Number: 158 (continued)

Answer:

\$3.364 million has been expended between 1 July 2015 and 30 May 2017.

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: 159

Division/Agency: Service Delivery Division

Topic: Review of quarantine procedures after destruction of historic and valuable plant specimens

Proof Hansard Page: 65-66 (24.05.2017)

Senator MCCARTHY asked:

Senator McCARTHY: If I can take you back to the conversation around biosecurity in relation to the plants, when did the department commence the review of Australia's quarantine procedures after biosecurity officers destroyed those historic and valuable plant specimens?

Mr Padovan: Are you referring to the procedures in terms of how we handle it? Are you referring to how we handle goods forfeited and subsequently—

Senator McCARTHY: I guess what I am trying to understand is: did you conduct a review in relation to what happened there?

Mr Padovan: We undertook a review within the delivery of biosecurity services—the area that I am responsible for. So we did look at the processes. That review—I would have to confirm the dates, but it was pretty much soon after this incident came to light.

Senator McCARTHY: Could you give me the dates then on notice?

Mr Padovan: Yes.

Answer:

The review of Brisbane mail gateway facility procedures for the handling and destruction of these forfeited herbarium specimens was undertaken in April 2017.

A similar review of the Sydney mail gateway facility procedures was completed on 8 May 2017.

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: 160

Division/Agency: Service Delivery Division

Topic: Training Costs – biosecurity officers

Proof Hansard Page: 67 (24.05.2017)

Senator MCCARTHY asked

Senator McCARTHY: How many staff are we talking about who are in need of this training or retraining?

Mr Hawe: I would have to confirm the numbers, but it would be around 40 to 50.

Senator McCARTHY: Where would those staff be located?

Mr Hawe: They are staff who are typically located at gateway facilities—so they are in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane.

Senator McCARTHY: So 40 to 50 staff need retraining?

Mr Hawe: We will run all our staff through that. Not all staff would necessarily routinely handle those particular specimens, but we just think it is good practice to put all our staff through that.

Senator McCARTHY: So how have you costed this retraining for the 40 to 50 staff in those three locations?

Mr Hawe: We train staff routinely in a range of things, so the cost of doing this is not over and above what we would normally undertake as part of just our routine training, and verification and insurance processes.

Senator McCARTHY: How much is that?

Mr Hawe: I would have to take that on notice.

Senator McCARTHY: Could you take that on notice, please.

Mr Hawe: Yes.

Question Number: 160 (continued)

Answer:

Refresher training occurs routinely for all biosecurity officers. Around 45 staff are currently employed in the mail centre environment and all are required to undertake the following refresher training specific to this role this calendar year:

- Introduction to mail operation eLearning course.
- Mail assessment training course (classroom training followed by online knowledge assessments).
- 3 hour assessment against the national mail job card.

The approximate cost of this training is \$22,000

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: 161

Division/Agency: Service Delivery Division

Topic: Outcomes of review

Proof Hansard Page: 68 (24.05.2017)

Senator MCCARTHY asked:

Senator McCARTHY: Okay. Now that the review is finished, can the review be provided to the committee?

Mr Hawe: Yes, I could take that on notice and provide you with an outline of the outcomes of our review.

Answer:

Action plan is attached.



Action Plan (Herbarium Samples through the Mail pathway)

Background:

In April 2017, the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources became aware that there were two instances of destruction of Herbarium Specimens – one in Brisbane, one in Sydney. Both imports came through the mail pathway and were identified as having incomplete or nil import documentation.

A thorough internal review of both incidents by senior management identified improvements to minimise the risk of reoccurrence. The review findings highlighted a number of process improvements and, importantly, confirmed compliance of the department’s work instructions with relevant legislation.

The following actions were identified as a result of the review.

ACTION PLAN				
Issue	Activity	Timeframe	Responsibility	Progress as of 16 June 2017

1. Training:	<p>1. Staff undertake refresher training in the following modules with an emphasis on handling botanical collections.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction to Mail Operations eLearning course - Mail assessment training course (classroom training followed by online knowledge assessment) - Mail assessment and inspection national job card. <p>These activities will all be registered in LearnHub</p>	To be completed by December 2017	Mail Program and Service Delivery	Training schedule for delivery to operational staff is currently being developed for training to commence.
2. Process improvement	<p>1. Level of approval for disposal of commodities such as Herbarium specimens, or other items of like intrinsic value, to be assigned to Assistant Director.</p> <p>2. Instruction to gateway facilities to segregate goods awaiting documentation attesting to compliance from those goods routinely awaiting disposal.</p> <p>3. Confirmation of practice regarding goods arriving without a permit.</p> <p>4. Implementation of Operational Staff Notice (OSN) to clarify process for destruction of goods.</p>	<p>Immediate</p> <p>Immediate</p> <p>3 months</p> <p>To be completed by 30 June 2017</p>	<p>Service Delivery</p> <p>Service Delivery</p> <p>Service Delivery</p> <p>Service Delivery</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>In progress</p> <p>In progress</p>

3. BICON case	1. Review BICON conditions to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • specify preferred commercial pathway (air cargo) for conveyance of botanical collections • clearly express methods of disposal for goods forfeited to the Commonwealth. • specify requirements for sender to clearly identify botanical collections and declared value on packaging 	3 months	Plant imports	In progress
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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: 162

Division/Agency: Service Delivery Division

Topic: Second case of valuable plant specimens being destroyed

Proof Hansard Page: 69 (24.05.2017)

Senator RICE asked:

Senator McCARTHY: There are allegations that there is a second case where valuable plant specimens were destroyed. Have these allegations been verified?

Mr Padovan: I think you are referring to the case of the plants sent from New Zealand to the Australian Herbarium late last year. Those specimens arrived on 4 August and were destroyed quite some time later—I think it was towards the end of October—and the receiving party only contacted us in the last month once they had become aware of the French herbarium incident. It certainly dates back a little bit to this.

Senator RICE: Can I clarify—did they know that they had been destroyed before then?

Mr Padovan: No. In fact they contacted us in April—I will have to get the dates—to find out the status of those items.

Answer:

- On 11 April 2017, the Australian National Herbarium contacted the department via email seeking an update on the status of a consignment sent from New Zealand in early August 2016.
- A formal direction was sent to Australian National Herbarium on 4 August 2016 requesting further information relating to the specimens and specifying this was required within 30 days of the notice. The notice advised that failure to comply may result in the goods being forfeited to the Commonwealth.
- On 11 April 2017, the department advised the Australian National Herbarium that the consignment was destroyed in late 2016 as no further documentation had been received in response to a request sent to the Australian National Herbarium on 4 August 2016.
- The goods were destroyed on 14 October 2016 and had been retained by the department for 61 days following their arrival on 4 August 2016.

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: 163

Division/Agency: Service Delivery Division

Topic: Additional information required within 30 days

Proof Hansard Page: 70 (24.05.2017)

Senator RICE asked:

Senator RICE: Did you follow up as to why they were not providing that required information?

Mr Padovan: I would have to chase up the further details on that.

Answer:

The notice issued by the department on 4 January 2017 to the importer advised that the goods may be forfeited to the Commonwealth after 30 days if no further information was provided.

The department was advised after this period that the original response from the Queensland herbarium to the 4 January 2017 notice had been sent to an invalid email address.

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: 164

Division/Agency: Service Delivery Division

Topic: email exchange - correspondence

Proof Hansard Page: 72 (24.05.2017)

Senator MCCARTHY asked:

Senator McCARTHY: No, hang on. The problem here is that a process was already underway by biosecurity officers. I would like to see the email exchange in this correspondence. But it sounds to me like someone did not want to wait for that further documentation, even though they had clearly been given a guarantee that there would be an opportunity to wait for that document to arrive.

Ms O'Connell: I think it is portrayed as a decision. There was a mistake made in destroying those goods. We have acknowledged that. Mr Padovan.

Mr Padovan: The breakdown was the disconnect between the person who was having the conversation and the person who undertook the destruction. The 30-day period had elapsed and the goods were in a room where they had been set aside on the basis that more than 30 days had passed. So 3 March, which is when we had the follow-up conversation, was after that 30-day period. The disconnect and where there was breakdown on our part was the communication between the person who undertook the destruction and the person who was having the correspondence with the Queensland Herbarium. The process Mr Hawe outlined earlier was one that now seeks to ensure that there is a clear line of sight between the person who undertakes the destruction and any communications that may be underway with that party.

Senator McCARTHY: There is a complete breakdown in that process at that particular moment when a guarantee clearly had been given for those further documents to arrive, even after you had identified that there had been a problem. You had already begun a series of conversations. Could I have a copy of those emails for the Senate committee, Mr Hawe?

Mr Hawe: I do not have them with me, but I can provide those.

Senator McCARTHY: Thank you.

Answer:

Copies of the original email to the Queensland Herbarium sent on 4 January 2017 and the response received by the Department on 3 March 2017 are attached.



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture
and Water Resources

**INFORMATION AND/OR DOCUMENTS REQUIRED – GOODS MAY BE FOREFEITED
 TO THE COMMONWEALTH**

Biosecurity Act 2015

Reference No: QM17000010

QUEENSLAND HERBARIUM
 [REDACTED] BRISBANE BOTANIC
 GARDENS, MT COOTHA ROAD
 TOOWONG QLD 4066

Wednesday, 4 January 2017

Your international mail did not meet Australian biosecurity requirements

ID	Good(s) in biosecurity	Further Details	Units	Action
a	Herbarium specimens	1 BOX OF DRIED HERBARIUM SPECIMENS	1	Secure pending further advice/investigation

The good(s) listed above (goods) were inspected at Brisbane Airport Logistic Centre on 4/01/2017.

The goods are conditionally non-prohibited goods. It is a condition for these goods that they must not be brought or imported into Australian territory unless an import permit has been granted or all conditions have been complied with.

Comments: [a] Suppliers declaration required as per BICON case for Herbarium Specimens.

Dear QUEENSLAND HERBARIUM,

I am an authorised biosecurity officer and a subdelegate of the Director of Biosecurity for the purposes of s 628 of the *Biosecurity Act 2015 (Act)*. I have taken possession of the goods addressed to you sent by mail from (MUSEUM NATIONAL HISTOIRE NATURELLE, France) under s 628(2) of the Act.

The goods are conditionally non-prohibited. It is a condition for these goods that they must not be brought or imported into Australia unless an import permit has been granted or conditions which may not have been complied with and in relation to which information and documents are sought. On the information available to me, these conditions have not been complied with.

Unless you arrange for the goods to be exported to the sender within 30 days from the date of this notice, a biosecurity officer may take possession of the goods and they will be forfeited to the Commonwealth in accordance with s 628 of the Act.

To arrange for the goods to be exported to the sender, please complete the attached Payment Notice - Export and return it to the department at mail.payments@agriculture.gov.au or Mail Payments, PO Box 4175, PARRAMATTA NSW 2124 quoting the reference number above within 30 days from the date of this notice.

Alternatively, if you consider that all applicable conditions have been complied with, you may provide information and documents demonstrating compliance within 30 days from the date of this notice.

The goods will not be forfeited to the Commonwealth if all applicable conditions have been complied with.

Giving false or misleading information is a serious offence. You may be liable to a civil penalty for giving false or misleading information.

Bringing or importing conditionally non-prohibited goods into Australia in contravention of an applicable condition may constitute a criminal offence and you may be liable to a civil penalty.

**INFORMATION AND/OR DOCUMENTS REQUIRED – GOODS MAY BE FOREFEITED
TO THE COMMONWEALTH**

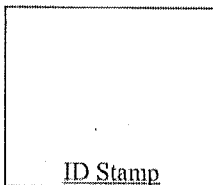
Biosecurity Act 2015

Reference No: QM17000010

If you often get mail from overseas, I would be grateful if you could let any regular senders know about Australia's biosecurity requirements. Biosecurity import requirements can be found on the department's website - www.agriculture.gov.au/import/online-services/bicon.

If you have any questions, please contact the Biosecurity Detained Goods Office on 07 3246 8678.

Biosecurity Officer
Brisbane Airport Logistic Centre



[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Queensland Herbarium Ref:QM17000010 [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Service Delivery Division | Inspection Services – Brisbane
Phone 1800 900 090

Department of Agriculture and Water Resources
42 - 44 Qantas Drive, BRISBANE AIRPORT QLD 4009 Australia
PO Box 222, HAMILTON CENTRAL QLD 4007 Australia
www.agriculture.gov.au



Australian Government
**Department of Agriculture
and Water Resources**

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 3 March 2017 3:13 PM
To: BGF DGO <BGF DGO@agriculture.gov.au>
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Queensland Herbarium Ref:QM17000010 [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Hi [REDACTED]

I have emailed the curator at the Museum national d'Histoire Naturelle requesting that they complete a 'Quarantine Declaration' for the Herbarium specimens they sent on loan to us on the 26th of December 2016.
I anticipate that this will not be received until next week.

I will send through the completed 'Quarantine Declaration' once I receive the form from our colleagues in France.

Have a great weekend.

With thanks,



Queensland
Government

[REDACTED]
Queensland Herbarium
Department of Science, Information Technology and Innovation

[REDACTED]
Queensland Herbarium, DSITI, Brisbane Botanic Gardens Mt Coot-tha Road, TOOWONG Q 4066

Customers first | Ideas into action | Unleash potential | Be courageous | Empower people

From: BGFDDGO [mailto:BGFDDGO@agriculture.gov.au]
Sent: Friday, 3 March 2017 2:43 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: BGFDDGO
Subject: RE: Queensland Herbarium Ref:QM17000010 [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Hi [REDACTED]

We have a small issue that hopefully you can get your French clients to comply with. The Import Permit (IP15003260) states at point 3. C, that -

"a declaration that the specimens before packaging were free from live insects and excess soil, and are not knowingly infected with potentially viable pathogenic organisms".. was not provided.

They did provide one document in French that I have had translated and this document didn't address this particular requirement of your permit.

If you could please ask them to provide you (the Permit Holder) with this declaration, and forward this to us at BGFDDGO@agriculture.gov.au quoting the QM number in the correspondence, we can release the goods to you at our earliest convenience.

Regards

[REDACTED]
Senior Biosecurity Officer
Department of Agriculture and Water Resources
Cargo & Mail | Inspection Services | Service Delivery Division

42-44 Qantas Drv
BRISBANE AIRPORT QLD 4008 Australia
PO Box 222, HAMILTON CENTRAL QLD 4007 Australia
www.agriculture.gov.au
Tel: 1800 900 090



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture
and Water Resources

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: 165

Division/Agency: Service Delivery Division

Topic: Indigenous ranger program – Longreach district

Proof Hansard Page: 41 (25.05.2017)

Senator O’SULLIVAN asked

Mr Quinlivan: Senator McCarthy asked a question about Indigenous employment in the department, and we did provide an answer to the question about the overall numbers of direct employees, and you might recall yesterday we talked a little bit about the Indigenous rangers program—I think that was when we were discussing Landcare—but we have got a document here which shows the geographic distribution of the employment of those rangers, whom we employ under a program but not as direct employees. But it is obviously an area of increasing effort for us and for the government. We have got this map that shows you where they are across northern Australia, if you are interested in seeing it.

Senator McCARTHY: Are you providing that information in response to those—

Mr Quinlivan: No, just in addition, because it is relevant to the question you asked and I thought you would be interested. We have got the document here.

Senator McCARTHY: Absolutely. Can you table that document?

Mr Quinlivan: We will table it now.

Ms O’Connell: Also, Senator, you asked for this yesterday, so we are providing it—and we have got colour copies.

CHAIR: Is there any objection to that being tabled? There is no objection. Mr Quinlivan, on that point, I do not know if you guys are aware of just how successful those programs are with the Indigenous rangers. We have had a discussion with Senator Scullion about the prospect of a slight broadening of that in the desert channels area, to do with the prickly acacia that I raised yesterday. You may have some knowledge as to whether there is a plan to expand it with numbers in the Longreach district. If not, could you take it on notice?

Mr Quinlivan: I think I would need to. I am certainly well aware of the value of the program to both the communities that are involved and the Commonwealth departments who are involved in it. I am also well aware of the overall value of the program and looking to expand it wherever we can.

Question Number: 165 (continued)

Answer:

The Queensland Government's War on Western Weeds program is providing funding to help farmers and communities to reduce prickly acacia and bellyache bush in western Queensland. The role of indigenous rangers in managing biosecurity risks at a Commonwealth level is primarily focused on exotic, rather than domestic, pests, weeds and diseases. As a consequence, the Department is not funding indigenous rangers to reduce prickly acacia and bellyache bush in western Queensland.

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: 166

Division/Agency: Service Delivery Division

Topic: Termination and shortage of meat inspectors

Proof Hansard Page: 70 (25.05.2017)

Senator KIM CARR asked:

Senator KIM CARR: If you could, I would appreciate that. Is the department aware of any complaints from producers about the inflexibility of hours and charges relating to inspection services?

Mr Quinlivan: We regularly get—

Senator KIM CARR: Complaints?

Mr Quinlivan: I do not know if I would call them complaints, but we regularly get concerns about the difficulties in managing our requirements with a relatively small number of people sometimes operating in remote locations with the commercial objectives of the processing plants. So, yes, there are regular concerns.

Senator KIM CARR: It has been put to me that there is a waiting period of up to two months to appoint or terminate inspectors. This is not in remote locations; this is in quite accessible regions in New South Wales. Are you aware of that?

Mr Quinlivan: I am not sure about termination, but I would not be at all surprised if that was the case for recruitment, because they are a small cohort of people who have quite a high average age. I think we have had a lot of difficulty recruiting people to provide these services. I am not surprised by that. As to termination, I am not sure what the issues are there. Again, I would have to take that on notice.

Senator KIM CARR: Could you please?

Mr Quinlivan: Yes.

Senator KIM CARR: What is your understanding of the level of shortage, if you are saying there is a shortage of meat inspectors?

Mr Quinlivan: I do not have precise knowledge of that.

Senator KIM CARR: You can take that on notice again.

Mr Quinlivan: Yes.

Senator KIM CARR: Is this a Commonwealth responsibility?

Question Number: 166 (continued)

Mr Quinlivan: Yes, it is. The people who deal with this in the department are those who were here when we first spoke yesterday morning.

Senator KIM CARR: Producers were suggesting to me that it was a surprise to them, given that there have been plant closures in New South Wales, and yet the claim was that there were shortages of meat inspectors. The two propositions did not really sit side by side.

Mr Quinlivan: My impression is that we always have a shortage of meat inspectors.

Senator KIM CARR: So, what control does the department have over inspection services?

Mr Quinlivan: It is our regulatory responsibility.

Senator KIM CARR: Why is there not more flexibility in the service?

Mr Quinlivan: We are getting to a level of detail that I am not sure about.

Senator KIM CARR: Would you take that on notice?

Mr Quinlivan: Yes, I will have to do that.

Answer:

The Department maintains a workforce that is composed of an appropriate mix of both ongoing ('permanent') and non-going ('casual') staff. These staff are flexibly deployed by the Department to various establishments to meet industry demand. This flexible approach represents an efficient means of ensuring that the Department is well positioned to respond quickly and cost effectively to industry demand such as new shifts, changed operating hours and the opening of new establishments.

The Department has no current shortage of meat inspection staff in NSW and the Department is not aware of any occurrence where an owner/operator of an establishment in NSW has not been provided with the required services such that their operations have been adversely impacted.