

Rural & Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates

Infrastructure and Regional Development

Question no.: 258

Program: 3.1

Division/Agency: Local Government and Territories

Topic: Regional Development Australia Committees

Proof Hansard Page: Written

Senator Sterle asked:

1. I note that the Guidelines make no mention of a direct role between the RDA Committees and the Ministerial Panel that will ultimately decide the projects to be funded under the NSRF. Will the RDA Committees be able to make recommendations to the Ministerial Panel?
2. Will the RDA Committees correspond with the Ministerial Panel in any capacity?
3. I note that the NSRF guidelines only mention briefly the new role of the RDA Committees in the regional funding process, in particular that the Committees will not play a role in the appraisal or prioritisation of projects. Are there going to be any structural changes to the RDA Committees after the announcement of the NSRF guidelines?
4. Will the reduced role of the RDA Committees in the decision making process mean any change to their funding?
5. I note that the Government has recently undertaken a review into the RDA Committees coinciding with the release of the new NSRF guidelines. Can you explain the new structure of RDA Committees and the administrative changes the Government is making to the RDA Committees?
6. Can you put on record the exact changes that are being made to the RDA Committees?
7. I note that the Government has indicated it will again review the functions of RDA Committees in two years, which coincides with the current contracts for funding the majority of the committees running out. Is this timing coincidental? What will be the process for this review?

Answer:

1. The guidelines for the National Stronger Regions Fund advise that Regional Development Committees may assist applicants to identify infrastructure projects, particularly projects which contribute to long term economic growth and have been identified as priorities. Committees may approach eligible organisations about developing an application for an infrastructure project or play a facilitation role by bringing key parties together, including those who may provide a financial contribution to the project. Committees may work with Applicants to prepare applications, supporting documents and evidence. RDA committees will not be involved in the appraisal or prioritisation of projects..
2. See previous answer.
3. No.
4. No.
5. RDA Committees will continue to provide a link between local community stakeholders and Governments. RDA Committees will be funded to
 - maintain a 3-5 year regional plan that focuses on economic development of the region and takes account of Australian, state/territory and local government plans;
 - advise on the priority activities that will drive regional economic development and take advantage of comparative advantages, based on consultation and engagement with community leaders;
 - assist local community stakeholders to develop project proposals and help shepherd them to appropriate public and/or private funding sources;
 - provide advice to the governments on critical issues affecting each region; and
 - enhance awareness of government programmes.

The Government appointment process will be streamlined to reduce administrative burden and simplify governance arrangements. The Government proposes to appoint the Chair and Deputy Chair of each RDA

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Committee with final arrangements being settled with States where they are funding partners. RDA Committee Chairs and Deputy Chairs will make appointments to fill Committee vacancies themselves.

The Department is currently engaging in a series of consultations with State/Territory Governments, Local Government Associations and RDA Committees regarding the new administrative arrangements.

6. See answer to question 5
7. The scope of the independent review has not yet been determined. The purpose of the review is to assess the effectiveness of the arrangements of the RDA Committees in delivering the Government's regional agenda.

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Question no.: 259

Program: 1.1

Division/Agency: Local Government and Territories

Topic: Riverwalk Brisbane

Proof Hansard Page/s: Written

Senator Ludwig asked:

1. What was the total cost of rebuilding Brisbane's Riverwalk?
2. What was the breakdown for the commonwealth, state and local governments?
3. Was any private money raised to help meet the costs? If yes, please detail.
4. Initial costing was expected to be \$72 million; reports suggest that the total will be higher than this figure. Can you please provide a breakdown of the extra cost?
5. What reasons were provided by the contractor for the extra costs? Please provide a copy of any communication (including but not limited to emails, letters, memos, notes etc) between the contractor, the minister and the department.
6. Are there any plans to recoup the costs? Please detail.
7. Were any studies or reports commissioned to assess the cost increase? If yes:
 - a. Please provide a copy of the studies or reports.
 - b. When were they requested?
 - c. When were they complete?
 - d. Please provide a cost breakdown of the studies or reports.
 - e. Who requested that the studies or reports be commissioned?

Answer:

1. The Commonwealth agreed to a joint funding cap of \$145 million under the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA) for the Brisbane Riverwalk and the Ferry Terminals. Of this amount, \$75 million was assigned for the Riverwalk and the remainder for the Ferry Terminals.
2. The Commonwealth and Queensland governments agreed to contribute funding on a 75:25 cost share basis for each of the projects consistent with NDRRA Category D funding arrangements. Any costs above the agreed NDRRA amounts are a matter for the Brisbane City Council and the Queensland Government.
3. The Department is unaware of any private funding for the Riverwalk project.
4. The total cost of the Riverwalk is yet to be finalised. During the project construction process, the Brisbane City Council proposed a revised cost estimate of \$72 million. The Council has subsequently submitted a final NDRRA expenditure claim to the Queensland Government for \$71,639,796 million.
5. Not applicable.
6. Not applicable.
7. Not applicable.