

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee**

Answers to questions on notice

Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities portfolio

Budget Estimates, May 2011

Program: Division or Agency: 5.1: HD

Question No: 111

Topic: Heritage division funding

Proof Hansard Page and Date 12-13 (25/5/11)
or Written Question:

Senator Ludlam asked:

Senator LUDLAM: No. Overall the total program expenses, we start with a figure of 34 and we end with a figure of 22. So can you draw my attention to the largest component of the drop and explain what accounts for them.

Ms Dripps: Certainly. There is \$3 million in the Distinctively Australian program between 2010-11 and 2011-12.

Senator LUDLAM: Yes, we have covered that one.

Ms Dripps: If you look over on the left-hand side of the page under program 5.1, we have 'Revenues from independent sources' of \$1.9 million. Also in the government's budget announcement but not appearing in the PBS because it is funding from AusAID is the \$4.5 million for the Kokoda Track. I do not have a calculator with me, Senator, but I believe that brings it pretty close. With productivity dividends and suchlike there is a general trend in a negative direction, but those are the key things that explain the differences between last year and the years looking forward.

Senator LUDLAM: I mean, 31 per cent is a pretty severe efficiency dividend. Last year the budget was cut by 18 per cent when program support was revised from \$24 million to \$19 million. I wonder whether, to cut this short, you could table for us a summary of funding to the heritage division over the last decade?

Ms Dripps: We can certainly do that. What I would also add is that because of the potential in heritage to invest substantially or less substantially in property maintenance and improvement, there have been substantial peaks and troughs in the heritage budget over the last 10 years. For example, with \$63 million put in through the jobs fund as an economic stimulus measure a couple of years ago.

Senator LUDLAM: I am fairly familiar with that one, because I think we put that there. I do not expect you to have all of this with you at the moment, but if you could maybe provide that longer range summary. Officers who have appeared at this committee before have tended to defend the cuts and explain them away as not really being cuts, but I do not think it is really deniable that the division has suffered quite severely over the last decade or so. ...

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Answer:

The following table provides a summary of the funding provided to the Heritage function over the last 10 years:

| Financial Year | Departmental Appropriation \$'000 | Administered Appropriation \$'000 | Total Appropriation \$'000 |
|----------------|---|---|----------------------------------|
| 2011-12 | 13,280 | 12,997 | 26,277 |
| 2010-11 | 19,051 | 14,233 | 33,284 |
| 2009-10 | 14,774 | 59,282 | 74,056 |
| 2008-09 | 19,234 | 20,045 | 39,279 |
| 2007-08 | 21,009 | 9,508 | 30,517 |
| 2006-07 | 22,778 | 13,924 | 36,702 |
| 2005-06 | 22,210 | 20,754 | 42,964 |
| 2004-05 | 22,385 | 5,235 | 27,620 |
| 2003-04 | 9,204 | 1,739 | 10,943 |
| 2002-03 | 11,404 | 10,554 | 21,958 |
| 2001-02 | 10,968 | 16,102 | 27,070 |

The figures have been extracted from the Department's Portfolio Budget Statement (PBS) and therefore reflect initial budget allocations for each year. For comparative purposes, the Departmental appropriation excludes revenues from independent sources, given the variable and unpredictable nature of these funding sources.

There is a \$7.0m net reduction in budget funding for the Heritage function in 2011-12 when compared to 2010-11 which reflect a number of changes including:

- Departmental – cessation of funding for the Distinctive Australian program (\$3.0m reduction).
- Departmental and administered – cessation of the appropriation funding for the Kokoda Initiative (\$3.5m reduction). The appropriation for the continued support for this initiative in 2011-12 has been provided to AusAID. The management of the initiative will continue to be undertaken by the Department with funding to be provided by AusAID.
- Departmental and administered – cessation of the Jobs Fund Heritage Program, part of the economic stimulus package (\$3.3m reduction). As part of the Jobs Fund initiative, \$60 million was allocated under the Local Jobs stream for heritage projects under the Jobs Fund Heritage Program. Two rounds of funding were provided in 2008-09 and 2009-10.
- Administered – commencement of the new Community Heritage Grants program (\$4.0m increase).

The remaining \$1.2m reduction related to parameter adjustments and other internal Departmental budget reallocations.

However, subsequent to the publication of the PBS, the Heritage function's budget for 2011-12 has been allocated a further \$1.0m by way of internal Departmental budget reallocation.

An allocation for the Kokoda Initiative of \$4.5m has been provided by AusAid, which is not reflected in the PBS figures.

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Budget Estimates, May 2011

Program: Division or Agency: 5.1: HD

Question No: 112

Topic: Emergency assessment of the
Dampier Archipelago

Proof Hansard Page and Date 15-16 (25/5/11)
or Written Question:

Senator Ludlam asked:

Senator LUDLAM: I might put a couple of these questions on notice and move on. While we're on the subject of the AHC, can we get an update on the emergency assessment of the Dampier Archipelago site that was announced by the minister a couple of months ago?

...

Mr Murphy: The department has briefed the Australian Heritage Council on the work that was requested by the Senate. On behalf of the council we have called for heritage experts and we are running a market test of consultants that could do this assessment. That has gone out. I think it is due this Friday. We will then look at the applications that come in and select a consultant.

...

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Senator LUDLAM: Can you undertake to take on notice when you can provide us with a work plan for that review—dates, times, budgets and so on? I understand that there must be some of that material in existence by now.

Mr Murphy: We are happy to do that, Senator.

Answer:

A budget of \$100,000 has been allocated to complete the assessment. The anticipated timing for key activities is set out in the table below. These dates are for planning purposes only and may be subject to change.

| Date (2011) | Activity |
|--------------------|--|
| 4 May | Request for proposals to conduct assessment submitted to heritage experts. |
| 27 May | Proposals submitted by heritage experts. |
| June - July | Consultation with landholders, Indigenous groups and other stakeholders. |
| 8 June | Heritage expert selected to undertake assessment. |
| 11 June | Australian Heritage Council field inspection of the Burrup Peninsula. |
| 25 June | Heritage experts appointed to undertake assessment. |
| 29 July | Draft assessment submitted to DSEWPac for comment. |
| 16 August | Heritage experts to incorporate comments into draft assessment. |
| 5 September | Peer review of draft assessment. |
| 12 September | Draft assessment submitted to DSEWPac and Australian Heritage Council. |
| 16 September | Australian Heritage Council to review draft assessment. |

The Australian Heritage Council will then provide its draft assessment to Minister Burke.

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Program: Division or Agency: 5.1: HD

Question No: 113

Topic: Myrtle Rust and Fraser Island

Proof Hansard Page and Date 16 (25/5/11)
or Written Question:

Senators Ludlam and Siewert asked:

Senator LUDLAM: ... This question is on behalf of Senator Rachel Siewert. What are World Heritage managers doing to keep myrtle rust out of Fraser Island, there has been an incursion at Hervey Bay that potentially impacts on the World Heritage values?

Ms Dripps: That might be a question we have to ask of the management agency.

Senator LUDLAM: Yes. I know that probably sounds like it is coming from left field. Is there any info you can provide?

Mr Murphy: I would imagine that the major activities here are by the Queensland government. As you know, we do not have operational responsibility for the management of parks in Queensland.

Dr Grimes: We are happy to take it on notice and see if there is any further information.

Senator LUDLAM: I do not want to come away with the impression that the Commonwealth is doing nothing at all if that is not the case. Mr Murphy, is there anything you want to add?

Mr Murphy: There is funding that goes to Fraser Island under the Caring for our Country grants. The major funding at the moment from the Commonwealth is to fund the executive officer for the advisory council. I know that there is also some funding to do with myrtle rust but I am not sure if that is specific to Fraser Island, so I will have on notice.

Senator LUDLAM: What I am asking you to take on notice is specifically Fraser Island but particularly myrtle rust and whether you are aware of what is going on there as they relate to the World Heritage values and as they relate to Commonwealth responsibilities for preserving the values of that site. If there is nothing, that is fine and I will move on. But can you take on notice any activity at all that the Commonwealth has undertaken, whether on staffing or resourcing or on any level at all.

Answer:

The Australian Government is working with the states and territories and industry groups to coordinate a national response to this disease.

The Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry has allocated \$1.5 million to myrtle rust research. This research will improve our understanding of myrtle rust, and will assist with our attempts to manage its potential impact on the natural environment and industry.

The list of projects includes:

- Assessment of ecological and landscape impacts of Myrtle rust
- Immediate disease management
- Taxonomy and molecular genetics of myrtle rust, *Uredo rangelii*

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- Host testing of key-stone species including *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* listed species
- Genetic basis for host plant resistance
- Chemical control
- Myrtle rust web portal

The day to day management of Fraser Island is the responsibility of the Queensland Department of Environment and Resource Management and enquiries about specific activities to manage myrtle rust on Fraser Island should be directed to the Queensland Government.

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Question No: 114

Topic: Macquarie Island baiting

Proof Hansard Page and Date 19 (25/5/11)
or Written Question:

Senator Abetz asked:

Ms Dripps: There may be some value in us taking on notice the question of what happened to the remainder of the bait. I am not certain I could come to the same conclusion in terms of it having necessarily been wasted. It may be being kept for future use. It may not all have been wasted.

Senator ABETZ: I was told that due to spoilage it is expected that about 70 tonnes of the bait left on the island will be used.

Dr Terrill: In terms of Ms Dripps' intervention, the answer to the question does allow room that not all of the bait may have been left on the island. That is something we probably do need to take on notice and check. It does record that 70 tonnes of the bait left on the island would be used, but that does not definitively lock out that that was all of the remaining bait. Can we take that on notice?

Senator ABETZ: By all means. I think it is pretty clear. Can you then tell us exactly how many tonnes were spoilt?

Ms Dripps: Yes.

Dr Terrill: Yes.

Senator ABETZ: And what has happened to what I suspect is 210 tonnes of spoiled bait? Does it have to be transported off the island? What is the cost of doing so et cetera? You can take all that on notice. It would seem that just the capital cost of purchase of the bait, about \$750,000, has been wasted due to spoilage. About 70 tonnes of the bait will be used this year. Do we have a better figure than 70 tonnes now that we are starting to use it again?

Mr Murphy: I do not have that.

Senator ABETZ: If you could take that on notice for me, Mr Murphy, I would be obliged. ...

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Answer:

A total of 543 tonnes of bait was purchased. Approximately 331 tonnes of bait was used during the aerial baiting program. It is estimated that 55-60 tonnes of bait was spoilt. All unused bait, whether spoilt or excess to requirements, was destroyed on the island as the cost of returning excess bait to Australia for reuse significantly exceeds its value and returning spoilt bait to Australia for landfill is also very expensive.

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Question No: 115

Topic: Wild rivers

Proof Hansard Page and Date 22 (25/5/11)
or Written Question:

Senator Boswell asked:

Senator BOSWELL: Anyhow, let me put the question on notice. In Senator Fielding's speech to the Senate on 12 May, 2011, in relation to wild rivers, he said that the federal government had agreed to fund a professional services resource to assist people to get an application for permit approval. Can you detail how much funding the federal government has agreed to provide; what the nature of the professional services resource will be; whether the Commonwealth will be providing the services; and where the resource will be based?

Answer:

This matter falls within the portfolio of the Hon Jenny Macklin MP, the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs – her department has provided the following response:

The Australian and Queensland Governments will each provide \$500,000, resulting in total resourcing of \$1 million over two years.

Discussions are proceeding with the Queensland Government about a model to improve support to Indigenous people in Cape York and the Gulf who live in areas where there are Wild Rivers declarations.

The Australian and Queensland Government will consult with Indigenous community leaders before the final model is settled.

It is proposed the model will help applicants understand and navigate the Wild Rivers legislative framework including access to professional resources and other business development requirements. Applicants will also be assisted to develop new business and economic development proposals.

The nature and location of these professional resources will be discussed with community leaders during the consultation process.

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Question No: 116

Topic: Wild Rivers

Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Boswell asked:

1. What involvement does the Department of Sustainability, Environment Water, Population And Communities have with the Queensland state government on the Lake Eyre Basin Wild Rivers program? Does the department have to be notified? If so what is the process of notification?
2. In 1993 the then Prime Minister, Paul Keating, announced his intention to proceed with the Lake Eyre basin world heritage listing. In 1988 the Lake Eyre society recommended that Lake Eyre basin for world heritage listing. Has your department done or has been asked to make any assessment or done any work on the world heritage registration on of Lake Eyre basin?
3. Recently Minister for Sustainability, Tony Burke, has issued a media statement saying he has pushed the pause button on listing the Cape York Wild Rivers. What status does the Cape York Wild Rivers have in your department? Is the department doing any further work or making any further assessment on Wild Rivers?
4. Has the department notified the World Heritage secretariat that the listing application will not be proceeded with? What is the status of the application?
5. In preparing the commonwealth interdepartmental committee's submission to the House of Representatives Economic committee inquiry into indigenous economic development and the Wild Rivers environmental management bill, there were thirteen different Commonwealth government agencies involved in the preparation of this report. What meetings occurred with indigenous people individually and in groups of Queensland indigenous people, Queensland state government officers and others in preparing this report? What are the dates and times of these meetings?

Answer:

1. A representative of the department, along with representatives of the South Australian and Queensland governments, universities, the Lake Eyre Basin Community Advisory Committee and Desert Channels Queensland, attended a scientific workshop in March 2010 which informed the development of the Cooper Creek Water Resource Plan and the Wild Rivers discussion paper. As the Queensland Government administers the Wild Rivers Act, questions about the operations of that Act should be directed to Queensland.

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2. No.
3. The Wild Rivers Act is Queensland legislation and the department is not involved in the administration of that legislation.
4. The Australian Government has not yet formally notified the World Heritage secretariat of its intention to nominate Cape York to the World Heritage List.
5. This matter falls within the portfolio of the Minister for Families, Housing Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, the Hon Jenny Macklin MP – the Department of Families, Housing Community Services and Indigenous Affairs has provided the following response. ‘Some members of the IDC, namely representatives from the Departments of Families, Housing Community Services and Indigenous Affairs; Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities and the Attorney-General’s, met with Queensland Government officials on 14 December 2010 to discuss the Wild Rivers issue and the House of Representatives committee inquiry.’