

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities portfolio
Budget Estimates, May 2012

Program: Division or Agency: 5.1: HWD **Question No:** 102

Topic: Personnel on the UNESCO World Heritage Committee

Proof Hansard Page and Date 31

or Written Question: (22/5/12)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD: Could you on notice refer me to a website that would give me who the personnel on that World Heritage committee are? I assume it would have their qualifications for being on that committee.

Dr Dripps: We can certainly provide you the linkage to UNESCO's World Heritage committee home page. I have looked at that home page recently and I do not believe that it includes the names of the individual members from the countries. But we can undertake to attempt to provide that material for you. Indeed, we will try to do so by the time the heritage output is discussed tomorrow morning.

Answer:

World Heritage Committee members

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/sessions/36COM/>

Current World Heritage Committee Members are:

Algeria	Cambodia	Colombia
Estonia	Ethiopia	France
Germany	India	Iraq
Japan	Malaysia	Mali
Mexico	Qatar	Russian Federation
Senegal	Serbia	South Africa
Switzerland	Thailand	United Arab Emirates

Individual representatives on the World Heritage Committee are determined by the 21 elected States Parties. According to Article 9.3 of the *World Heritage Convention*, "States members of the Committee shall choose as their representatives persons qualified in the field of the cultural or natural heritage."

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Program: Division or Agency: 5.1: HWD **Question No:** 103

Topic: UNESCO Mission – effect of major projects on World Heritage sites

Proof Hansard Page and Date 32

or Written Question: (22/5/12)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD: I understand that the World Heritage council was urged, if I might say for want of a better word, by WWF to have a look at Gladstone Harbour. Is that correct? Are you able to confirm or otherwise that information? Why did the World Heritage committee take this interest in Gladstone? Was it at the urging of WWF or the IUCN?

Dr Dripps: I would have to take some advice from the officials involved at the time of precisely what drew the matter to the attention of the World Heritage committee. They do undertake a regular scan of things that are occurring worldwide and take a particular interest in World Heritage sites. But we can take that on notice.

Answer:

The Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities is unaware of any representations made by the World Wildlife Fund urging the World Heritage Committee to look at Gladstone Harbour. Non government organisations are able to contact the World Heritage Committee independently about any world heritage matter.

The decision by the World Heritage Committee in 2011 to undertake a monitoring mission of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area was made in relation to the approval of liquefied natural gas processing and port facilities on Curtis Island. Issues around the approval were raised in the IUCN State of Conservation report on the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area that was provided to the committee in 2011.

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Budget Estimates, May 2012

Program: Division or Agency: 5.1: HWD **Question No:** 104

Topic: Correspondence between the Australian Government and the New South Wales Government

Proof Hansard Page and Date 5

or Written Question: (23/5/12)

Senator Cameron asked:

CHAIR: ...As I understand it, in 2008 the minister wrote to the New South Wales state government on this issue.

Dr Grimes: I am not aware of that correspondence.

Mr Hooy: That is correct. I am aware that the minister did write expressing concern about that.

CHAIR: What is the response from the New South Wales state government?

Mr Hooy: I am not aware of the response but I can take that on notice.

CHAIR: So there is ministerial correspondence on this going back to 2008?

Mr Hooy: No, that is the limit of my knowledge of the issue.

CHAIR: Can you take on notice any correspondence going back to 1997 on this matter between the Commonwealth and the state government?

Dr Dripps: Certainly.

Answer:

The Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities is not aware of any correspondence between the Commonwealth and the New South Wales Government about the Canyon coal site before 2008.

The then Minister for the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts wrote to the then New South Wales Minister for Climate Change and Environment in July 2008 requesting her to address water quality issues in the Grose River which had been raised with him in a letter from the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area Advisory Committee. The New South Wales Minister responded to the Advisory Committee on 1 August 2008, but did not respond to the then Minister.

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Program: Division or Agency: 5.1: HWD **Question No:** 105

Topic: Melbourne Royal Exhibition Building
– grant application

Proof Hansard Page and Date 6

or Written Question: (23/5/12)

Senator Birmingham asked:

Senator BIRMINGHAM: When did the department receive an application for the grant that is being provided to the Melbourne Royal Exhibition Building?

...

Dr Dripps: The decision on the grant that has been provided to the Royal Exhibition Building was a matter that emerged through the budget process.

Senator BIRMINGHAM: So there was never an application received?

Dr Grimes: We would have to take on notice whether there was an application received.

Answer:

The provision of funding for the Melbourne Royal Exhibition Building was determined through the budget process.

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Budget Estimates, May 2012

Program: Division or Agency: 5.1: HWD **Question No:** 106
Topic: Museum of Victoria – project funding
Proof Hansard Page and Date 7-8
or Written Question: (23/5/12)

Senator Birmingham asked:

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Senator BIRMINGHAM: Has the department ever had any correspondence with the Museum of Victoria about funding this project before the budget?

Mr Hooy: I would have to take that on notice. I know that there have been discussions with one of my directors, going back some time, about the general condition of the building. I am not aware of a formal request.

Senator BIRMINGHAM: No formal request that you are aware of for this funding. Did the department ever deal with any representations received by either the Prime Minister or the minister from Mr Bandt in relation to the heritage building?

Mr Hooy: I would have to take that on notice, but not as far as I am aware.

Senator BIRMINGHAM: Really by the sounds of it, this came as a surprise to the department out of the budget process. There were no grants received beforehand, no correspondence received beforehand, no briefings provided beforehand, but the department is now administering this \$20 million contract and grant. Is that a fair precis of how the budget process appears to have worked in this instance?

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Senator BIRMINGHAM: ...The question is: is it a fair summary that this grant really just materialised out of the budget process as a pleasant surprise for the department to administer and to oversee the money going to the Museum of Victoria?

Dr Grimes: I wouldn't describe it in those terms. It was a matter that was considered through the budget process. As Mr Hooy has indicated, we can take other aspects of this on notice.

Answer:

Funding for the Royal Exhibition Building was a matter that was considered through the budget process as determined by the Cabinet. The records indicate that the Department did not receive representations outside the budget processes relating to the Royal Exhibition Building.

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Budget Estimates, May 2012

Program: Division or Agency: 5.1: HWD **Question No:** 107

Topic: 2012-13 Budget - Heritage and Wildlife Division's budget position

Proof Hansard Page and Date 8-10

or Written Question: (23/5/12)

Senator Wright asked:

Senator WRIGHT: ...My first question relates to the level of program support allocated to heritage activities. It is not clear from the current portfolio budget statement what level of program support heritage activities will receive in 2012-13. Of the \$42.3 million allocated for program 5.1 in that year, how much of that will be spent on heritage related activities as opposed to wildlife related activities?

...

(Page 9)

Dr Dripps: ...I have figures in front of me about why it is different from last year, but I am not sure I have figures in front of me to answer that question of precisely how much goes to wildlife and how much goes to heritage. What I can say, though, is that as the Secretary has indicated there was a terminating program last year which had an impact on the division on the budget of the heritage division. In addition, within the reported heritage budget last year, there was some work on the EPBC taskforce and some one-off funding to fund a wildlife permit system. So that and the efficiency dividend that has been applied is the explanation of how we got from \$48 million to \$42 million in departmental funding. May I take the rest of the question on notice?

Senator WRIGHT: Yes, I would be pleased if you would do that. In last year's budget the heritage division was allocated just over \$13.3 million in program support. Are you able to give me comparative figures for the coming year and also over the forward estimates? What we are trying to find out is the heritage budget again in terms of program support. Can you give me those indications?

Dr Dripps: I can do my best to take those questions on notice.

...

Senator WRIGHT: I guess I am particularly interested in the trend in relation to the heritage division specifically. So I presume, even if you don't have those figures now, you will need to do those figures. So if you could take that question on notice, I would appreciate that.

Dr Dripps: Indeed, and what we will also give you is the administered funding that is administered by the heritage division in terms of the grants that it administers, and also funding that we receive from other sources for heritage related activities—in particular, the Kokoda initiative in Papua New Guinea.

...

Senator WRIGHT: I am now looking at the total program expenses for program 5.1. From 2011-12 there was a baseline of \$63.2 million. Total program expenses are predicted to drop by 16 per cent to \$52.93 million in 2015-16. A loss of your community heritage grants accounts for \$4 million of that cut, and I note with regret that the government does not intend to continue this important program beyond 2012-13. But my question is, where will the remaining \$6 million in cuts come from and what impact will this long-term cut in total program expenses have on the activities of the heritage division?

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Dr Grimes: While Ms Stone and Dr Dripps are looking at the table, I will say that my suspicion is that again this goes to the question you asked on the breakdown on the divisional budget. The administered items there are very clear in the table that you have referred to in the budget papers. Unless they have further information now, I think it will be answered in that material that has been taken on notice.

Answer:

The 2012-13 Budget allocation for Heritage is \$14.7 million plus \$5.6 million funding from Ausaid for the Kokoda initiative. The Wildlife Branch has an allocation of \$13.5 million and Business Systems Governance and Regulatory Reform has an allocation of \$8.5 million.

In terms of the forward estimates for program 5.1 there is no notional allocation between the functions.

The reduction of \$6 million from 2011-12 to 2012-13 is attributed to:

- additional efficiency dividend of 2.5 per cent;
- an internal allocation to meet departmental savings requirements;
- one off funding in 2011-12 for Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation systems projects not continued in 2012-13;
- the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation taskforce funded in 2012-13 by a new Budget Measure; and
- reduction in funding from Ausaid for Kokoda.

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Budget Estimates, May 2012

Program: Division or Agency: 5.1: HWD **Question No:** 108

Topic: 2012-13 Budget – Impact on staffing levels

Proof Hansard Page and Date 10

or Written Question: (23/5/12)

Senator Wright asked:

Senator WRIGHT: Is it possible to be more specific about which of those job losses might come from the heritage division specifically?

Dr Dripps: Not at this stage. They are management decisions that are yet to be taken.

Senator WRIGHT: When would it be likely that you would be able to provide an answer to that?

Dr Dripps: We could endeavour to do so by the deadline for questions on notice, because that coincides quite nicely with the beginning of the financial year when we need to do it.

CHAIR: Senator Wright, we have to move on.

Senator WRIGHT: Yes. If you could take that on notice.

Answer:

As advised by Dr Kimberley Dripps at Senate Estimates on 23 May 2012, the reduction in staff during 2012-13 across the Heritage and Wildlife Division (the division) will be around ten people. The reduction of staff will be managed to ensure that the priorities for the division for both heritage and wildlife outcomes are met. It is anticipated that around two thirds of the staff reduction will be in the Heritage area, with one third in Wildlife. The Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities is managing the reduction in average staffing levels across divisions through attrition and redeployment.

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Program: Division or Agency: 5.1: HWD **Question No:** 109

Topic: UNESCO inspection of Australian convict sites

Proof Hansard Page and Date 11

or Written Question: (23/5/12)

Senator Singh asked:

Senator SINGH: Do you work with the state government on meeting that time frame of UNESCO's requirement to have the visitors centre removed because it is anachronistic? And I can't agree more, actually. Obviously it is going to be at a cost. So is there anything in the forward estimates or is there any kind of plan to meet that? We have some time. I think it is six years, isn't it, until the next inspection or the time frame for it to be removed?

Mr Hooy: That is right. I would like to take that question on notice.

Answer:

- The Australian Convict Sites was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2010. When the World Heritage Committee inscribed the site, it recommended that Australia "Give consideration to removing the anachronistic structures or constructions at Old Government House (site No 2), Cascades (7) and Fremantle (11)".
- There is no timeframe for implementation of this recommendation. However, during the preparation of the Australian Convict Sites World Heritage nomination (2006-08), the Tasmanian Government gave an undertaking that the 'Fudge Factory' would be removed within five years of receiving World Heritage listing.
- In 1999 the Australian Government gave \$979,000 (in two amounts) as a Centenary of Federation grant to the Festival of Tasmania Ltd for the Cascades Female Factory site to purchase Yard 3, develop a conservation management plan and undertake conservation works.
- At the same time a Deed of Agreement was also established between the Commonwealth and the Festival of Tasmania that required ownership of the site to be transferred to the State Government of Tasmania and the demolition of the 'Fudge Factory' (the 'anachronistic' structure) prior to the handover to the State Government by 2009. The handover of the site did occur however the 'Fudge Factory' was not demolished.

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Budget Estimates, May 2012

Program: Division or Agency: 5.1: HWD **Question No:** 110

Topic: National Heritage listing of Cape York – Indigenous consent

Proof Hansard Page and Date 12

or Written Question: (23/5/12)

Senator Boswell asked:

Senator BOSWELL: Can you tell me which Indigenous communities you have talked to and what councils you have talked to about this matter?

Dr Dripps: Given the number of officers involved in the meetings, it might be best if we took that question on notice so that we can be sure that we give you a complete list.

Answer:

Noting that the Queensland Government leads the consultation program, as of 25 July 2012 Australian Government officials have met with the following Indigenous communities and councils to discuss potential world heritage listing for areas of Cape York Peninsula:

- Cook Shire Council
- Laura Rangers
- Hopevale Aboriginal Shire Council
- Olkola Traditional Owners
- Cape York Land Council
- Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation

The Queensland Government Department of Environment and Heritage Protection have advised that they have held meetings in most Indigenous communities and met with most councils on Cape York Peninsula in relation to this matter.

Councils that Queensland officials have consulted include:

- Northern Peninsula Area Council
- Mapoon Shire Council
- Weipa Town Authority
- Aurukun Shire Council
- Pormpuraaw Aboriginal Council
- Lockhart River Council

- Cook Shire Council
- Hopevale Aboriginal Shire Council
- Wujal Wujal Council

Communities that Queensland officials have consulted include:

- Bamaga
- Seisia
- Mapoon
- Lockhart River
- Laura
- Hopevale
- Cooktown
- Pormpuraaw
- Kowanyama

In addition, Queensland officials have addressed the Regional Organisation of Councils of Cape York Peninsula, a forum which brings together mayors and CEOs of all the councils on Cape York Peninsula.

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Program: Division or Agency: 5.1: HWD **Question 111**
Question No:

Topic: Provision of information to the
UNESCO monitoring mission

Proof Hansard Page and Date 14

or Written Question: (23/5/12)

Senator Waters asked:

Senator WATERS: So did the department advise the World Heritage committee or the UNESCO monitoring mission when they were here about those exemptions that I just mentioned? Did the Australian government provide any maps or any data of the actual on-ground situation?

Dr Dripps: As you are aware, Senator, the World Heritage mission visited Australia from 6 to 14 March and undertook—and I had better ask Greg Terrill to come to the table—I believe, over 100 meetings with various parties and inspections of quite a lot of the reef all the way from Gladstone up to well north of Cairns up to Lizard Island. So in terms of the precise provision of the information that you refer to, I do not have at hand the exact information about what was given to who on precisely on which day, but we can find out for you.

Answer:

The UNESCO monitoring mission was provided with, and briefed on, a mapping application loaded with spatial data on management areas, proposed developments, areas of biological significance and current and historical imagery for the Great Barrier Reef. The application included layers showing exemptions, including state development areas, maritime development areas and aquaculture development areas.

The mission team was also provided with a set of hard copy maps of key development areas within and adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

The mission team had approximately 40 meetings with a broad range of stakeholders and discussed development issues affecting the world heritage area, including management arrangements and the Queensland State Coastal Plan.

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Budget Estimates, May 2012

Program: Division or Agency: 5.1: HWD **Question 112**
No:

Topic: Koala – experts and studies undertaken

Proof Hansard Page and Date 27

or Written Question: (23/5/12)

Senator Joyce asked:

Senator JOYCE: Did you know whether they did any in Western Queensland and where they did them?

Dr Dripps: I do not know myself precisely which studies were undertaken. I have undertaken to provide you on notice a list of experts, a list of studies and a list of fieldwork that was undertaken in the preparation of this listing.

...

Senator JOYCE: Give me some of the data sets for your population data and where they were.

Ms Callister: I can actually provide you a copy of the listing advice if you would like it.

Answer:

An extensive list of references is cited in the Threatened Species Scientific Committee's listing advice, including studies referring to koalas in Queensland. The Committee's listing advice can be viewed at: <http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/species/pubs/197-listing-advice.pdf>

Experts consulted on koalas in Queensland:

- Dr Greg Baxter – University of Queensland
- Prof Frank Carrick – University of Queensland
- Dr Diedre DeVilliers - Qld Department of Environment and Resource Management
- Dr David Dique – GHD consultants (and ex-Qld Department of Environment and Resource Management)
- Dr Bill Ellis – University of Queensland
- Dr Greg Gordon – (retired) Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service
- Dr Jon Hanger – Australian Wildlife Hospital
- Dr Christine Hosking – University of Queensland
- Prof Clive McAlpine – University of Queensland

- Dr Alistair Melzer – Central Queensland University
- Dr Harriet Preece - Qld Department of Environment and Resource Management

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Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities portfolio
Budget Estimates, May 2012

Program: Division or Agency: 5.1: HWD

Question No: 113

Topic: Heritage and Wildlife Division
Funding

Proof Hansard Page and Date Written

or Written Question:

Senator Wright asked:

1. During last year's hearing on 25 May 2011, Senator Scott Ludlam asked for a summary of funding to the heritage division over the last decade to be tabled. My understanding is that he never received a response to this question. Accordingly, would you please provide a table summarising the heritage budget over the last decade, including both program support and grant programs?

Answer:

The responses for the requested information were tabled on 22 August 2011 (refer to Question Number 111 Budget Estimates, May 2012). Response below:

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

Financial Year	Departmental Appropriation	Administered Appropriation	Total Appropriation
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.

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Program: Division or Agency: 5.1: HWD **Question 114**
No:

Topic: Heritage Projects Jobs Fund

Proof Hansard Page and Date Written

or Written Question:

Senator Wright asked:

1. What evaluation processes were put in place by the Department to measure the economic, social and environmental benefits of the \$60 million Heritage Projects Jobs Fund?
2. How many jobs were created as a result of this \$60 million dollar investment in heritage conservation?
3. Have the wider economic benefits of the Heritage Projects Job Fund been measured, for example the impact on community revitalisation, heritage tourism and property values?
4. We understand there were two independent reports commissioned to evaluate the social, economic and environmental dividends of the Heritage Projects Job Fund. Is this correct?
5. Have these evaluation reports been made public? If not, does the Department intend to publish them and what is the timeframe for that?

Answer:

1. During 2011, two external consultants (Courage Partners and Sweeney Research) were engaged to determine the success of the program. The Sweeney report was to assess the jobs aspect and the Courage was to concentrate on the heritage benefits.
2. The Jobs Fund Heritage Program resulted in an estimated 4,354 jobs.
3. The above reports provided the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (the department) with a qualitative assessment of the operation of heritage focused Jobs Fund projects focusing on their impact on employment, training and stimulation of the local economy.

The reports found that the Jobs Fund Heritage Program has been successful in meeting the heritage outcomes including:

- that the Jobs Fund Heritage Program had effectively engaged with a genuine community interest in heritage, and had raised the profile of heritage with stakeholders and their communities;
- a number of economic and social impacts were identified as resulting from the Jobs Fund Heritage Program:

- Community pride;
 - Enhanced visitor experience;
 - Extending the life of the site;
 - Increased time of stay in the area;
 - Improved aesthetics;
 - Increased access;
 - Increased capacity for further use (adaptive re-use);
 - Applied training opportunities and preservation of heritage skills; and
 - Other short-term impacts from project work (other than job creation).
- many positive social and economic impacts typically arose in cases where projects built on other works done previously or concurrently. Often the impacts realised were the result of a mix of multiple projects and investments, of which the Jobs Fund Heritage Program formed a part;
 - valuable impacts were achieved from investments that either increased the use of, or access to, the site; for example projects involving rewiring, fire safety, plumbing and installing toilets; and
 - the majority of grants were shown to be useful in leveraging additional funding support. Grant investment in the majority of projects either built on work done previously or was used concurrently with other funding sources, including income derived from: philanthropic organisations; other Commonwealth and state funding; local council funding; and community donations as well as income from the site itself.
4. Yes. See 1.
 5. Yes. These evaluation reports are on the department's website.

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Budget Estimates, May 2012

Program: Division or Agency: 5.1: HWD **Question No:** 115

Topic: National and Commonwealth
Heritage List Assessments

Proof Hansard Page and Date Written

or Written Question:

Senator Wright asked:

1. Assessments for the National Heritage List seem to have come to a standstill in recent years. The Tarkine was the only place listed on the 2011-12 Priority Assessment List and many of the places on earlier Priority Assessment Lists have had their completion dates pushed back by at least 12 months, if not years. Why are so few assessments being completed and why are so many assessments are being delayed?
2. How many places under assessment for the National Heritage List have a current assessment deadline of 30 June 2013?
3. How many National Heritage List assessments are expected to be finalised in 2012-13, given the significant backlog?
4. During last year's hearing on 25 May 2011, the Department indicated to Senator Scott Ludlam, that assessments for the Commonwealth Heritage List were expected to continue at a significant rate. Has this been borne out?
5. How many Commonwealth Heritage List assessments will be finalised in 2011-12, and how many are expected to be finalised in 2012-13?
6. Have the cuts to Program Support in the last few years had an impact on the number of assessments being completed for the National and Commonwealth Heritage Lists?

Answer:

1. There has been a trend in recent years to assess larger areas (for example, the West Kimberley, the Tarkine). This entails more complex assessments and consultation than is required for historic places with smaller, readily defined boundaries which tended to be the predominant type of assessment in the early years of the National Heritage List. Also, the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities now works to identify and resolve sometimes very complex management issues and management arrangement before a place is listed.
2. 17 (this figure treats Canberra as a single place, although it was the subject of two separate nominations with different boundaries in each nomination).
3. Two.

4. Yes. The Australian Heritage Council has completed its assessments of the Commonwealth Heritage values of 83 places since 1 June 2011.
5. (a) Assessments of 23 places were completed in 2011-12. (b) Currently no Commonwealth Heritage List assessments are expected to be completed in 2012-13 due to higher priority being given to National Heritage List assessments.
6. No.

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Program: Division or Agency: 5.1: HWD **Question No:** 116

Topic: Australian Heritage Strategy

Proof Hansard Page and Date Written

or Written Question:

Senator Wright asked:

1. Last year's Portfolio Budget Statement (PBS) included the launch of an Australian Heritage Strategy by June 2012 as a key performance indicator. In recent weeks a public consultation paper has been released and the closing date for submissions is 15 June 2012, so it seems pretty clear that the Strategy itself is a long way from being launched. Is that correct?
2. Why the delay in developing an Australian Heritage Strategy?
3. Once submissions on the current consultation paper have been processed, will the Government release a draft Australian Heritage Strategy for consultation?
4. What form will that consultation process take?
5. What is the timeline for release of a draft Australian Heritage Strategy?
6. When do you expect to launch the finalised Australian Heritage Strategy?

Answer:

1. The Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (the department) will not meet its initial plan to launch a final Strategy by 30 June 2012.
2. Extending the timeframe has been important as it has facilitated broad input from the states, territories and community stakeholders. It will enable the development of an integrated, national Strategy that encompasses the three strands of heritage - Indigenous, historic and natural.
3. 95 public submissions were received by 15 June 2012. These are now being analysed by the department. No decision has been made yet about further consultation processes.
4. No decision has been made yet on further consultation processes.
5. No decision has been made yet on this issue.
6. No decision has been made yet on this issue.

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Program: Division or Agency: 5.1: HWD **Question 117**
No:

Topic: Register of the National Estate

Proof Hansard Page and Date Written

or Written Question:

Senator Wright asked:

1. The Australian Heritage Council in its submission to the Hawke Review recommended that the RNE be retained as a statutory list 'until all places can be assessed for possible inclusion in an appropriate heritage list or appropriately protected in another statutory way'. This advice was not taken and the RNE lapsed on 19 February 2012. How many former RNE places (including non-Commonwealth places) have been left without alternative statutory protection as of 19 February 2012?
2. Is the Department continuing to work with State & Territory heritage agencies to assist them in transferring places from the RNE to their own heritage lists?
3. What steps has the Department taken to ensure that the RNE is maintained as a publicly accessible archive?
4. Will the RNE archive include information on those places given interim listing status but never actually listed on the RNE?
5. We understand that in addition to the 400 or so places already transferred from the RNE to the Commonwealth Heritage List, an additional 120 RNE places have been identified as potentially eligible for protection under the Commonwealth Heritage List. What process does the Department have in place for assessing these remaining places and how long is it expected to take?

Answer:

1. The lapsing provision of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (the EPBC Act), section 391A, required the Minister to have regard to information in the Register of the National Estate in making any decision under the Act to which the information is relevant. The information in the Register of the National Estate continues to be available to decision makers. The EPBC Act still requires the approval of activities involving Commonwealth land and also for activities of Commonwealth agencies significantly affecting the environment. In addition the changes of 19 February 2012 do not affect the many places in the Register of the National Estate already protected by inclusion in a wide range of heritage lists, parks and reserves, Aboriginal heritage laws, and local planning schemes.
2. Yes.
3. All records from the Register of the National Estate are publicly available online through the Australian Heritage Database.

4. Yes.
5. The process for adding places to the Commonwealth Heritage List is set out in Sections 341E and 341JP of the EPBC Act. The timing would depend on priorities determined in accordance with that process.

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Program: Division or Agency: 5.1: HWD **Question 118**
No:

Topic: Review of the *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976*

Proof Hansard Page and Date Written

or Written Question:

Senator Wright asked:

A review of the *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976* and consideration of the requirements arising from the UNESCO 2001 Convention for the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage was undertaken by the Department in 2009:

1. I understand that a report on the outcomes of this review is currently being developed. When will this report be released?
2. Nearly 3 years have passed since the review was announced. Why has it taken so long for the Department to develop a response?
3. Did the 30% cut in the Heritage Division's program support, made back in 2011-12, impact upon the timeline for developing a response to the review?
4. In developing the report, has the Department undertaken any consultation other than the call for submissions made back in June 2009? If so, please provide details of the consultation process.

Answer:

1. Progress on this item is still under policy consideration and has been incorporated into the work arising from the separate review of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (the EPBC Act). The review of the EPBC Act recommended that the *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976* should be included in the EPBC Act. The Australian Government's response to the review of the EPBC Act was released in August 2011.
2. See answer to Question 1.
3. No.
4. No. The Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities continues to work with and consult with senior State and Territory government officials who are the Minister's delegates under the *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976*.

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Program: Division or Agency: 5.1: HWD **Question 119**
No:

Topic: Australia's ratification of the UNESCO
2001 Convention for the Protection of
the Underwater Cultural Heritage

Proof Hansard Page and Date Written

or Written Question:

Senator Wright asked:

1. Does the Department have a proposed timetable for Australia's ratification of the UNESCO 2001 Convention for the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage?

Answer:

1. No.

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Program: Division or Agency: 5.1: HWD **Question No:** 120

Topic: Leadbeater's Possum

Proof Hansard Page and Date Written

or Written Question:

Senator Di Natale asked:

1. What action is being undertaken in relation to the Commonwealth's Leadbeater's Possum recovery plan?
2. Particularly after the 2009 bushfires, the required action to undertake habitat assessments is more critical than ever; what steps are being taken with regard to assessing habitat for the Leadbeater's Possum?
3. Is the department is assessing whether Leadbeater's Possum habitat can be listed as critical? If so, what is the extent of this work, and its timeframe?

Answer:

1. The Commonwealth recovery plan for Leadbeater's possum is being revised. It has completed a period of public consultation and has been reviewed by the Threatened Species Scientific Committee. Final edits are being completed by the Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment, before the revised plan is recommended to the Minister for adoption as a national recovery plan.

In addition to this, the department understands that Recovery Actions under the current plan that are being implemented by the Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment include:

- A captive breeding program at Zoos Victoria;
 - \$1 million invested over four years for predator control in the central highlands;
 - Community grants for habitat restoration, including nest boxes, revegetation and monitoring;
 - Implementing prescriptions for timber harvesting operations from the Leadbeater's possum Action Statement (which is consistent with the existing Recovery Plan); and
 - A \$1.86 million project to collect new information relating to timber production and the protection of biodiversity, including population surveys and assessments of habitat suitability across the Leadbeater's possum range.
2. The Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities understands that, in 2009, the Victorian Government allocated funding for fire recovery projects associated with flora and fauna values. These included a specific project focusing on the impact of the fires on Leadbeater's possum and its habitat in the central highlands.

3. No.

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Program: Division or Agency: 5.1: HWD **Question 121**
No:

Topic: Key Threatening Process – Mercury
pollution

Proof Hansard Page and Date Written

or Written Question:

Senator Heffernan asked:

1. Could you further explain and provide details why your Department has not made mercury pollution a key threatening process under the EPBC Act?

Answer:

1. Mercury pollution is not listed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* as a key threatening process because it has never been nominated for assessment.