

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

Answers to questions on notice

Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities portfolio

Supplementary Budget Estimates, October 2010

Program: Division or Agency: 1.1: AGLC **Question No:** 5
Broad Topic: WA region funding under
Caring for our Country
Proof Hansard Page and Date 119 and 128 (18/10/10)
or Written Question:

Senator Siewert asked:

[EC 119]

Senator SIEWERT—I will obviously be putting a series of questions on notice around that. Could you take on notice how many of the applications were successful and what was the level of funding on those applications. ...

...

[EC 128]

Mr Flanigan—You are back to the EPBC Act. I will flick to my colleague at the end of the table. While we are waiting for this colleague, Senator Siewert asked a question of me earlier. I can give the answer now. Under the 2010-11 business plan open call there were 614 applications worth an estimated \$277 million, 168 projects worth approximately \$60 million have been approved in the first round and there are approximately 67 projects worth approximately \$27.8 million on the reserve list.

Senator SIEWERT—Can you take on notice why only four of the WA regions have been funded on the website? I have just looked on the website and see it is only four of our six regions.

Mr Flanigan—All of your regions would have received their base-level funding, but I will check that.

Senator SIEWERT—Only four of them are on the website.

Mr Flanigan—I will take that on notice.

Answer:

The two West Australian regions not listed on the Natural Resource Management web-site (<http://www.nrm.gov.au/business-plan/funded/10/bp-success-wa.html>), Northern Agricultural and South West, had already received approval for their full 2010-11 allocation under the 2009-10 Caring for our Country Business Plan. They elected not to apply for base-level funding for the 2011-12 and 2012-13 financial years under the 2010-11 Business Plan, opting instead to bed down their existing approved projects.

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Supplementary Budget Estimates, October 2010

Program: Division or Agency: 1.1: AGLC **Question No:** 6

Broad Topic: Eradication of foxes in
Tasmania

Proof Hansard Page and Date Written Question
or Written Question:

Senator Colbeck asked:

1. Can you please advise on the status of funding for the eradication of foxes in Tasmania?
Can you please provide a breakdown on the funding over the forward estimates?
2. What performance measures are associated with this funding?
3. How many Federal Departmental officers dedicated to this project? Full time? Part time?

Answer:

1. A contract is in place with the Tasmanian Department of Primary Industry, Parks, Water and the Environment to assist with the Tasmanian Fox Eradication Program (FEP). The Australian Government has approved \$7 million for the program for the years 2010-11 to 2012-13 comprising; \$2.4 million in 2010-2011, \$2.3 million in 2011-2012, and \$2.3 million in 2012-2013.
2. The specific contracted performance measures for the Australian Government's contribution towards the activity are hectares of baiting and monitoring effort demonstrating evidence of the presence of foxes in Tasmania.
3. Australian Government departmental officer time spent on this program consists of approximately 0.2 Full Time Equivalent over a year. This includes ongoing contract management for funding and Australian Government representation on the FEP Management Committee and Technical Advisory Panel.

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Supplementary Budget Estimates, October 2010

Program: Division or Agency: 1.1: AGLC **Question No:** 7
Broad Topic: Caring for our Country
projects
Proof Hansard Page and Date Written Question
or Written Question:

Senator Siewert asked:

1. Has the independent panel of experts been consulted during the assessment process for the most recent round of grants? If yes, what components of the Business Plan assessment did the independent panel of experts consult on? If no, why not?
2. What is the purpose of 'reserve projects' in this funding round? Have reserve projects been identified in previous funding rounds?
3. When is the Business Plan for 2011-12 going to be released? What process is being used to develop the plan?

Answer:

1. Yes. There were three independent panels for the assessment of the open call component of the 2010–11 business plan. These panels were the Preliminary Screening Panel, the National Moderating Panel and the Quality Assurance Group.

The Preliminary Screening Panels undertook the initial scoring and ranking of the open call proposals. These panels were made up of community, scientific and departmental experts. There was one panel for each state and territory.

The National Moderating Panel membership comprised the Community Chairs from each of the Preliminary Screening Panels, an Independent (community) Chair and two senior departmental representatives. The role of the National Moderating Panel was to moderate rankings, in line with targets and national priorities, and develop a balanced national set of recommendations.

The Quality Assurance Group was responsible for considering the robustness of the Caring for our Country 2010–11 business plan assessment process for the open call and sustainable farm practices expressions of interest components. It was also responsible for certifying that the process has been equitable, rigorous and transparent and is consistent with the investment principles set out in the 2010–11 business plan. This certification was provided on 16 June 2010.

2. Reserve projects are high quality proposals which, although not among the first round of recommended projects put to Ministers, are considered suitable for funding subject to available budget under the Caring for our Country program.

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There was a reserve list of projects identified under previous funding rounds and some of these projects received funding.

3. We anticipate the business plan will be released in early 2011. Australian Government Land and Coasts is responsible for the development of the business plan and activities are well underway. Applicants are currently providing feedback on the 2010-11 business plan and the application process. Other feedback has already been collected and reviewed from a number of sources including; a public online survey, the Preliminary Screening Panels, the National Moderating Panel, the Quality Assurance Group, state based facilitators and staff. This will be used to make improvements where practical and appropriate to the 2011-12 business plan. A consultation forum with key stakeholders held in November 2010 will provide input to the development of the business plan.