

**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 2011

Program: Division or Agency: 1: BOM

Question No: 27

Topic: Mt Stapylton weather radar

Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Birmingham asked:

With reference to the inability of Mt Stapylton Radar to supply radar imaging to web users on the morning of 8 October 2011 while severe thunderstorms were affecting Brisbane and South East Queensland:

1. At what time, and by what means, did the Bureau advise Emergency Management Queensland that the Mt Stapylton Radar was not operational?
2. What was found to be the cause of the “technical or equipment problems” given as the reason for the radar service's unavailability on a website error message?
3. When was the system restored to full operation and what was the duration of the outage?
4. How many users attempted to access the radar through the website during the outage?
5. Since this radar became operational, please provide details of:
 - a. the time, date, duration, and causes of each occasion that the Mt Stapylton Radar was unable to provide the public (through the www.bom.gov.au website) with radar imaging due to equipment, technical or other non-scheduled maintenance or system failures.
 - b. if, and when, any of these occasions coincided with periods during which South East Queensland was the subject of a severe weather or thunderstorm warning.

Answer:

1. Notification of radar outages are provided to all users via the Bureau's website. The relevant radar image is replaced with the message 'Radar service is currently unavailable' followed by the reason and length of outage if known. In addition, if a long-term outage is expected a banner announcement stating the expected return to service date is placed above the radar image.
2. The outage of Mt Stapylton radar was noted at 8:12 EST on Saturday 8 October 2011, and was the result of a lightning strike which damaged the Bureau's communications system.
3. The system was restored to full operation on 10 October 2011 after an outage of approximately 50 hours. It should be noted that Marburg radar also provides coverage for the Brisbane area and acts as a backup when Mt Stapylton is unavailable. Marburg radar was fully operational during the 8-10 October 2011 outage.
4. During the event there were 301,478 attempts to view products from Mt Stapylton radar by users of the Bureau's web services. If no data output is received from the Mt Stapylton radar for 80 minutes, standard operating procedure is to automatically redirect user requests for radar data to the Marburg radar data.
- 5a. Information regarding the time, date, duration, and causes of each occasion that the Mt Stapylton radar was unavailable through the web service are given in **Table 1**. Note that the radar has delivered approximately 97 per cent of scheduled radar images over this period.

**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 2011

5b. The provision of information on if and when outages occurred during a forecast of severe weather or thunderstorm events is available, but is expected to take significant time and resources to collate. However, at no time on 8 October 2011 was the warning service at significant risk. The Bureau networks, including radars, are designed so that outages of single systems do not necessarily result in a disruption to the forecasting service. The Bureau's forecasting relies on data from a range of sources including satellites and conventional surface observing stations as well as other radars in the area. The Mt Staplyton and Marburg radars along with back up radars provide adequate coverage for Brisbane, so that the provision of thunderstorm and severe weather warnings can continue unaffected by individual outages.

**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 2011

Table 1. Mt Stapylton Radar Reported Outages – Duration and Date Confirmed

| OUTAGE START DATE | DURATION (hours) | TYPE OF OUTAGE |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 2006-09-25 | 55 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2006-10-07 | 78 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2006-10-23 | 12 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2006-11-10 | 2 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2006-12-05 | 11.9 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2006-12-20 | 24 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2007-02-09 | 1 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2007-04-08 | 87 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2007-04-13 | 2 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2007-04-15 | 24 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2007-04-16 | 38 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2007-04-18 | 5 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2007-04-22 | 31 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2007-05-27 | 19 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2007-07-04 | 6 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2007-08-03 | 60 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2007-08-18 | 19 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2007-08-24 | 8 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2007-09-24 | 38 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2007-10-31 | 1 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2007-11-05 | 6 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2007-12-07 | 9 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2008-01-26 | 68 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2008-02-14 | 4 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2008-02-25 | 8 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2008-03-12 | 2 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2008-04-04** | 96 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2008-04-09 | 2 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2008-04-11 | 5 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2008-07-04 | 64 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2008-07-07 | 5 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2008-10-21 | 3 | Communications. Services Failure |
| 2008-10-24 | 17 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2008-11-27 | 8 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2009-04-01 | 8 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2009-04-07 | 1 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2009-04-22 | 1 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2009-07-01 | 2 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2009-11-04** | 24 | Radar Equipment Failure |
| 2010-01-18 | 26 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2010-07-04 | 44 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2010-10-12 | 8 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2011-10-08 | 50 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2011-10-17 | 2 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2011-10-27 | 17 | Equipment Malfunction |
| 2011-10-29 | 17 | Equipment Malfunction |

** indicates these outages need further investigation as the radar archive has images for parts of these outages.

**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 2011

Program: Division or Agency: 1: BOM

Question No: 28

Topic: BOM Staffing

Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. Within The Bureau of Meteorology how many divisions are there and what are their names?
2. How many staff are there in each of these divisions?
3. Where is each division located and what are their staffing numbers?

Answer:

1. There are four divisions inside the Bureau of Meteorology: Climate and Water, Corporate, Services, and Research and Systems.
2. As of 30 June 2011, Climate and Water has 313 staff, Corporate has 277 staff, Services has 436 staff and Research and Systems has 748 staff.
3. The activities of the Corporate, Services and Research and Systems Divisions are focused in Melbourne, while the Climate and Water Division mainly operates from Canberra.

The total staff numbers (as at 30 June, 2011) for each region are as follows:

| | |
|---------|------|
| NSW/ACT | 229 |
| VIC | 1018 |
| QLD | 148 |
| SA | 82 |
| WA | 135 |
| TAS | 82 |
| NT | 80 |

**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 2011

Program: Division or Agency: 1: BOM

Question No: 29

Topic: BOM Accommodation

Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. How many office locations are there within The Bureau of Meteorology and where is each located?
2. What is the size of each of these offices and are they leased or owned?
3. If the office is rented, what is the amount and what is the breakdown of rent per square metre?
4. What is the value of the buildings owned and what is the depreciation of those buildings?

Answer:

1, 2 & 3:

| Meteorological Offices | Lease costs | Sq M | Price Per SqM |
|---------------------------------|---------------|--------|---------------|
| Adelaide Airport | \$ 147,358.17 | 19,059 | \$7.73 |
| Albany | \$ -* | 27,000 | \$0.00 |
| Alice Springs | \$ 100,435.33 | 29,242 | \$3.43 |
| Brisbane Airport | \$ 330,293.24 | 12,692 | \$26.02 |
| Broome Airport | \$ -* | 31,912 | \$0.00 |
| Cairns Airport | \$ 95,886.81 | 19,700 | \$4.87 |
| Canberra (Capital Jet Building) | \$ 79,849.68 | 208 | \$383.89 |
| Carnarvon Airport | \$ -* | 30,000 | \$0.00 |
| Ceduna | \$ -* | 3,020 | \$0.00 |
| Charleville Airport | \$ -* | 34,010 | \$0.00 |
| Cobar | Owned by BoM | 27,900 | \$0.00 |
| Cocos Islands | \$ -* | 33,450 | \$0.00 |
| Coffs Harbour | \$ 100.00 | 1,030 | \$0.10 |
| Darwin RAAF Base | \$ 146,185.47 | 38,300 | \$3.82 |
| East Sale | \$ 847.35 | 200 | \$4.24 |
| Esperance | Owned by BoM | 44,515 | \$0.00 |
| Eucla | Owned by BoM | 40,000 | \$0.00 |
| Geraldton | \$ -* | 29,800 | \$0.00 |
| Giles | \$ -* | 38,231 | \$0.00 |
| Gove Airport | \$ -* | 55,000 | \$0.00 |
| Halls Creek | \$ -* | 9,772 | \$0.00 |
| Hobart Airport | \$ 17,075.22 | 1,300 | \$13.13 |
| Kalgoorlie | \$ -* | 94,404 | \$0.00 |
| Launceston | \$ 37,250.52 | 132 | \$282.20 |

**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 2011

| | | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|------------------|---------------|
| Learmonth Airport | \$ 2,202.01 | 100 | \$22.02 |
| Longreach Airport | \$ -* | 40,000 | \$0.00 |
| Lord Howe Is | \$ 3,167.27 | 8,203 | \$0.39 |
| Mackay Harbour | Owned by BoM | 3,758 | \$0.00 |
| Meekatharra Aerodrome | \$ -* | 19,600 | \$0.00 |
| Mildura Airport | \$ 421.82 | 24,400 | \$0.02 |
| Moree | \$ 1,023.60 | 3,267 | \$0.31 |
| Mount Gambier | \$ -* | 5,358 | \$0.00 |
| Mount Isa Airport | \$ 16,266.61 | 40,000 | \$0.41 |
| Norfolk Island | \$ -* | 15,986 | \$0.00 |
| Perth Airport | \$ 19,157.70 | 4,405 | \$4.35 |
| Port Hedland | \$ 14,483.88 | 30,000 | \$0.48 |
| Rockhampton | \$ -* | 37,110 | \$0.00 |
| Sydney Airport | \$ 253,501.68 | 4,480 | \$56.59 |
| Tennant Creek | \$ 27,432.57 | 51,039 | \$0.54 |
| Townsville RAAF Base | \$ 1,327.51 | 40,000 | \$0.03 |
| Tullamarine Airport | \$ 72,006.60 | 8,551 | \$8.42 |
| Wagga Wagga | \$ -* | 9,016 | \$0.00 |
| Weipa | \$ 6,678.90 | 24,220 | \$0.28 |
| Williamstown RAAF Base | \$ -* | 4,500 | \$0.00 |
| Woomera Airport | \$ -* | 19,000 | \$0.00 |
| Willis Island | \$ -* | 77,000 | \$0.00 |
| Total | \$ 1,372,951.94 | 1,090,870 | \$1.26 |

* Sites leased free of charge or with \$1 per year "peppercorn" rental.

| Regional Offices | Lease costs | Sq M | Price Per SqM |
|-----------------------|------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Brisbane | \$ 856,945.04 | 1,410 | 607.76 |
| Canberra | \$ 582,258.73 | 1,568 | 371.34 |
| Darwin | \$ 384,563.84 | 1,160 | 331.52 |
| Hobart | \$ 483,894.00 | 1,420 | 340.77 |
| Adelaide | \$ 512,342.43 | 2,167 | 236.43 |
| Perth | \$ 544,741.79 | 1,918 | 284.02 |
| Sydney | \$ 1,177,048.29 | 2,595 | 453.64 |
| Melbourne | \$ 690,421.89 | 2,132 | 323.84 |
| Head Office/Melbourne | \$ 7,408,463.06 | 17,272 | 428.93 |
| Total | \$12,640,679.07 | 31,642 | 399.49 |

| Maintenance Centres | Lease costs | Sq M | Price Per SqM |
|---------------------|----------------------|--------------|----------------|
| Belmont | \$ 50,471.82 | 656 | 76.939 |
| Eagle Farm | \$ 124,370.46 | 503 | 247.257 |
| Hobart | \$ 48,384.00 | 448 | 108.000 |
| Leichhardt | \$ 63,294.00 | 437 | 144.838 |
| Tullamarine | \$ 32,806.55 | 413 | 79.435 |
| Winnellie | \$ 103,636.32 | 820 | 126.318 |
| Total | \$ 422,963.15 | 3,277 | 129.053 |

**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 2011

| Special Purpose | Lease costs | Sq M | Price Per SqM |
|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Broadmeadows | \$ 545,524.44 | 160,040 | 3.41 |
| Campbellfield Store | \$ 213,180.84 | 3,100 | 68.77 |
| Cape Grim | \$ -* | 488,000 | 0.00 |
| Learmonth Observatory | \$ -* | - | 0.00 |
| Total | \$ 758,705.28 | 651,140 | 1.17 |

* Sites leased free of charge or with \$1 per year “peppercorn” rental.

| Overall Statistics | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| Accommodated Sites | 66 |
| Lease Costs | \$15,195,299.44 |
| Sq M | 1,776,929 |
| Avg Per Sq M | \$ 8.55 |

4.

| Description – Owned Building | Depreciation \$AUD | Building Value \$AUD |
|------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Eucla – OBS/Radar Building | \$27,579 | \$680,700 |
| Esperance Met Office | \$33,650 | \$2,551,280 |
| Mackay – OBS/Radar Building | \$24,550 | \$1,664,700 |
| Cobar – OBS/Radar Building | \$18,008 | \$1,158,300 |

**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 2011

Program: Division or Agency: 1: BOM **Question No:** 30
Topic: BOM Expenditure
Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. Provide details on expenditure for 2010-11 for the Bureau of Meteorology on the following; advertising, travel (including breakdown: of business versus economy, domestic versus international), hospitality and entertainment, ICT, consultancy, education/training of staff, external accounting, external auditing, external legal and membership or grants paid to affiliate organisations?
2. Provide a further breakdown of the above expenditure for each division with the Bureau of Meteorology: advertising (\$mn), travel (including breakdown: of business versus economy, domestic versus international) (\$mn), hospitality and entertainment (\$mn), ICT (\$mn), consultancy (\$mn), education/training of staff (\$mn), external accounting (\$mn), external auditing (\$mn), external legal and membership or grants paid to affiliate organisations (\$mn)?
3. Within each divisional area, provide a further breakdown of expenditure under each Executive Manager: : advertising (\$mn), travel (including breakdown: of business versus economy, domestic versus international) (\$mn), hospitality and entertainment (\$mn), ICT (\$mn), consultancy (\$mn), education/training of staff (\$mn), external accounting (\$mn), external auditing (\$mn), external legal and membership or grants paid to affiliate organisations (\$mn)?
4. Please provide a breakdown over the forward estimates of each program or activity including: program title, program summary, is the program ongoing, lapsing, or terminating , breakdown of administered and departmental costs, program staffing numbers and location?

Answer:

1. Please see below.

Advertising

Media Advertising \$ 61,057

Travel

The total costs for travel related expenditure for the 2010-11 financial year are:

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 2011

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------------|
| Domestic Travel Allowance | \$4,499,268 |
| International Travel Allowance | \$ 916,668 |
| Passport & Visa Costs | \$ 1,850 |

| | |
|-------------------|-------------|
| Domestic Airfares | |
| Business | \$ 97,094 |
| Economy | \$2,046,665 |

| | |
|------------------------|------------|
| International Airfares | |
| Business | \$ 869 417 |
| Economy | \$ 581,015 |
| First Class | \$ 25,551 |

Hospitality and Entertainment

Costs for 2010-11 financial year were \$ 48,569.41 (GST Free)

ICT

Costs for the 2010-11 financial year were \$25,816,614.96 (GST Free)

Consultancy

Consultancy Services over \$10,000 or more let during 2010-11: \$3,059,859

Education/Training of staff \$1,146,095

External Accounting \$ Nil

External Auditing

Audit Fees for Annual Statements \$ 100,000

External Legal and Membership

Legal Advice \$ 486,213

**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 2011

Grants paid to affiliate organisations \$ Nil

2. Please see below.

Advertising

Media Advertising \$ 0.061M

| | | |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Corporate | Systems | Services |
| \$ 0.034M | \$ 0.026M | \$ 0.001M |

Travel

| | | | |
|--|-----------|------------|-----------------|
| Corporate | Systems | Services | Climate & Water |
| Domestic Travel Allowance \$ 1.087M | \$ 1.681M | \$ 1.125M | \$ 0.606M |
| International Travel Allowance \$ 0.196M | \$ 0.393M | \$ 0.117M | \$ 0.211M |
| Passport & Visa Costs \$ 0.0003M | \$ 0.001M | \$ 0.0002M | \$ 0.0003M |

Domestic Airfares & International Airfares cannot be broken down to a Divisional or sub-Divisional level.

Hospitality and Entertainment

Costs for 2010-11 financial year are \$ 48,569.41 (GST Free)

| | | | |
|-----------|----------|-----------|-----------------|
| Corporate | Systems | Services | Climate & Water |
| \$ 0.008M | \$ 0.02M | \$ 0.014M | \$ 0.024M |

ICT

Cannot be broken down to a Division or Sub-Divisional level.

Consultancy

Consultancy Services over \$10,000 or more let during 2010-11 were \$3,059,858. This figure cannot be broken down to a Divisional or sub-Divisional level.

| | | | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------------|
| Education/Training of staff | Corporate | Systems | Services | Climate & Water |
| | \$ 0.588M | \$ 0.174M | \$ 0.091M | \$ 0.293M |

**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 2011

External Auditing Corporate
Audit Fees for Annual Statements \$ 0.100M

External Legal and Membership Corporate Services
Legal Advice \$ 0.483M \$ 0.003M

Grants paid to affiliate organisations
Not applicable.

3. Please see below.

Advertising

Media Advertising \$ 0.061M

Corporate Systems Services
\$ 0.034M \$ 0.026M \$ 0.001M

Corporate Exec & International Finance & budgets People Management
\$ 0.027M \$ 0.004M \$ 0.003M

Systems Observations & Engineering Centre for Weather and Climate Research
\$ 0.011M \$ 0.015M

Services Services
\$ 0.001M

Travel Corporate Systems Services Climate & Water
1. Domestic Travel Allowance \$ 1.087M \$ 1.681M \$ 1.125M \$ 0.606M

**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 2011

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| <u>Corporate</u> | Exec & International \$ 0.139M | Finance & budgets \$ 0.026M | People Management \$ 0.907M | Corp Admin \$ 0.015M |
| <u>Systems</u> | Information Technologies \$ 0.096M | Observations & Engineering \$ 1.323M | Ionospheric Prediction \$ 0.027M | Centre for Weather and Climate Research \$ 0.235M |
| <u>Services</u> | Services \$ 0.015M | Ionospheric Prediction \$ 1.110M | | |
| <u>Climate & Water</u> | Climate Information Services \$ 0.150M | Climate & Water Data \$ 0.041M | Environmental information \$ 0.014M | C & W Information Technology \$ 0.018M |
| | Water Forecasting Services \$ 0.183M | Water Information Services \$ 0.102M | Climate & Water D/Director \$ 0.098M | |
| 2. International Travel Allowance | Corporate \$ 0.196M | Systems \$ 0.393M | Services \$ 0.117M | Climate & Water \$ 0.211M |
| <u>Corporate</u> | Exec & International \$ 0.192M | People Management \$ 0.004M | | |
| <u>Systems</u> | Information Technologies \$ 0.033M | Observations & Engineering \$ 0.054M | Ionospheric Prediction \$ 0.002M | Centre for Weather and Climate Research \$ 0.303M |
| <u>Services</u> | Services \$ 0.007M | Ionospheric Prediction \$ 0.109M | | |
| <u>Climate & Water</u> | Climate Information Services \$ 0.175M | Climate & Water Data \$ 0.011M | C & W Information Technology \$ 0.006M | |

**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 2011

Services

Services
\$ 0.014M

Climate & Water

Water Forecasting Services
\$ 0.001M

Climate & Water D/Director
\$ 0.002M

C & W Information Technology
\$ 0.021M

ICT

Cannot be broken down to a Division or Sub-Divisional level.

Consultancy

Consultancy Services over \$10,000 or more let during 2010-11 were \$3,059,858. This figure cannot be broken down to a Divisional or sub-Divisional level.

Education/Training of staff

Corporate

Exec & International
\$ 0.024M

Finance & budgets
\$ 0.046M

People Management
\$ 0.497M

D/Director Admin
\$ 0.021M

Systems

Information Technologies
\$ 0.029M

Observations & Engineering
\$ 0.047M

Ionospheric Prediction
\$ 0.003M

Centre for Weather and
Climate Research
\$ 0.095M

Services

Services
\$ 0.083M

Ionospheric Prediction
\$ 0.008M

Climate & Water

Climate Information Services
\$ 0.066M

Climate & Water Data
\$ 0.143M

Environmental information
\$ 0.0003M

C & W Information Technology
\$ 0.009M

Water Forecasting Services
\$ 0.008M

Water Information Services
\$ 0.005M

Climate & Water D/Director
\$ 0.062M

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 2011

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| External Auditing | Corporate (Finance & Budgets) | |
| Audit Fees for Annual Statements | \$ 0.100M | |
| External Legal and Membership | Corporate (People Management) | Services (Services) |
| Legal Advice | \$ 0.483M | \$ 0.003M |

Grants paid to affiliate organisations

Not applicable.

4. The Bureau of Meteorology does not budget to the program or activity level requested, hence, forward estimates for these items cannot be provided.

**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 2011

Program: Division or Agency: 1: BOM

Question No: 31

Topic: Hydrological monitoring

Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. Please provide an update on work being done on hydrological monitoring systems in the Murray-Darling Basin.
2. Is this program being terminated at the end of this financial year? What has been achieved?
3. Where are there gaps in data? What is being done to address these gaps?

Answer:

1. The Bureau administers a discretionary grants program - the Modernisation and Extension of Hydrologic Monitoring Systems Program (M&E Program). One of the objectives of this Program is to support projects to extend and modernise monitoring of water resources across Australia.

Round 5 of the M&E Program commenced in July 2011 and will finish in June 2012. The following monitoring projects have been funded in the Murray Darling Basin through the M&E Program and are currently underway.

| Recipient | Purpose | Value (GST inc.) | State |
|--|--|------------------|-------|
| ACTEW Corporation Ltd | 5ACT01.01 - Upper Murrumbidgee River Catchment Surface Water Measurement and Monitoring Improvement Project | \$242,000 | ACT |
| Department of Trade & Investment, Regional Infrastructure & Services | 5NSW07.04 - Improved measurement, logging and currency system for groundwater, stream flow and their interaction | \$95,700 | NSW |
| NSW Office of Water | 5NSW01.05 - Installation of sensors and telemetry for monitoring of surface water-groundwater interaction | \$349,800 | NSW |
| Department of Environment and Resource Management | 5QLD01.05 - Equipment purchase: Acoustic Doppler Current Profilers and underwater video systems | \$320,100 | QLD |
| Department for Water | 5SA05.05 - Improving the reliability of telemetry system | \$72,600 | SA |
| South Australian Murray-Darling Basin MRMB | 5SA13.02 - Reinstate the Willyaroo surface water monitoring site on the Angas River | \$25,960 | SA |
| Department of Sustainability and Environment | 5VIC13.01 - Monitoring instrumentation and infrastructure upgrade | \$64,130 | VIC |
| Department of Sustainability and Environment | 5VIC13.07 - Improving the quality of groundwater data and information | \$426,250 | VIC |
| Lower Murray Urban and Rural Water Corporation | 5VIC30.01 - Telemetry installation and transfer of data to the Bureau in water data transfer format | \$440,000 | VIC |

**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 2011

2. Yes, the final round of funding has been allocated for the 2011-12 year. The M&E Program is set to lapse in 2012, once acquittals have been completed.

The complete lists of projects funded over the five year life of the M&E Program are available on the Bureau website. Funding for each year is detailed (under the heading Funded projects):
<http://www.bom.gov.au/water/regulations/fundingProgram/index.shtml>

As part of the M&E Program, lead water agencies in each State and Territory (except ACT) have been funded to develop Strategic Water Information Monitoring Plans. These comprehensive reports include a section that discusses the achievements of the M&E Program in each state (see <http://www.bom.gov.au/water/regulations/fundingProgram/swimps.shtml>).

3. Strategic Water Information Monitoring Plans have been completed by each State and Territory (apart from the ACT). The plans include sections where gaps in the data are identified and priorities for future investment are listed.
(see <http://www.bom.gov.au/water/regulations/fundingProgram/swimps.shtml>).

**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 2011

Program: Division or Agency: 1: BOM

Question No: 32

Topic: Australian Sea Level
Monitoring Network

**Proof Hansard Page and Date
or Written Question:** Written

Senator Abetz asked:

1. Is the Bureau aware of the concerns voiced by Tonga's Director of Meteorology 'Ofa Fa'anunu that following the 7.6 undersea earthquake near the Kermadec Islands in early July that the Australian Sea Level Monitoring Network was 'out of order'?
2. What action has the Bureau taken to reassure the Tongan Government that any issues have been resolved?
3. Why was the Gauge out of order?
4. For how long was the Gauge out of order?
5. Were other countries in the region, who rely on the gauge, notified of it being out of order?
 - a. If so, which counties and when?

Answer:

1. Yes, the Bureau of Meteorology (the Bureau) is aware of the concerns voiced by Tonga's Director of Meteorology relating to the Tonga tide gauge. The Tongan gauge is not part of the Australian Sea Level Monitoring Network. However, data from the gauge is received by the Bureau and transmitted to several agencies and updated on registered web sites as part of Australia's tsunami warning services.

2. The Bureau contacted Tonga's Director of Meteorology and reassured him that the tide gauge was fully operational throughout the tsunami event, and data was being received by the Bureau and supplied to the registered webpage provided for the Tonga Meteorological Service.

The Director of the Tonga Meteorological Service has acknowledged that the gauge was working.

3. The tide gauge was not out of order and was fully operational throughout the tsunami event.
4. Please refer to Question 3.
5. The gauge was not out of order, and therefore no notification to countries in the region was required.
 - 5a. Please refer to Question 5.

**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 2011

Program: Division or Agency: 1: BOM **Question No:** 33

Topic: National Plan for
Environmental Information

**Proof Hansard Page and Date
or Written Question:** Written

Senator Waters asked:

1. Of all the environmental information collected / coordinated through this process, is the intention to have it all centrally in one place, for ease of access? What if any of the information collated will not also be made publicly available?
2. What are the main challenges encountered so far in developing the NEIP in coordinating the collection and collation of data from state, territory and local governments, and the private sector?
3. And in relation to the challenges identified in response to (2) what steps is the Commonwealth taking to draw this all together?

Answer:

1. As a general principle it is not intended to centralise data as part of the National Plan for Environmental Information (NPEI) initiative. Rather, the NPEI aims to significantly improve the discoverability of and access to environmental data and information by working with data custodians and providers. This will be achieved by:

- creating on-line environmental catalogues that can be interlinked;
- enhancing accessibility and use of key Australian Government capabilities such as, the Atlas of Living Australia, Australian Natural Resources Data Library, Australian National Data Service, and data.gov.au; and
- developing and implementing enabling information technologies based on agreed industry standards across Australian Government key environmental data providers.

We have not yet identified any environmental data or information that cannot be made publicly available. However, we would expect some environmental information that includes the precise location of rare and threatened species or significant places (cultural and heritage) may not be released publicly. Similarly environmental information that identifies individuals would not be released in accordance with privacy laws.

2. The main challenges are:

Understanding environmental data needs:

The most significant challenge faced to date is identifying environmental data needs across the diverse portfolios of the Commonwealth Government.

Effective coordination:

Effective coordination across the Commonwealth Government in terms of access to environmental information is a key outcome for the NPEI initiative. Understanding how well environmental data needs are being met and sourced is key to improving efficiency and access.

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
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Identifying dependencies:

Dependencies on state, territory and local governments, or the private sector for environmental data will be identified as part of the NPEI and pathways defined to support priority environmental information needs for the Commonwealth Government.

Enabling standards:

Challenges already faced in the development of the national urban air quality database include:

- Data supplied do not conform to the agreed National Environmental Protection Measures (NEPM) technical standard;
- Data collected at different frequency and different geographic detail; and
- Data licensing arrangements limit the ability to share or use the data for purposes other than State of the Air Reporting.

3. Understanding environmental data needs:

The Bureau of Meteorology (the Bureau) is defining environmental information needs by finalising a *Statement of Australian Government Priorities for Environmental Information*. This statement provides direction on where the NPEI should focus effort. Similar environmental information needs assessments would be provided by other jurisdictions, and this provides a template for such assessments. It will also become a key design document for the NPEI. The Bureau will define a 'top tier' of environmental information products and test them with end users.

Effective coordination:

The Bureau has established the Australian Government Environmental Information Advisory Group to provide strategic advice and identify whole-of-government priorities for environmental information. The Statement provides a catalyst for improved collaboration and cooperation across the Commonwealth Government where environmental information needs are shared. The Bureau is responsible for establishing cross-portfolio working groups to progress the specific areas of policy to specify the environmental information needs in detail.

Identifying dependencies:

An independent review of environmental information activity (due to start in November 2011) will identify dependencies and opportunities for improved coordination and cooperation with state, territory and local governments, and potentially the private sector. Also, the Standing Council on Environment and Water (comprised of Ministers from various jurisdictions) agreed on five priority topics for discussion and work.

Enabling standards:

The Bureau has established a water data transfer format that now serves as a standard for the water sector to use to exchange water data. Where standards are enabling the NPEI, the NPEI will also adopt, adapt or develop them in partnership with the end user and data provider community. NPEI will also leverage the experience of the Bureau in using standardised approaches to sourcing data from industry and individuals.