

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts Committee

Answers to questions on notice

Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio

Additional Estimates, February 2009

Outcome:	1	Question No:	2
Output:	1.2		
Division/Agency:	Land and Coasts Division		
Topic:	Caring for our Country - regional funding		
Hansard Page ECA:	67 (24/02/09)		

Senator Siewert asked:

Ms Rankin—Yes. We have advised regions, I think in the last week, of all of their guaranteed regional allocation for the next four years. So each region knows exactly what guaranteed baseline funding they will receive from Caring for our Country over the remaining years of the Caring for our Country program.

Senator SIEWERT—Can you tell us what that is and how it was decided?

Ms Rankin—Do you want me to go through all 56 regions?

Senator SIEWERT—I appreciate that I am not going to take up the limited amount of time we have with you going through each one. Is it possible for that list to be tabled?

Ms Rankin—It is, yes.

Answer:

A table of the guaranteed baseline funding for each regional body is shown at [Attachment A](#). This table also provides:

- A comparison between the average annual historic allocation to each region and their guaranteed allocation for the years 2009-13; and
- A comparison of the proportion of funding historically provided to regions in each state and territory compared to the proportion to be received in guaranteed baseline funding.

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ATTACHMENT A

Regions by jurisdiction	Average annual historical funding (NHT & NAP)	Caring for our Country Regional allocations 2008-09	Caring for our Country Regional annual allocations 2009-13	Annual allocation 2009-13 vs Average annual historical
New South Wales				
Border Rivers Gwydir	\$3,200,000	\$2,460,000	\$2,120,000	66.30%
Central West	\$4,370,000	\$3,240,000	\$2,943,000	67.30%
Hawkesbury-Nepean	\$4,350,000	\$3,370,000	\$2,917,000	67.10%
Hunter Central Rivers	\$5,170,000	\$3,810,000	\$3,354,000	64.90%
Lachlan	\$4,500,000	\$3,370,000	\$2,804,000	62.30%
Lower Murray Darling	\$2,490,000	\$2,110,000	\$1,843,000	74.00%
Murray	\$6,210,000	\$4,300,000	\$4,015,000	64.70%
Murrumbidgee	\$6,460,000	\$4,530,000	\$4,115,000	63.70%
Namoi	\$3,090,000	\$2,580,000	\$1,659,000	53.70%
Northern Rivers	\$5,830,000	\$4,410,000	\$3,410,000	58.50%
Southern Rivers	\$4,750,000	\$3,680,000	\$2,839,000	59.80%
Sydney Metro	\$1,210,000	\$750,000	\$764,000	63.10%
Western	\$3,070,000	\$2,400,000	\$2,468,000	80.40%
Total	\$54,700,000	\$41,010,000	\$35,251,000	64.44%
Queensland				
Burdekin	\$3,510,000	\$2,670,000	\$1,843,000	52.50%
Burnett Mary	\$3,330,000	\$2,050,000	\$2,028,000	60.90%
Cape York	\$1,930,000	\$1,660,000	\$1,530,000	79.30%
Condamine	\$2,530,000	\$1,980,000	\$1,982,000	78.30%
Desert Channels	\$1,870,000	\$1,600,000	\$1,543,000	82.50%
Fitzroy Basin	\$4,300,000	\$2,860,000	\$2,304,000	53.60%
Mackay Whitsunday	\$1,890,000	\$1,150,000	\$1,033,000	54.70%
Northern Gulf	\$1,510,000	\$1,310,000	\$1,171,000	77.50%
QMDC (Border Rivers & Maranoa-Balonne)	\$3,450,000	\$2,640,000	\$2,489,000	72.10%
South East Qld	\$3,450,000	\$2,640,000	\$2,304,000	66.80%
South West	\$1,730,000	\$1,500,000	\$1,390,000	80.30%
Southern Gulf	\$1,510,000	\$1,310,000	\$1,122,000	74.30%
Torres Strait	\$920,000	\$940,000	\$822,000	89.30%
Wet Tropics/FNQ/Terrain	\$2,370,000	\$1,450,000	\$1,459,000	61.60%
Total	\$34,300,000	\$25,760,000	\$23,020,000	67.11%
South Australia				
Adelaide + Mt Lofty Ranges	\$3,700,000	\$2,280,000	\$2,209,000	59.70%
Alintjara Wiluara	\$2,200,000	\$1,990,000	\$1,751,000	79.60%
Eyre Peninsula	\$2,300,000	\$2,070,000	\$1,843,000	80.10%

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Kangaroo Island	\$1,300,000	\$1,450,000	\$1,187,000	91.30%
Northern & Yorke	\$2,000,000	\$1,698,000	\$1,567,000	78.40%
SA Murray Darling Basin	\$8,300,000	\$5,080,000	\$4,741,000	57.10%
South Australian Aridlands	\$2,000,000	\$1,800,000	\$1,659,000	83.00%
South East	\$3,500,000	\$2,612,000	\$2,389,000	68.30%
Total	\$25,300,000	\$18,980,000	\$17,346,000	68.56%
Tasmania				
Cradle Coast	\$2,300,000	\$2,060,000	\$1,843,000	80.10%
NRM North	\$2,200,000	\$1,970,000	\$2,028,000	92.20%
NRM South	\$2,000,000	\$1,800,000	\$1,843,000	92.20%
Total	\$6,500,000	\$5,830,000	\$5,714,000	87.91%
Victoria				
Corangamite	\$4,600,000	\$3,050,000	\$2,765,000	60.10%
East Gippsland	\$2,600,000	\$2,350,000	\$2,335,000	89.80%
Glenelg Hopkins	\$5,000,000	\$3,250,000	\$2,541,000	50.80%
Goulburn Broken	\$7,000,000	\$4,450,000	\$3,993,000	57.00%
Mallee	\$4,400,000	\$3,525,000	\$2,724,000	61.90%
North Central	\$5,700,000	\$3,650,000	\$3,484,000	61.10%
North East	\$2,900,000	\$2,610,000	\$1,843,000	63.60%
Port Phillip & Westernport	\$3,500,000	\$3,150,000	\$2,996,000	85.60%
West Gippsland	\$3,400,000	\$3,060,000	\$2,535,000	74.60%
Wimmera	\$4,100,000	\$3,280,000	\$2,304,000	56.20%
Total	\$43,200,000	\$32,375,000	\$27,520,000	63.70%
Western Australia				
Avon	\$6,900,000	\$4,609,000	\$3,926,000	56.90%
Northern Agricultural	\$6,900,000	\$4,599,000	\$3,915,000	56.70%
Rangelands	\$4,900,000	\$4,410,000	\$3,963,000	80.90%
South West	\$9,700,000	\$5,921,000	\$5,282,000	54.50%
South Coast	\$8,500,000	\$6,651,000	\$4,713,000	55.40%
Swan	\$3,600,000	\$3,230,000	\$2,304,000	64.00%
Total	\$40,500,000	\$29,420,000	\$24,103,000	59.51%
Northern Territory				
Northern Territory	\$6,000,000	\$4,427,000	\$3,687,000	61.50%
Australian Capital Territory				
Australian Capital Territory	\$1,500,000	\$1,350,000	\$1,359,000	90.60%
	\$212,000,000		\$138,000,000	

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Outcome:	1	Question No:	3
Output:	1.2		
Division/Agency:	Land and Coasts Division		
Topic:	Caring for our Country – regional funding		
Hansard Page ECA:	67 (24/02/09)		

Senator Siewert asked:

Senator SIEWERT — Was there a minimum baseline that everybody received?

Ms Rankin — The final decision was that no region would receive less than 50 per cent of its historical average allocation and no region would receive more than 100 per cent of its historic average allocation. So all of the regions have been guaranteed an allocation somewhere within the range of 50 to 100 per cent of their historic average.

Senator SIEWERT — How is that information presented in the table that you can provide us with? Can we see from that table which areas or regions have decreased their funding or stayed the same?

Ms Rankin — We can provide that information in whatever way you would like it. We could provide you with the historic average allocation by region and their guaranteed regional allocation.

Answer:

Please see the response to Question on Notice No.2.

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Outcome:	1	Question No:	4
Output:	1.2		
Division/Agency:	Land and Coasts Division		
Topic:	Caring for our Country – forward allocations		
Hansard Page ECA:	70 (24/02/09)		

Senator Siewert asked:

Senator SIEWERT—Have you set a percentage on the amount of forward allocations you are making?

Ms Rankin—... I would have to confirm and get back to you with the specific details, but it is a guideline only.

Answer/s:

Under the Caring for our Country business plan for 2009-2010, the Australian Government will commit approximately:

- 100 per cent of business plan funding for the 2009-10 financial year
- 40 per cent of business plan funding for the 2010-11 financial year
- 30 per cent of business plan funding for the 2011-12 financial year
- 10 per cent of business plan funding for the 2012-13 financial year.

These proposed commitments are indicative only and are being used as a guide.

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Outcome:	1	Question No:	5
Output:	1.2		
Division/Agency:	Land and Coasts Division		
Topic:	Caring for Country – assessment panel		
Hansard Page ECA:	71 (24/02/09)		

Senator Siewert asked:

Senator SIEWERT - We started talking about the different assessment panels. Rather than going through the detail now, would you be able to provide us with a list or some sort of schematic or whatever of how you intend to carry out the assessment process with the different themes and then how that will be assessed? Is that possible?

Ms Rankin—I can do that, yes.

Senator SIEWERT—I am conscious of the time.

Ms Rankin—I will not be able to give you names of panel members at this point, because we are still going through that.

Senator SIEWERT—Maybe how you are going to select those panel members would be useful, if you have decided that.

Answer/s:

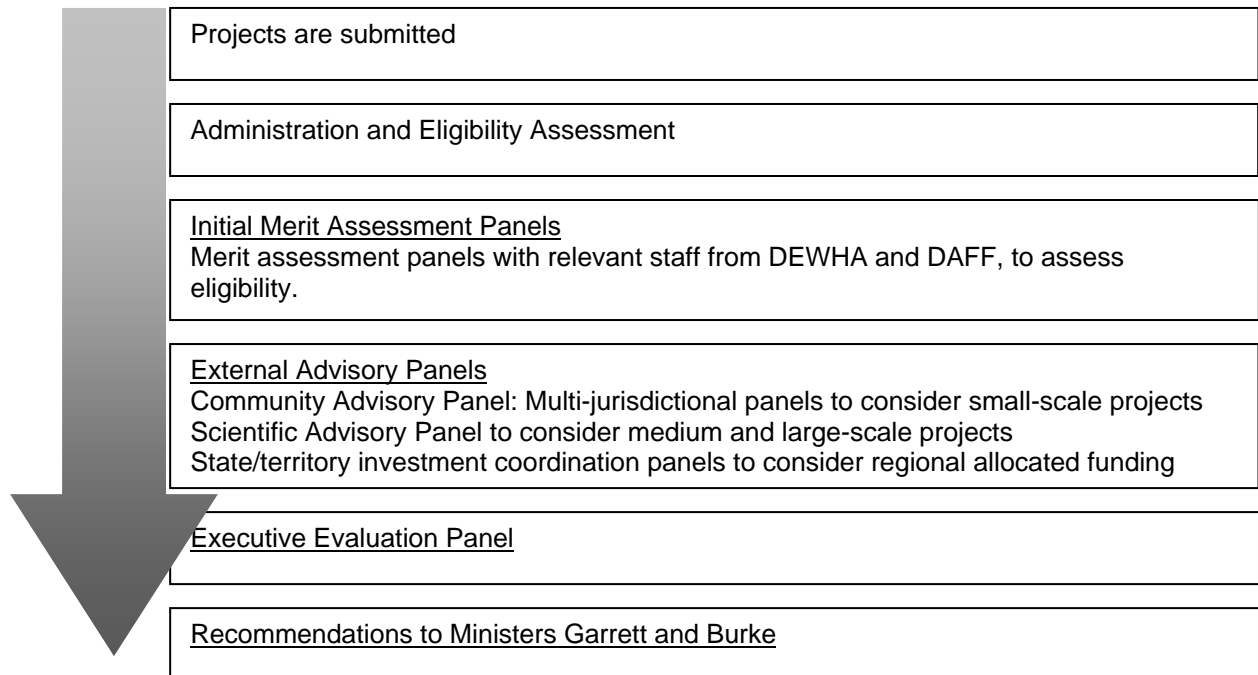
Proposals for funding under the Caring for our Country 2009-10 business plan close on 3 April 2009. The proposals will be subject to an assessment process based on eligibility and merit using a combination of Internal Merit Assessment Panels, External Advisory Panels, and an Executive Evaluation Panel (refer to figure below). All panel members will be selected based on their expertise and experience. The combined skill, expertise and experience of the panel members will ensure that all applications will be assessed in an informed, fair, transparent and repeatable manner.

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The Internal Merit Assessment Panels will consider all proposals (small, medium and large-scale) against the assessment criteria outlined on page 38 of the 2009-10 business plan.

The assessment criteria include:

- Demonstrated contributions to at least one of the Caring for our Country targets
- Best available science
- Public benefit
- Value for money
- Delivery risk

The External Advisory Panel members will be selected based on their experience, skills and expertise across the Caring for our Country national priority areas. The selection of Community Advisory Panel members will also take into consideration their knowledge of environment and natural resource management issues in their jurisdiction. The Scientific Advisory Panel will be selected based on their qualifications, skills and experience across the Caring for our Country national priority areas.

The final phase of the assessment process will be conducted by the Executive Evaluation Panel, consisting of members from the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) who have responsibility for the implementation of Caring for our Country.

Final recommendations will take into account the delivery of the targets and ultimately the five year outcomes, the notional budget allocations for each priority area, the likelihood of being able to make a significant difference and the delivery capability of the proponent. Final decisions regarding allocation of funding will be made by Ministers Garrett and Burke.

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Outcome:	1	Question No:	6
Output:	1.2		
Division/Agency:	Land and Coasts Division		
Topic:	Biodiversity		
Hansard Page ECA:	Written question on notice		

Senator Siewert asked:

1. Noting Chapter 7 of Australia's National Strategy for the Conservation of Australia's Biological Diversity. How much did the Commonwealth invest in implementing the requirement for the Commonwealth to review all appropriations bills and spending relevant to implementing the policy?
2. Can the government give details of how, since the Strategy was finalised in 1996, this requirement has been incorporated into spending programs?
3. a) Since the Strategy was finalised in 1996, how much has been invested in tracking progress against the strategy, especially in monitoring and reporting outcomes relating to chapter 2 Integrating Biological Diversity Conservation and Natural Resource Management?
b) Do forward estimates include funding for reviewing the effectiveness of the government's implementation of this part of strategy, especially considering the current re-writing of the national strategy that is underway?

Answer/s:

1 & 2. There is no requirement in chapter 7 of the National Strategy for the Conservation of Australia's Biological Diversity for the Commonwealth to review all appropriations bills.

Action 7.4.1, titled 'Government appropriations', states: "Governments will review funding and administration of existing programs that relate to the conservation of biological diversity to identify the potential for reallocation of resources for improved efficiencies and the need for increased funds to ensure implementation of the Strategy."

This requirement applies to all state and territory governments and the Australian Government.

The National Biodiversity Strategy is an overarching national policy document that applies to all Australian governments, and to the community, business and scientific sectors. The Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council is responsible for its oversight. Auditing and review of government programs is specific to the program in question.

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The Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts expenditure on biodiversity is made publicly available through its budget statements and annual reports. Expenditure on biodiversity conservation is a significant part of the Department budget each year.

Since coming to office, the Australian Government has reviewed existing programs relating to natural resource management and the conservation of biological diversity, and has established the more than \$2 billion Caring for our Country initiative.

3.a) There is no national mechanism for tracking investment across jurisdictions. Each jurisdiction reports through its annual budget processes on its allocations for programs related to biodiversity conservation.

b) Not at the present time.

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Outcome:	1	Question No:	7
Output:	1.2		
Division/Agency:	Land and Coasts Division		
Topic:	Caring for our Country		
Hansard Page ECA:	Written question on notice		

Senator Brown asked:

1. The Caring for Country budget for Tasmania's World Heritage area in 2008–09 is \$3.4 million. How much of this budget is allocated to management of land by Indigenous groups?
2. The Caring for Country budget for Indigenous Protected Areas for 2008–13 is \$21.65 million. How much of this budget is allocated to Tasmania? How much of the Tasmanian allocation is managed by Indigenous groups?

Answer/s:

1. None of the \$3.4 million Caring for our Country budget for Tasmania's World Heritage Area is directly allocated by the Australian Government to management of land by Indigenous groups.
2. \$2,370,000 has been allocated through the Indigenous Protected Areas element of the Caring for Country initiative to Declared Indigenous Protected Areas in Tasmania for 2008-13. In addition, \$152,000 was allocated to the Three Islands Indigenous Protected Areas Consultation Project for 2008-09, bringing the total funds allocated to Tasmanian Indigenous organisations to date to \$2.522 million. Indigenous Protected Area Consultation Projects are allocated funds on an annual basis.

All Indigenous Protected Area project funds are allocated to, and managed by Indigenous organisations.

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Outcome: 1 **Question No:** 8
Output: 1.2
Division/Agency: Land and Coasts Division
Topic: Natural Heritage Trust (NHT),
National Landcare program,
Environmental Stewardship program,
Working on Country program.

Hansard Page ECA: Written question on notice

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. How much funding will be available this year under each of these programs?
2. When will funding rounds be opening?
3. What will be the eligibility requirements for this funding?

Answers:

Caring for our Country integrates delivery of the Australian Government's previous natural resource management programs including the Natural Heritage Trust, the National Landcare Program, the Environmental Stewardship Program and the Working on Country Indigenous land and sea ranger program.

A table which summarises the requested information is at [Attachment A](#)

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Attachment A

Program	Funding Available 08/09	Funding Rounds 08/09	Eligibility Requirements
NHT	08-09 funding available \$346.5 million.	All funding rounds complete. No further funding available 08/09.	To be eligible for Caring for our Country funding proposals must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ be from a legal entity ▪ clearly identify how they will contribute to Caring for our Country targets ▪ have or be able to obtain, before agreed commencement, all necessary planning, regulatory or other approvals ▪ have no overdue reports or acquittals from previous Australian Government funding (this includes the project itself, and any partners involved in the project) ▪ be agreed to by the head of the lead partner organisation and key partner organisations (eg CEO of company, president of the community group, chief executive of government department).
National Landcare Program	08-09 funding available \$31.233 million.	All funding rounds complete. No further funding available 08/09.	As above
Environmental Stewardship	08-09 funding available \$5.305 million.	No further funding available 08/09.	Those eligible for participation in Environmental Stewardship projects must own or manage freehold, leasehold or native title land which has priority environmental assets that have been identified under a specific call for expressions of interest. Each project implemented by Environmental Stewardship will specify additional criteria such as the type, location, condition and size of the environmental asset in a call for expressions particular to that

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Clearing Officer: Mary Colreavy

AS CMS Sig: Date
FAS PCD Sig: Date
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			project. Success in obtaining a contract will be determined through a tender process and/or other market-based mechanisms.
Working on Country	08-09 funding available \$7.811 million.	No further funding available 08/09 for new projects.	To be eligible for Working on Country project funds the applicant must: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ be from a legal entity▪ have sufficient management capacity to administer an ongoing project which employs Indigenous rangers to undertake land/sea and/or heritage activities under an agreed work schedule▪ identify how they will contribute to Caring for our Country targets▪ hold tenure to the land▪ have an environment management plan▪ have or be able to obtain, before agreed commencement, all necessary planning, regulatory or other approvals▪ have no overdue reports or acquittals from previous Australian Government funding, ..

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Outcome:	1	Question No:	9
Output:	1.2		
Division/Agency:	Land and Coasts Division		
Topic:	Caring for our Country, Landcare - Funding		
Hansard Page ECA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. How much funding will be available this year under Caring for our Country Community Coastcare?
2. How much funding will be available this year under Caring for our Country Open Grants?
3. Will any Green Corps places be cut?
4. How much funding will be available this year for Landcare groups?
5. Have there been any complaints or concerns about this funding from any of the groups involved?

Answers:

1. \$22 million has been allocated to Community Coastcare in 2008-09.
2. Open Grants investments totalling \$28.96 million were approved by Ministers in November 2008.
3. The Green Corps program is administered by the Education, Employment and Workplace Relations portfolio.
4. In 2008-09, over \$220 million has been available to landcare groups through competitive processes with other community groups and organisations through a range of processes, including Open Grants, Landcare Sustainable Practice Grants, Coastcare Grants, and regional allocations. These processes included opportunities to submit proposals directly to access funding, and forming partnerships with regional natural resource management organisations to deliver projects under the secure base-level funding component provided to these organisations.
5. In relation to Caring for our Country funding there have been concerns expressed about:
 - the reduction in guaranteed funding for regional Natural Resources Management (NRM) Groups;
 - potential difficulties for small community groups to access dollars from the business plan or through their regional body;
 - perceived reductions in levels of funding for particular activities which largely seem to have been caused by misinformation. For example, landcare funding has not been cut, landcare funding under Caring for our Country is commensurate with that provided under previous natural resource management funding programs.

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Outcome:	1	Question No:	10
Output:	1.2		
Division/Agency:	Land and Coasts Division		
Topic:	Caring for Country - farmers		
Hansard Page ECA:	Written question on notice		

Senator Birmingham asked:

The budget under Caring for our Country for the target of increasing the number of farmers to 42,000 is \$40m over 4 years – this equates out to about \$250/farmer/year.

1. How does the Department suggest the \$250 is spent to ensure the farmers adapt and become sustainable?
2. Does the Department envisage a group of farmers pooling the resources and then using these as a point of reference for other farmers?

Answers:

As stated in *Caring for our Country Outcomes 2008-2013*, the strategies and investments delivered under Caring for our Country will frequently contribute to multiple outcomes across different priority areas. It is expected that investments that contribute to the targets in each of the six Caring for our Country national priority areas will all contribute to the target of assisting farmers adopt sustainable farm practices. A variety of mechanisms will be used to deliver sustainable farm practices and other Caring for our Country targets. This includes collective activities, which may involve farmers pooling resources and sharing information with other farmers.

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Outcome:	1	Question No:	52
Output:	1.2		
Division/Agency:	Approval and Wildlife Division		
Topic:	Cocos (Keeling) Islands – Pulu Keeling		
Hansard Page ECA:	25 (24/02/09)		

Senator Scullion asked:

Senator SCULLION—I have some questions principally in relation to part of my electorate in Cocos Keeling, Pulu Keeling, the park and the management plan and issues associated with that. As you would be well aware, there is a degree of community concern about the exact position of the reference. I am not sure—I have to use the right terminology—but the Environment, Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 has a whole range of steps, so whether it is referred or a public inquiry, where are we up to with it? Could you provide a report on where we are up to now, what is the next stage and perhaps provide some indications of the timing about when decisions associated with that process will in fact be made? I think that is the EPBC Act reference 2002/844 proposal. I am not sure whether that is absolutely correct, but that is the indication of the actual application.

Mr Early—I could provide more detail on notice if what I am about to say is not quite correct, but my understanding is that the referral required some consideration by the community, and they were to come back with some advice to the department. I do not think that has actually happened. I think the action is with the community to determine precisely what it is they want and how they want to achieve it. If that is not the case, I will clarify that on notice.

Senator SCULLION—Perhaps you would take on notice, because I am sure the information is at hand or behind you, the exact information that is required of the community to provide? ... perhaps you can help me with this, that it was back to the community to see what they thought about something. If that area is seeking their advice on numbers, times or specifics of the management, I would understand that. But given the general theme has not changed—and I note there is a fair bit of action behind there, Mr Early—perhaps you could provide me with the nature of the overall framework of the sorts of issues that the community now has to provide?

Answer/s:

- 1 The Cocos Congress Incorporated lodged a referral under the *Environment, Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* on behalf of the Cocos-Malay community on 23 October 2002. The proposed action was determined to be a controlled action under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* on 26 November 2002. At that time the Cocos Congress was asked to provide preliminary information on the proposal.

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- 2 The department has sought clarification on the preliminary information provided by Cocos Congress Incorporated on 5 July 2007.
- 3 The information required by the department concerns issues such as how the Congress would establish, manage and monitor the birds to be taken consistent with the proposed annual quota, as well as methods for harvesting the birds safely and humanely.

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Outcome:	1	Question No:	53
Output:	1.2		
Division/Agency:	Approval and Wildlife Division		
Topic:	Cocos (Keeling) Islands – Red footed booby, <i>Sula sula</i>		
Hansard Page ECA:	26 (24/02/09)		

Senator Scullion asked:

Senator SCULLION—I am happy to table the letter, but it states in part, ‘As the Cocos Congress,’ who own the island and lease it to the director ‘has expressed its concern that the matter of community management plan for the harvesting of red-footed boobies, *Sula sula*, in the Cocos (Keeling) Islands has dragged on for some time, at the Cocos Congress meeting held on 31 July 2007, it was decided not to proceed with either the community restoration of habitat on the southern atoll on Cocos (Keeling) Islands or the hand-raising of seabird chicks at this stage.’

...

My question is: where are we up to with this process? What I need to be convinced of is not only that you are not dragging your feet, but I want to know that you have not made a fundamental decision that Environment Australia has simply decided that that is not going to happen. I think the people on Cocos deserve to have that answer rather than the frustration of continual meetings. I understand that you are still trying to get some detail, but I thought I would provide the background, and perhaps for the benefit of others on the committee, the reasons and the motive for my line of questioning.

Mr Early—I am afraid we will need to take some of that on notice, but in answer to the second part of your question, I can assure you that there has been no decision from the department or the minister that says that this proposal cannot go ahead. Having said that, I am not quite sure what stage we are at, so I will have to take that on notice.

Senator SCULLION—I had assumed that your officers would have had something to hand. I am not pressing you on this, but perhaps you can give me an understanding in terms of timing. On notice, I would not have thought it would have been too difficult, that the information would be available today. I think it is important.

Mr Early—We will try to get it today.

...

Senator SCULLION—Would you be able to provide me with the numbers of surveys that have been conducted, say, in the last five years, in addition to those things on notice, and provide me also on notice—I expect that you do not have it here, in view of the fact that more substantive answers are not available—with the results of those surveys? Would you be able to provide me with the sort of formulaic structure of a sustainable use plan? I assume that you are getting this baseline data, and from that baseline data you will then use some sort of a formula to establish whether you have ‘some take’ or ‘no take’ based on whatever the numbers are. Can you take those questions on notice?

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts

Answers to questions on notice

Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio

Additional Estimates, February 2009

Mr Early—Yes.

Senator SCULLION—Perhaps you would be able to tell me directly what sort of a framework, in terms of access, has been planned by the department when you have finalised the results of the surveys?

Mr Early—I can provide all of that information on notice.

Answer/s:

- 1 See responses to Questions on Notice 52 and 191.
- 2 Several surveys of nest sites may be undertaken each year, over defined transects, depending on the weather. The numbers of nests counted between 2001 to 2008, primarily during August, were as follows: 1814 (2001), 1214 (2002), 1315 (2003), 1184 (2004) 788 (2005), 1903 (2006), 1831(2007) and 1549 (2008).
- 3 The party responsible for taking the action, that is the Cocos Congress Incorporated, is responsible for developing a sustainable use plan under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

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Additional Estimates, February 2009

Outcome:	1	Question No:	56
Output:	1.2		
Division/Agency:	Approvals and Wildlife Division		
Topic:	Christmas Island – mining issue		
Hansard Page ECA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator Siewart asked:

Senator SIEWERT—What is the time frame then for the department to decide whether it is new information?

Mr Burnett—I am not sure that there is a time frame. The court set aside the previous minister's final decision, but not all the preliminary stages, so it goes back into that end stage. I am not sure as a matter of legal interpretation whether the standard decision making time frame applies or not.

Senator SIEWERT—Could you maybe take that on notice? I am obviously keen to find out what the process is from here, how you decide what a significant change is, how the community finds out what is going on and how the minister makes a decision. It seems to me that there is a potential that the community can get cut out of making any comment here on what could potentially be a significant decision by the minister, if the minister overturns the previous minister's advice.

Mr Burnett—We will take it on notice, but as Mr Early said, we are talking about if there is any significant new information.

...

Senator SIEWERT—Could you take on notice the actual steps and the time line, because I understand from your answers that you cannot tell me at the moment.

Answer:

Phosphate Resources Limited was asked to provide a submission to progress the assessment process under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999* by 31 March 2009 and provided its submission on 1 April 2009. As the previous decision to refuse approval of the proposal was set aside by the Federal Court, there is no statutory time frame for a decision on whether the expected submission is considered to be new information.

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Outcome:	1	Question No:	150
Output:	1.2		
Division/Agency:	Land and Coasts Division		
Topic:	Catchment Management Authorities - Staffing		
Hansard Page ECA:	Written question on notice		

Senator Birmingham asked:

Will there be any job losses at any Catchment Management Authorities? If so, where and when?

Answer:

Employment decisions are a matter for the Catchment Management Authorities and other regional Natural Resource Management (NRM) organisations. The level of funding provided overall through Caring for our Country will support similar sized programs and projects to those supported under previous Australian Government NRM programs. The Australian Government is not the only source of funds used to employ regional staff. Most regional NRM organisations receive significant resources from state and territory governments as well as from private corporations and philanthropic bodies. Levels of contributions from all sources can expect to vary over time and will impact on local staffing levels.