

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts  
Legislation Committee**

Answers to questions on notice

**Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio**

Additional Estimates, February 2010

<b>Outcome:</b>	1	<b>Question No:</b>	28
<b>Program:</b>	1.1		
<b>Division/Agency:</b>	Australian Government Land and Coasts Division		
<b>Topic:</b>	National Reserve System – NRM Groups		
<b>Hansard Page ECA:</b>	34 (9/2/10)		

**Senator SIEWERT asked:**

**Mr Cochrane**—My team, which manages the NRS component of it, is not involved directly with whatever the NRM regions do on NRS. We manage the direct acquisitions program and the applications that come to us via the states, the major NGOs and, more recently, local governments and groups of local governments which have taken a keen interest in contributing to the NRS. Eventually, if projects that NRM regions come up with to add areas to the NRS come to fruition and become declared parks, then we will add them, obviously, to the National Reserve System in an accounting sense, but we deal generally with the acquisitions by third parties.

**Senator SIEWERT**—I will ask later on, but why do those projects not go to you? If you are assessing the other projects and this is NRS money—and \$3.059 million is not an insubstantial amount of money—why is that not assessed as part of your process?

**Mr Cochrane**—Can I take that on notice or talk to the NRM groups? I know that if anything is to be added to the NRS, then we will be asked about our evaluation against the NRS criteria.

**Answer:**

Senator Siewert's question was subsequently answered by Ms Mary Colreavy on 9 February 2010 (see Hansard pages ECA 67-68).

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts  
Legislation Committee**

Answers to questions on notice

**Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio**

Additional Estimates, February 2010

<b>Outcome:</b>	1	<b>Question No:</b>	29
<b>Program:</b>	1.1		
<b>Division/Agency:</b>	Parks Australia Division		
<b>Topic:</b>	National reserve system - projects		
<b>Hansard Page ECA:</b>	35 (9/2/10)		

**Senator SIEWERT asked:**

**Mr Cochrane**—That is this financial year. We still have projects we are working on.

**Senator SIEWERT**—Beyond the 21?

**Mr Cochrane**—Beyond those.

**Senator SIEWERT**—So the 21 are ones that are developed up to the point where you are negotiating?

**Mr Cochrane**—Yes.

**Senator SIEWERT**—How many overall applications did you have?

**Mr Cochrane**—That is a good question. I might have to take that on notice, I am afraid.

**Answers:**

88 Expressions of Interest for National Reserve System property purchase assistance were received under the 2009/10 Caring for our Country round.

38 full applications for National Reserve System property purchase assistance were received under the 2009/10 Caring for our Country round.

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts  
Legislation Committee**

Answers to questions on notice

**Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio**

Additional Estimates, February 2010

<b>Outcome:</b>	1	<b>Question No:</b>	30
<b>Program:</b>	1.1		
<b>Division/Agency:</b>	Parks Australia Division		
<b>Topic:</b>	National reserve system - purchases		
<b>Hansard Page ECA:</b>	36 (9/2/10)		

**Senator SIEWERT asked:**

**Senator SIEWERT**—I suspect it would take a while to go through the list of how your purchases stack up against those underrepresented bioregions. Could you provide that on notice, perhaps?

**Mr Cochrane**—I can, but I mentioned that we have 28 property purchase projects that we are working on at the moment. Twenty of them are in priority bioregions, with representation of less than 10 per cent in the NRS.

**Answers:**

20 of the 28 approved properties to be purchased in 2009/10 are in priority bioregions with less than 10% protected. If all 20 property purchases are successful they will add approximately 933,800 hectares to the National Reserve System.

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts  
Legislation Committee**

Answers to questions on notice

**Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio**

Additional Estimates, February 2010

<b>Outcome:</b>	1	<b>Question No:</b>	31
<b>Program:</b>	1.1		
<b>Division/Agency:</b>	Parks Australia Division		
<b>Topic:</b>	National reserve system – cumulative purchase		
<b>Hansard Page ECA:</b>	36 (9/2/10)		

**Senator SIEWERT asked:**

**Senator SIEWERT**—In terms of the cumulative purchase now under the new approach, we have nearly one million this financial year. How much are we up to now?

**Mr Cochrane**—In terms of total for the NRS?

**Senator SIEWERT**—Yes.

**Mr Cochrane**—We have just finally published the 2008 data, which is on the department of parks website. I would have to take that on notice to tell you precisely where that takes us. It is not just property acquisitions; the Indigenous protected areas component adds significant area to the national conservation estate as well.

**Senator SIEWERT**—If you could take it on notice, that would be appreciated, thank you.

**Answers:**

3,175,000 hectares have been added to the National Reserve System (including Indigenous Protected Areas) under the Caring for Our Country initiative.

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts  
Legislation Committee**

Answers to questions on notice

**Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio**

Additional Estimates, February 2010

<b>Outcome:</b>	1	<b>Question No:</b>	32
<b>Program:</b>	1.1		
<b>Division/Agency:</b>	Parks Australia Division		
<b>Topic:</b>	Viewing platform - Uluru		
<b>Hansard Page ECA:</b>	39 (9/2/09)		

**Senator BIRMINGHAM asked:**

**Senator BIRMINGHAM**—You probably will not be able to tell me this offhand, but could you take on notice and please let us know: over the last couple of years since the construction of the new viewing platform, how many applications have been approved and how many have been rejected?

**Mr Cochrane**—We have those statistics, but I do not have them with me.

**Answers:**

Since the opening of Talinguru Nyakunytjaku on 8 October 2009 there have been 27 photography permits received only one of which has been rejected. There have been five filming permits issued and none rejected.

From November 2008 to September 2009 there have been 86 photography permit applications received and issued and none rejected. There have been 21 filming permit applications received three of which have been rejected.

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts  
Legislation Committee**

Answers to questions on notice

**Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio**

Additional Estimates, February 2010

<b>Outcome:</b>	1	<b>Question No:</b>	33
<b>Program:</b>	1.1		
<b>Division/Agency:</b>	Parks Australia Division		
<b>Topic:</b>	Capturing images of Commonwealth properties - permit		
<b>Hansard Page ECA:</b>	38 (9/2/09)		

**Senator BIRMINGHAM asked:**

**Senator BIRMINGHAM**—What cost is applied to the permit?

**Mr Cochrane**—I might have to take that on notice. Off the top of my head I cannot remember. It is pretty small.

**Answers:**

There is a cost of \$250 for filming per day or part thereof. This administration fee is required in advance with the application and is non-refundable. For still photography, artwork and sound recording, there is a cost of \$20 per day or part thereof. This administration fee is required in advance with the application and is non-refundable.

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts  
Legislation Committee**

Answers to questions on notice

**Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio**

Additional Estimates, February 2010

<b>Outcome:</b>	1	<b>Question No:</b>	34
<b>Program:</b>	1.1		
<b>Division/Agency:</b>	Parks Australia Division		
<b>Topic:</b>	Australian National Botanical Gardens – national leadership role in climate change		
<b>Hansard Page ECA:</b>	41 (9/2/09)		

**Senator LUNDY asked:**

**Senator LUNDY**—Finally, I recollect the announcement in previous years about the Australian National Botanic Gardens’ national leadership role in climate change adaptation strategies. Is there anything you can update the committee on in that regard? I am happy for you to take that on notice if you would prefer.

**Mr Cochrane**—I might take that on notice. One of the things we did agree to do was take on the role, in the context of climate change, of coordinator for the national seed banking effort, which is one of those insurance strategies for climate change. I am anticipating that position will be advertised fairly shortly. That will assist us with contributing in that role. Can I take it on notice and I will give you a fuller response?

**Answers:**

The Australian National Botanic Gardens (ANBG) is taking a national leadership role in climate change adaptation strategies in partnership with other capital city botanic gardens through the Council of Heads of Australia’s Botanic Gardens (CHABG). In November 2008 CHABG released the *National Strategy and Action Plan for the Role of Australia’s Botanic Gardens in Adapting to Climate Change* (the *Action Plan*).

The strategy identifies goals which are to:

- (1) co-ordinate a national safety net for Australia’s plant species through ex situ conservation;
- (2) deliver integrated and easily accessible information about Australian plant species;
- (3) establish a long-term monitoring program of plant responses to environmental change;  
and
- (4) increase national community awareness of climate change and facilitate an effective response.

These elements form the foundation for a unique national collaborative contribution by botanic gardens, in partnership with herbaria, to existing Australian Government climate change and biodiversity initiatives.

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts  
Legislation Committee**

Answers to questions on notice

**Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio**

Additional Estimates, February 2010

The ANBG has played a leading role in the development and implementation of the strategy. To meet Goal 1 the Australian Government has agreed to fund a national coordinator to facilitate the Australian Seed Bank Partnership strategy. The seed bank partnership is the highest priority for action as a contribution to biodiversity conservation under the *Action Plan*. This action aims to ensure that plant species in danger of extinction from climate change are represented in a seed bank, living collection or gene bank, and that they are available for use in species recovery programs. The national coordinator will be employed through the Director of National Parks, and located at the ANBG. The position will: (a) co-ordinate a distributed national seed bank network to ensure efficiency of seed collection efforts and to input into global efforts after 2010; and (b) develop strategic partnerships with user groups of seed banks (eg. species recovery programs).

The ANBG is also contributing to the delivery of other goals under the *Action Plan*.

- The ANBG is in discussions with the Atlas of Living Australia project team to seek their support to deliver the costly virtual “national collection”, which would be accessible through the World Wide Web and contribute to a co-ordinated National Plant Information System (Goal 2).
- In 2008-9 the ANBG led an action to deliver key climate change and biodiversity messages and marketing approach for use by all botanic gardens. These messages have been developed and are being implemented in public programs across Australia’s capital city botanic gardens (Goal 4).
- In 2009-10 the ANBG provided input and expertise to a grassland identification workshop conducted by the Australian Network for Plant Conservation (ANPC). This workshop included a wide range of plant conservation practitioners, from policy and field officers, to community conservationists and gardeners, from the Australian Capital Territory and New South Wales. This workshop has contributed to strengthening and extending the existing relationship between the ANPC, botanic gardens and herbaria, ensuring effective skills and knowledge transfer to plant conservation practitioners (Goal 4).

The Director of National Parks is also drafting an *Australian National Botanic Gardens: Climate Change Strategy 2010 – 2015*. This draft strategy identifies the preliminary adaptation, mitigation and communication strategies that gardens staff and key stakeholders will need to implement to manage the consequences of climate change and reduce the carbon footprint of the gardens. The strategy is an initial ‘first step’ and recognises that management responses to climate change are subject to continual review as further information comes to light.



**Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts  
Legislation Committee**

Answers to questions on notice

**Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio**

Additional Estimates, February 2010

<b>Outcome:</b>	1	<b>Question No:</b>	35
<b>Program:</b>	1.1		
<b>Division/Agency:</b>	Parks Australia Division		
<b>Topic:</b>	National Parks – feral animals and weeds programs and fuel reduction		
<b>Hansard Page ECA:</b>	Written Question on Notice		

**Senator ABETZ asked:**

What specific programmes and plans exist for each National Park (where relevant) to eradicate or control:

1. Feral animals;
2. Feral plants (weeds).
3. How much money is allocated to each Park for each of weeds and feral animals?
4. What programmes and plans exist for fuel reduction in each national park?
5. How much money has been allocated to each park for fuel reduction?
6. How many hectares have had their fuel load reduced in the past two years? And how was this achieved?

**Answers:**

1. Feral animal management priorities, policies and actions are generally set out in each individual national park management plan. In addition some parks develop and maintain more detailed feral animal strategies or plans that are regularly revised and updated.

Booderee National Park has a specific program for intensive fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) control. Under the fox control program monthly baiting is undertaken and the outcomes monitored by changes in indicator species such as bandicoots and shore birds.

Kakadu National Park undertakes:

- opportunistic control of all feral animal species but particularly feral pigs and buffalo particularly near known weed infestations;
- aerial survey and control programs;

Christmas Island National Park has a specific program focussed on yellow crazy ant control. Yellow Crazy Ants have been listed as a Key Threatening Process for Christmas Island, as they impact on a range of native species including the iconic red crab, a keystone species in the island's ecosystem. Feral cats are also a significant threat to Christmas Island's sea and land birds and other native species. Funding is provided to support cat de-sexing clinics in the community.

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts  
Legislation Committee**

Answers to questions on notice

**Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio**

Additional Estimates, February 2010

Christmas Island National Park also undertakes some monitoring and periodic surveys of other feral species, such as rats, centipedes, feral chickens, and Asian wolf snakes.

Pulu Keeling National Park has a program to address the threats posed by invasive plant and animal species to the ecological character of Ramsar listed wetlands of Pulu Keeling, in particular weeds and Yellow Crazy Ants.

Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park undertakes cat trapping and Global Positioning System collaring to allow data collection to develop a more effective trapping and baiting program to be developed; ongoing fox monitoring with activity indices calculated regularly; and camel control options have been presented and discussed at the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park Board of Management. Effective camel control will necessarily be undertaken at a regional scale, given the scale of the problem.

Norfolk Island National Park has specific programs focussed on rodent and cat management. Feral bird control (for example blackbirds, chickens) is also undertaken periodically.

The Australian National Botanic Gardens (ANBG) is currently drafting a *Pest animal control strategy* which will include the management of rabbits on the ANBG site. European rabbits are a legislated pest in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). As landholders the ANBG is required to control feral rabbits. A two-stage rabbit control program has been implemented in the ANBG. The first stage involved upgrades and repairs to the Eastern Boundary fence to restrict rabbit movement into the ANBG grounds from the adjoining land. The second stage has been a count and proposed cull of rabbits within the ANBG.

2. Weed management priorities, policies and actions are set out in each individual national park management plan. Some parks also have specific weed management strategies.

Booderee National Park has a specific program for the control of Bitou Bush (*Chrysanthemoides monolifera*). Under this program a cycle of spray-burn-spray of heavy infestations is undertaken. Satellite infestations are dealt with by on-ground spraying, as resources permit.

Kakadu National Park undertakes ongoing weed control on identified priority weeds. Most are dealt with on a district by district basis within the park, with assistance from a park-wide grassy weeds team for infestations of priority grassy weeds. A Weed Management workshop was convened by the park in 2008. The workshop brought researchers, stakeholders, Traditional Owners, members of the Park's Research Advisory Committee and park staff together to review and inform the Park's management of weeds and identify any knowledge gaps. The workshop proceedings have been published and are being used to revise the Kakadu Weed Management Strategy.

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts  
Legislation Committee**

Answers to questions on notice

**Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio**

Additional Estimates, February 2010

Christmas Island National Park has a framework for weed control that is guided by the Plan of Management and a subsidiary Weed Management Strategy. As approximately one-third of the island's flora is exotic species, a considerable investment will be required to effectively manage weeds and will require a co-ordinated approach across the island. Active weed control is undertaken in the park's plantings of rainforest species as part of the rehabilitation program for old mine sites.

During 2009, an Expert Working Group chaired by Associate Professor Bob Beeton was formed to review and advise the Minister on Christmas Island's ecosystem conservation issues. The report noted feral animals and weeds are a significant threat, and feral animal management and quarantine control is considered a high priority by the Working Group for conservation of Christmas Island's natural values. The Expert Working Group is currently completing its final report which will be provided to the Minister in the near future.

Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park has a specific program for the control of *Cenchrus ciliaris* (buffel grass) – the major weed species in the park. Under this program mapping, spraying and physical removal are undertaken.

Norfolk Island National Park has a rotational weed management program. This involves dedicated weed management in the highest conservation areas on a three year rotation across the park.

The Australian National Botanic Gardens has a weed control program to reduce the impact of weeds on the site, including areas of site not currently under cultivation (the bush buffer zones) and boundary.

3. Booderee National Park spent \$65,800 in 2008-09 on fox control and \$143,200 on bitou bush control.

Kakadu National Park has an indicative budget of \$555,000 for feral animal management and \$2,035,000 for weed management.

Christmas Island National Park has an indicative budget \$1,057,000 for feral animal management and is not currently investing in weed control outside of the rainforest rehabilitation program.

Pulu Keeling National Park has an indicative budget of \$165,000 for feral animal and weed management (combined).

Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park has an indicative budget of \$34,200 for feral animal management and \$53,000 for weed management.

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts  
Legislation Committee**

Answers to questions on notice

**Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio**

Additional Estimates, February 2010

Norfolk Island National Park has an indicative budget of \$90,000 for feral animal management and \$80,000 for weed management.

In the Australian National Botanic Gardens a total of \$65,000 of capital funds have been expended on rabbit proof fencing over two financial years (\$45,000 in 2008-9 and \$20,000 in 2009-10). In addition, in 2009-10, \$1,500 was spent on a rabbit count and cull. Nine rabbits were sighted during the count, but no rabbits were culled. Weed management is a large and integral component of core gardens maintenance. The ANBG also works in partnership with the ACT Government to control weeds within the immediate surrounds. The ANBG spends approximately \$3000 per annum to control woody and noxious weeds in the bush buffer zones and around the ANBG boundary. This maintenance strategy ensures weeds are managed on-site and are controlled at the boundary and bush buffer zones.

4. Where fire is a major management issue in a national park, there are specific sections in the relevant management plan setting out priorities, policies and actions. Booderee, Kakadu and Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Parks also have individual fire management strategies, which in Kakadu include annual district level operational plans.

Booderee National Park has prepared and published a five year Bushfire Management Program (including prescribed burning). A Memorandum of Understanding with the New South Wales Rural Fire Service sets out a framework for close cooperation and collaboration across the park boundary.

Kakadu National Park has Strategic and Operational Fire Plans. Under these plans, fuel reduction for most areas within the park, apart from that carried out in the immediate area around assets, is largely achieved by the mosaic (patch burning) approach that has been practised for centuries by the Traditional Owners. A fire management workshop was convened by the park in 2008. The workshop brought researchers, stakeholders, Traditional Owners, members of the Park's Research Advisory Committee and park staff together to inform the Park's management of fire and identify any knowledge gaps. The proceedings are currently being compiled and will contribute to future fire management policy and actions.

Christmas Island National Park does not require a fire management program as fire is not regarded as a risk within the park.

Pulu Keeling National Park does not require a fire management program as fire is not regarded as a risk within the park.

Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park has a Fire Management Strategy. An Operations Manual linked to this strategy provides information and guidance for fire plan preparation and the conducting of both prescribed burns and bushfire suppression. Fuel reduction and ecological burns are undertaken in the winter months of each year.

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts  
Legislation Committee**

Answers to questions on notice

**Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio**

Additional Estimates, February 2010

Norfolk Island National Park does not require a fire management program as fire is not regarded as a risk within the park.

The Australian National Botanic Gardens' ongoing garden maintenance program ensures fuel reduction occurs as needed through the physical removal of excess vegetative matter from developed sections of the site. The ANBG also works in partnership with neighbouring property owners to manage fuel loads at the boundary and in bush buffer zones.

5. Booderee National Park has an indicative budget of \$197,000 for fire management.

Kakadu National Park has an indicative budget of \$2,960,000 for fire management.

Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park has an indicative budget of \$32,000 for fire management.

At the Australian National Botanic Gardens, on-site fuel reduction is funded as part of core gardens maintenance, and is focused on the physical removal of excess vegetative matter across all parts of the site. However in bush buffer zones and around the boundary, fuel reduction measures, such as prescribed burning, are employed periodically by the ACT Government (in consultation with neighbouring property managers) at no cost to the ANBG.

Christmas Island National Park, Pulu Keeling National Park and Norfolk Island National Park do not have a fire management budget as fire is not regarded as a risk within these parks.

6. Booderee National Park has had 402 hectares burnt through a combination of prescribed burns and managed wildfire over the last two years. Approximately 34 hectares have also been slashed for asset and roadside protection over the last two years.

Kakadu National Park manages a fire program that together with naturally occurring wildfires burnt an average of 52% of the park or a total of approximately 2 million hectares over the last two years. Some of these areas experience natural and/or deliberate burning each year. These estimates are derived from Landsat imagery and provide no indication of fire intensity. Much of the fuel reduction burning is undertaken early in the dry season to deliver low intensity fires in a mosaic or patch pattern across the landscape. Wildfires late in the dry season are often high intensity burns. Fuel reduction is undertaken through protective planned burns around assets. A combination of ground burning from vehicle or by foot, aerial burning and indigenous cultural burning is used to deliver operational objectives for fire and biodiversity management across the park.

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts  
Legislation Committee**

Answers to questions on notice

**Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio**

Additional Estimates, February 2010

Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park burnt 1504 hectares over the 2008-2009 prescribed burning seasons. Prescribed burning activities over the last two years have focused on small-scale, strategic burns to create appropriate habitat for threatened species and reinforce fire breaks to protect the Park against future bushfire events.

At the Australian National Botanic Gardens the ACT Government's management strategy for the Black Mountain region includes some limited fuel reduction on the ANBG site, confined to the bush buffer zones and boundary.

Christmas Island National Park, Pulu Keeling National Park and Norfolk Island National Park do not undertake fuel load reduction as fire is not regarded as a risk within these parks.