

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts

Answers to questions on notice

Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio

Supplementary Budget Estimates, October 2008

Outcome:	1	Question No:	105
Output:	1.2		
Division/Agency:	Director of National Parks		
Topic:	Toorale – impact on Indigenous employment		
Hansard Page ECITA:	60 (21 Oct)		

Senator Nash asked:

Was there any impact on Indigenous employment in the region? Perhaps if you could take on notice whether there are any permanent, part-time or casual Indigenous people being employed and what the numbers were across the various categories.

Answer:

The NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change has advised that they are still finalising their employment strategy for the management of Toorale but expect there to be a positive impact on Indigenous employment in the region. The NSW Department has advised that they do not have any information on current employment of Indigenous people on the property.

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Outcome:	1	Question No:	106
Output:	1.2		
Division/Agency:	Director of National Parks		
Topic:	Uluru Walks		
Hansard Page ECITA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. Have there been any alterations to conditions of access to Uluru, including the walk to the top, such as changes to hours or costs, in the last 12 months?
2. Are there any plans to alter conditions of access to Uluru, including the walk to the top, such as changes to hours or costs?

Answers:

1. Parks Australia regularly reviews how to more effectively manage the climb and reduce visitor safety risks. New (reduced) December to February summer opening hours were introduced in 2007 after consultation with tourism industry representatives. The new opening hours commenced on 1 January 2008. During January and February the climb was open from 5:30am to 8:00am each day (weather permitting), and closed for the rest of the day when the heat, wind and rain usually makes the climb unsafe. Since 2003, the climb has been closed because of weather conditions for more than 80 percent of summer daylight hours - last year it was only open after 08:00am for two days in December, four days in January, and not at all in February. There have been no other changes to hours (or costs) in the last 12 months.
2. There are no plans to alter costs for access to Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park. Conditions for access to Uluru will continue to be set out in the Management Plan for the Park. The Board of Management is expected to release the draft of the next plan early next year for public comment.

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Outcome:	1	Question No:	107
Output:	1.2		
Division/Agency:	Director of National Parks		
Topic:	Annual Report		
Hansard Page ECITA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator Birmingham asked:

If the Director of National Parks annual report has not yet been tabled, when will it be tabled and was any consideration given to having the annual report ready in advance of Supplementary Estimates as a courtesy?

Answer:

The Director of National Parks Annual Report for 2007-08 was tabled in the Senate on 27 October 2008 and the House of Representatives on 10 November 2008, meeting all requirements of the *Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997* and Senate procedures.

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Outcome:	1	Question No:	108
Output:	1.2		
Division/Agency:	Director of National Parks		
Topic:	Staff		
Hansard Page ECITA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. How many permanent staff recruited since the budget estimates?
2. What level are these staff?
3. How many temporary positions exist or have been created since budget estimates?
4. Since budget estimates, how many employees have been employed on contract and what is the average length of their employment period?
5. Have staffing numbers been reduced as a result of the efficiency dividend and/or other budget cuts?
6. If so, where and at what level?

Answer:

The Director of National Parks is assisted by staff employed by the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts. No staff are directly employed by the Director of National Parks. The Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts has responded to a similar written question on notice (number 127) incorporating those staff that assist the Director of National Parks.

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Outcome:	1	Question No:	109
Output:	1.2		
Division/Agency:	Director of National Parks		
Topic:	Razor Gang		
Hansard Page ECITA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. What discussions has the Director of National Parks had with the Razor Gang Mk II?
2. Has the Razor Gang indicated any cuts/savings to be made by the Director of National Parks?

Answers:

1. The Director of National Parks has had no discussions with the Expenditure Review Taskforce.
2. No.

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Outcome:	1	Question No:	110
Output:	1.2		
Division/Agency:	Director of National Parks		
Topic:	Special Accounts		
Hansard Page ECITA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. What special accounts does the Director of National Parks currently hold? How much is in these accounts?
2. Does the Director of National Parks use the interest from these funds to fund ongoing operations?
3. Has the Razor Gang Mark II given any indication about the future of these special accounts?

Answers:

1. The Director of National Parks does not hold any special accounts.
2. Not applicable.
3. Not applicable.

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Outcome:	1	Question No:	111
Output:	1.2		
Division/Agency:	Director of National Parks		
Topic:	Underspending		
Hansard Page ECITA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. How many programs were underspent in 07-08 financial year?
2. What requests have been made to roll-over underspends to 2008-09?
3. Were these requests successful?

Answers:

1. A surplus result was achieved for 2007–08 due largely to lower depreciation expenditure than expected due to delay in some major capital works.
2. There is no requirement for the Director of National Parks to request a roll-over of underspends to 2008-09.
3. Not applicable.

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Outcome:	1	Question No:	112
Output:	1.2		
Division/Agency:	Director of National Parks		
Topic:	Media Monitoring and Communications		
Hansard Page ECITA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. How much has been spent on media monitoring to date this year?
2. What communications programs has the Director of National Parks undertaken, or are planning to undertake?
3. For each program, what is the total spend?
4. Please detail date, location, purpose and cost of each event.

Answers:

1. The monitoring of media is a service that is provided by the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts under an overarching Service Delivery Agreement for corporate services to the Director of National Parks. The Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts has responded to a similar written question on notice (number 119) regarding the media monitoring activity.
2. No communications programs have been undertaken by the Director of National Parks other than (a) advertising 'have your say' processes which initiate the preparation of new Management Plans for Commonwealth Reserves and invitations to comment on draft Management Plans and (b) advice to tour operators on road conditions and access to sites in Kakadu National Park.
3. Cost of the above activities are minimal and not tracked separately.
4. Not applicable.

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Outcome:	1	Question No:	113
Output:	1.2		
Division/Agency:	Director of National Parks		
Topic:	FOI		
Hansard Page ECITA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. Has the Director of National Parks received any advice on how to respond to FOI requests?
2. How many FOI requests has the Director of National Parks received?
3. How many have been granted or denied?
4. How many conclusive certificates have been issued in relation to FOI requests?

Answer:

Responding to freedom of information (FOI) requests is a service that is provided by the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts under an overarching Service Delivery Agreement for corporate services to the Director of National Parks. The Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts has responded to a similar written question on notice (number 122) regarding FOI's.

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Outcome:	1	Question No:	114
Output:	1.2		
Division/Agency:	Director of National Parks		
Topic:	Reviews		
Hansard Page ECITA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. How many Reviews are currently being undertaken in the Director of National Parks?
2. When will each of these reviews be concluded?
3. Which Reviews have been completed since Budget Estimates?
4. When will the Government be responding to the respective reviews that have been completed?

Answers:

1. None
2. Not applicable
3. Not applicable
4. Not applicable

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Outcome:	1	Question No:	115
Output:	1.2		
Division/Agency:	Director of National Parks		
Topic:	Kakadu National Park		
Hansard Page ECITA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. Have there been any changes in access to Kakadu National Park as a result of the new tourism campaign for Kakadu or for any other purpose?
2. How much is being spent on the campaign?
3. From where is it being funded?
4. How is success being measured and monitored?

Answers:

1. No.
2. The tourism campaign promoting Kakadu is managed and largely funded by Tourism NT. The Australian Government contributed \$0.5 million in 2006-07 towards this campaign.
3. Refer response to part (2) above.
4. The success of the Tourism NT's campaign is a matter primarily for the NT Government. Success will be monitored and measured in several ways including: feedback from the tourism industry, the Northern Territory Government and the Kakadu Board of Management; the success of new indigenous businesses in the Park; and the results from a new visitor survey introduced this year. Visitor numbers to the Park have increased over recent years and a number of new Indigenous businesses have established in the Park.