

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:	96
Output:	1.2		
Division/Agency:	Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA)		
Topic:	GBRMPA – drop in Tourism		
Hansard Page ECITA:	143 (21 Oct)		

Senator Ian MacDonald asked:

What effect do you think declining tourism is likely to have on the amount collected for the environmental management charge? What impact is it going to have on your budget? How are you going to cope with that? What are your projections for the next 12 and 24 months for the tourism industry?

Answer:

Money collected through the EMC is paid to the Official Public Account and GBRMPA receives an equivalent amount via a Special Appropriation. In 2006-07 \$7.2 million was received through EMC and in 2007-08 \$8 million. In the 2008-09 Portfolio Budget Statement the forecast amount of revenue from EMC was \$8.2 million. Currently receipts of the first four months of 2008-09 indicate money collected through EMC is down by \$76,000 on forecast.

Declines in tourism visitation to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park directly impact EMC and, on current trends, revenue from EMC is likely to be down approximately \$250,000 for 2008-09. The GBRMPA will undertake a mid-year budget review to assess all revenue and expenditure including any shortfalls in EMC with any necessary budgetary adjustments made through that process.

The Australian tourism industry, and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park tourism sector in particular, has felt the impacts of various national and international influences over the past 12 to 18 months. These influences include the price of fuel, the value of the Australian dollar, the international stock market crash, variations in interest rates and negative media coverage regarding the state of the Great Barrier Reef. Marine tourism operators indicate declines in visitor numbers have been most significantly impacted by a decrease in international and domestic airline seating capacity into the tourism hubs of Cairns, Port Douglas and the Whitsundays and further reductions in airline seating capacity are expected in December 2008.

In June 2008, both the Australian and Queensland Governments committed \$4 million each to assist the Queensland tourism industry following the withdrawal of airline capacity and declining visitor numbers. This action coupled with a now devalued Australian dollar may see an increase in visitation to the Marine Park.

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Supplementary Budget Estimates, October 2008

Outcome:	1	Question No:	97
Output:	All		
Division/Agency:	Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA)		
Topic:	GBRMPA – Annual Report		
Hansard Page ECITA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator Birmingham asked:

If the Authority 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?

Answers:

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's Annual report was tabled in both Houses of Parliament on 13 November, 2008 in accordance with the relevant legislative requirements.

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Supplementary Budget Estimates, October 2008

Outcome: 1 **Question No:** 98
Output: All
Division/Agency: Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA)
Topic: GBRMPA Administration
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?

Answers:

1. Nine permanent staff have been recruited since the 2008-09 budget estimates.
2. 2 x APS 3
1 x APS 5
1 x APS 5/6
3 x APS 6
1 x EL1
1 x SES 1
3. Since the 2008-09 budget estimates a total of ten temporary positions have been created. Currently nine temporary positions exist in the Authority.
4. 15 people have been employed on non-ongoing employment contracts. The average length of non-ongoing employment contracts is nine months.
5. No.
6. Not applicable

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Outcome: 1 **Question No:** 99
Output: All
Division/Agency: Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA)
Topic: GBRMPA Administration
Hansard Page ECITA: Written Question on Notice

Senator Birmingham asked:

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

Answers:

1. The Authority has had no discussions with the Government about further reductions in funding.
2. Not applicable

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Supplementary Budget Estimates, October 2008

Outcome: 1 **Question No:** 100
Output: All
Division/Agency: Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA)
Topic: GBRMPA Administration
Hansard Page ECITA: Written Question on Notice

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. What special accounts does the Authority currently hold? How much is in these accounts?
2. Does the Authority 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 Authority has two Special Accounts:
 - (i) Great Barrier Reef Field Management Special Account: *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975*;
Balance at 30 June 2008 - \$430.
 - (ii) Services for Other Entities and Trust Moneys – Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Special Account;
Balance at 30 June 2008 - \$0.
2. As a prescribed Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997 Agency the Authority does not retain interest on its bank accounts.
3. No.

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Outcome: 1 **Question No:** 101
Output: All
Division/Agency: Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA)
Topic: GBRMPA Administration
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. The GBRMPA is regarded as one program. The GBRMPA had an operating surplus of \$9,359 for 2007-08.
- 2.
3. No requests have been made.
- 4.
5. Not applicable

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Supplementary Budget Estimates, October 2008

Outcome: 1 **Question No:** 102
Output: 1.3 Strategic Policy Co-ordination
Division/Agency: Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA)
Topic: GBRMPA – 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 Authority 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. From 1 July 2008 to 31 October 2008 the total amount of \$9,518.63 (ex GST) has been spent on media monitoring.
2. Communications programs the Authority have undertaken to date are: Zoning Education in the coastal communities of the GBR catchment.
3. Total spend to date - \$21,143.70. Total allocation for the year \$125,000.
4. The expenditure includes placement of existing television commercials during school holidays and peak visitation times. Selected press and magazine advertising and rental of 8 billboards strategically located along the GBR coastline. The purpose of the communications activities are to educate and remind the public and visitors to the region that zoning exists and to check their free zoning map so they know where they can go and what they can do in the Marine Park.

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Supplementary Budget Estimates, October 2008

Outcome: 1 **Question No:** 103
Output: All
Division/Agency: Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA)
Topic: GBRMPA Freedom of Information
Hansard Page ECITA: Written Question on Notice

Senator Birmingham asked:

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

Answers:

1. No, other than routine legal advice obtained from the Authority's legal advisers.
2. During the 2007/08 financial year, five FOI requests were received.
3. During the 2007/08 financial year, two FOI requests were granted, and documents sought under FOI were released outside of FOI processes in another three cases. No FOI requests were refused.
4. None.

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Outcome: 1 **Question No:** 104
Output: All
Division/Agency: Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA)
Topic: GBRMPA Administration
Hansard Page ECITA: Written Question on Notice

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. How many Reviews are currently being undertaken in the Authority?
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. There are no reviews currently being undertaken in the Authority.
2. Not applicable.
3. Nil.
4. The 2nd tranche of legislation to implement the recommendations of the 2006 Review of the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975* is currently being considered by the Parliament.