

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

Answers to questions on notice

Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio

Supplementary Budget Estimates, October 2009

Outcome:	1	Question No:	44
Program:	1.2		
Division/Agency:	Bureau of Meteorology		
Topic:	BoM Staffing		
Hansard Page ECA:	17 (20/10)		

Senator IAN MACDONALD asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD— (a) What was the total figure for 2008-09? Did you end up with more than you started with or vice versa?

Dr Ayers—I think the total staffing is listed at 1,546. That is made up of ongoing staff. My memory is around 1,269, 169 full-time non-ongoing staff and then 76 part-timers ongoing and 32 part-timers non ongoing.

Senator IAN MACDONALD— (b) How does that compare with the beginning of the last financial year?

...(c) On notice you might be able to give me the comparisons for the beginning and end of the 2008-09 financial year.

Answers:

- (a) The Bureau of Meteorology total staffing level at the end of 2008-09 was 1,546.
- (b) The Bureau of Meteorology total staffing level at the end of 2007-08 was 1,448.
- (c) The Bureau of Meteorology total staffing level increased by 98 staff from the end the 2007-08 financial year to the end of 2008-09.

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Program:	1.2		
Division/Agency:	Bureau of Meteorology		
Topic:	BoM Staffing		
Hansard Page ECA:	19 (20/10)		

Senator IAN MACDONALD asked:

Mr Foley—Yes. It will be the normal practice for meteorologists in Cairns to make weather observations.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—But I am told that there was no fully trained observer available to issue those things and they were done by someone else?

Mr Foley—By a meteorologist.

Senator IAN MACDONALD— (a) Is that intending to become the norm from hereon? (b) Is the observer reconfiguration plan publicly available or can you get me a copy? (c) Is there anything secret about it?

Ms Kruk—We will take it on notice.

Answers:

- (a) It is not a new practice for Bureau meteorologists to make weather observations where it assists the Bureau to maintain efficient operations. It will be the normal practice for meteorologists in Cairns to make weather observations in the future.
- (b) Plans to reconfigure elements of the Observations and Engineering Program first appeared in the Bureau's Operational Plan 2008-2012.

A summary of key changes that will be introduced is at **ATTACHMENT A**.

- (c) No.

Bureau of Meteorology Observations Reconfiguration 2008-2012: key changes

The observations reconfiguration is more than an observer reconfiguration, it includes a range of modernisation and efficiency initiatives including the installation of automated observing systems and a new distribution of weather observers at staffed stations across Australia.

In fact, modernisation and efficiency initiatives are continually being pursued by the Bureau. The Observations Reconfiguration 2008-2012 merely provides a formal strategic framework to coordinate and optimise a specific group of initiatives. The observer distribution at staffed stations across Australia has moved away from previously “configured” levels as local efficiencies have been achieved and as individuals have retired or followed postings between stations. The last review of the station staffing level configuration was undertaken in 2003.

The new staffing levels in the Observations Reconfiguration 2008-2012 provide new formal target staffing levels at each station, however the current staffing level is already near or at the target level at many stations. Some stations are currently staffed lower than target and will now increase to target levels. In particular, the national Leave Relief Pool was previously configured to operate with 47 observers but had fallen to about 25 staff. It is being reconfigured with a target level of 42 which actually means many more staff will be working in this role.

A summary of the nature and timing of changes planned for field stations is provided below. It is possible that some details in these tables, including the timing, may need to respond to changing circumstances over the implementation period out to and including 2011-2012.

Given the nature of the leave relief function, staff in ‘leave relief’ positions are counted as part of a national pool of leave relief staff rather than as part of the staffing level at their home location.

Changes that will be implemented will reflect:

- (i) changes in the utilisation of current systems at a number of stations;
- (ii) changes based on the introduction of new systems at a number of stations; and
- (iii) changes that support sustainable delivery of the national observing program.

In the first category (change in utilisation of current systems) are 12 stations:

- 10 autosonde stations will adopt a configuration similar to that already at Weipa and Charleville. Those stations are Cobar, Eucla, Kalgoorlie, Learmonth, Meekatharra, Moree, Mount Isa, Port Hedland, Williamtown and Woomera.

Station	State	New observing systems	Observer staffing level at Jan 09	New observer staffing level	Other staff on station?	Timing
Cobar	NSW	n/a	2	1		09-10
Eucla	WA	n/a	1	1		09-10
Kalgoorlie	WA	n/a	2	1		09-10
Learmonth	WA	n/a	2	1		09-10
Meekatharra	WA	n/a	2	1		09-10

Moree	NSW	n/a	1	1		09-10
Mount Isa	QLD	n/a	2	1		09-10
Port Hedland	WA	n/a	3	1		09-10
Williamtown	NSW	n/a	2	1	Yes	09-10
Woomera	SA	n/a	3	1		09-10

- 2 stations with Boundary Layer wind Profilers (BLPs) will operate without any observers, but will have other categories of Bureau staff on station. Those stations are: Canberra and East Sale.

Station	State	New observing systems	Observer staffing level at Jan 09	New observer staffing level	Other staff on station?	Timing
Canberra	ACT	n/a	3	0	Yes	09-10
East Sale	VIC	n/a	1	0	Yes	09-10

In the second category (change based on introduction of new systems) are 11 stations:

- 5 stations will have manual balloon programs replaced by BLPs. The roster will be reconfigured for 1-observer operations at four stations, having a strong emphasis on services. Those stations are Ceduna, Coffs Harbour, Mackay and Mildura. At Cairns there will be other categories of Bureau staff on station.

Station	State	New observing systems	Observer staffing level at Jan 09	New observer staffing level	Other staff on station?	Timing
Cairns	QLD	Automatic wind profiler	5	1	Yes	10-12
Ceduna	SA	Automatic wind profiler	2	1		10-12
Coffs Harbour	NSW	Automatic wind profiler	2	1	Yes	10-12
Mackay	QLD	Automatic wind profiler	3	1		10-12
Mildura	VIC	Automatic wind profiler	5	1		10-12

- 4 stations will have manual balloon programs replaced by Stratospheric-Tropospheric wind Profilers. The roster will be reconfigured for 1-observer operations, having a strong emphasis on services. Those stations are: Carnarvon, Halls Creek, Longreach and Tennant Creek.

Station	State	New observing systems	Observer staffing level at Jan 09	New observer staffing level	Other staff on station?	Timing
Carnarvon	WA	Automatic wind profiler	3	1		10-12
Halls Creek	WA	Automatic wind profiler	3	1		10-12
Longreach	QLD	Automatic wind profiler	3	1		10-12
Tennant Creek	NT	Automatic wind profiler	3	1		10-12

- 2 stations with manual balloon programs will have an automatic balloon release and tracking system installed (similar to the current autosonde stations). The roster will be changed to a single observer, locally-supported configuration. Those stations are Lord Howe Island and Mount Gambier.

Station	State	New observing systems	Observer staffing level at Jan 09	New observer staffing level	Other staff on station?	Timing
Lord Howe Is	NSW	Automatic balloon system	2	1		10-11
Mount Gambier	SA	Automatic balloon system	3	1		09-10

Staff numbers have been stabilised at a further group of 8 stations where efficiencies have already been implemented:

Station	State	New observing systems	Observer staffing level at Jan 09	New observer staffing level	Other staff on station?	Timing
Broome	WA	n/a	4	3	Yes	09-10
Esperance	WA	n/a	3	3		09-10
Alice Springs	NT	n/a	3	3	Yes	09-10
Rockhampton	QLD	n/a	3	3	Yes	09-10
Townsville	QLD	n/a	3	3	Yes	09-10
Wagga Wagga	NSW	n/a	3	3		09-10
Launceston information office	TAS	n/a	0	0	Yes	09-10
Mawson	Ant.	n/a	1	1	Yes	09-10

The remaining 19 staffed observing stations will operate with current staffing levels.

All of the above stations will benefit from a strengthened leave relief pool, which is counted separately as an additional number of observers available to flexibly sustain operations at all staffed stations:

Station	State	New observing systems	Observer staffing level at Jan 09	New observer staffing level	Other staff on station?	Timing
National pool	n/a	n/a	About 25	42		09-10

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Outcome:	1	Question No:	46
Program:	1.2		
Division/Agency:	Bureau of Meteorology		
Topic:	Staff		
Hansard Page ECA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator BIRMINGHAM asked:

1. Were there any staff cuts at the Bureau of Meteorology in 2008/09?
2. Will any volunteer or paid workers be cut this year? If so, can you please provide a detailed breakdown of when and where these job losses will occur?
3. Will any weather stations be closed? If so, can you please provide a detailed breakdown of which stations will be closed and when.
4. How much funding has been given to the Bureau of Meteorology for research into climate change in 2009?

Answers:

1. A number of administrative processes were centralised in 2008-09. This resulted in one staff redundancy during the year.
2. There is no proposal to cut volunteer workers in the current budget year. During 2009-10, further administrative process changes may result in a small number of additional redundancies.
3. No.
4. \$770,500 for the 2008/09 financial year.