

Outcome 1

Question 14

Division: Natural Heritage Division

Topic: Nominations to the Endangered Species Advisory Committee

Hansard Page: 23

Senator Bolkus asked:

“ How many nominations do you have? (before the Endangered Species Advisory Committee) Could we get on notice some breakdown of the nominations and the species?”

Answer:

Nominations made under the *EPBC Act (1999)*

To date, 25 species of fauna and 40 species of flora, 52 Ecological Communities and 18 Key Threatening Processes have been nominated:

Species

Fauna

- 1 skink;
- 2 seals;
- 13 bats;
- 1 bandicoot;
- 2 petrels;
- 4 crayfish;
- 1 shark; and
- 1 quoll.

Flora

- 9 shrubs;
- 25 orchids;
- 1 fern;
- 2 heaths;
- 2 herbs; and
- 1 seaweed.

Ecological Communities

52 Ecological Communities, including grasslands, vine thickets, Brigalow, forests and swamps, have been nominated.

Key Threatening Processes

Psittacine circoviral disease

Loss of climatic terrestrial habitat caused by anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases

Land clearance

Incidental catch (bycatch) of Sea Turtle during coastal otter-trawl fishing operations within Australian waters north of 28 degrees South.

Loss of hollow-bearing trees in native forests and woodlands due to ecologically unsustainable forestry practices

Clearing and degradation of lowland forest, feather palm swamps, freshwater wetlands, grassland ecosystems, littoral rainforest and other ecosystems, along the eastern seaboard (coastal lowlands) bioregions of Queensland due to sugar cane farming and expansion.

Continued net loss of hollow-bearing trees in native forests and woodlands due to firewood harvesting

Injury and fatality of marine wildlife caused by ingestion and entanglement in marine debris

Introduction of marine pests to the Australian environment via shipping

Predation, habitat loss & competition by feral pigs

Removal of woody debris from rivers and streams

Introduction of live fish into waters outside their natural range after 1770

Increase in sediment input into rivers and streams due to human activities

Alteration of the natural flow regimes of rivers and streams

Alteration to the natural temperature regime of rivers and streams

The prevention of passage of aquatic biota as a result of the presence of instream structures

Bumblebee *Bombus spp*

Chytridiomycosis due to the amphibian chytrid fungus (a frog disease)

Outcome 1

Question 15

Division: Natural Heritage Division

Topic: Salinity

Hansard Page: 44

Senator Bolkus asked:

Has the Department conducted any assessment of the cost of arresting environmental degradation or the costs of its impacts, particularly in terms of salinity?

[[Actual questions: ‘During the last estimates we asked if the Department conducted any assessment of the cost of arresting environmental degradation in the country and I think the answer we got was no. Is that still the case?’

‘... When you say studies have been done and costs have been assessed, is there any .. one study that drives the department in developing policy?’

‘I should not say just one; it could be a number. What about in terms of salinity?’

‘Take it on notice in terms of salinity.’

‘What other aspects of degradation would you have had assessments done on?’]]

Answer:

While the Department has not conducted any formal assessment of the cost of arresting environmental degradation in Australia, there have been a number of external studies on both the costs of arresting degradation and its impacts that have informed or will inform policy development.

External studies have estimated the costs of various land degradation impacts. For example, the National Land and Water Resources Audit’s report *Australian Dryland Salinity Assessment 2000* is about to be launched and contains the latest estimates of land, water, other natural assets, infrastructure and production at risk. The Prime Minister’s Science, Engineering and Innovation Council’s 1998 report *Dryland Salinity and its Impacts on Industries and the Landscape* gives estimates of the impacts of dryland salinity including 2.5 million hectares affected so far (4.5 per cent of presently cultivated land), with the potential for this to increase to 15 million hectares, and current costs that include \$130 million annually in lost agricultural production, \$100 million annually in damage to infrastructure, and at least \$40 million in loss of environmental assets.

Outcome 1,

Question 16

Division: Natural Heritage Division

Topic: NHT Estimates

Hansard Page: 46

Senator Bolkus asked:

Basically, then, you have \$200 million still to allocate this financial year. Two hundred and four million dollars, in fact.

(Senator Hill – I would be surprised if it is that high. Can we say yes, subject to checking please).

Answer:

The Natural Heritage Ministerial Board must prepare estimates of debits from the Reserve that are to be made for purposes of the Reserve. In preparing the estimates the Board allocates funds to each program. All funds for 2000-01 have been allocated to a program.

Taking account of project approvals and Government program commitments already made for 2000-01, \$29.6 million remains available this financial year for approvals under the Trust.

Outcome 1,

Question: 17

Division: Natural Heritage Division

Topic: NHT Estimates

Hansard Page: 46

Senator Bolkus asked:

In terms of the money's (NHT) allocated so far this financial year and the rollover from the previous financial year, give a breakdown of the funds and a table electorate by electorate.

Answer:

The Natural Heritage Ministerial Board allocates estimates only on a program basis as required. This allocation does not include nominal amounts by electorate or by State/Territory.

Once proposals are approved, their electorates are derived by the database based on the location of the project activity. Details of projects that are not national or statewide in nature and that fall entirely within a single electorate for 2000-01 are outlined in Attachment 1.

Electorate	Funding for 2000-01
Adelaide	\$268,000
Ballarat	\$297,000
Barker	\$3,212,777
Bass	\$1,172,186
Bendigo	\$1,415,100
Bennelong	\$19,800
Berowra	\$87,900
Blair	\$577,858
Blaxland	\$11,576
Boothby	\$32,940
Bowman	\$96,215
Braddon	\$1,604,876
Bradfield	\$52,700
Brand	\$291,295
Brisbane	\$501,955
Burke	\$208,300
Calare	\$869,796
Canberra	\$26,760
Canning	\$447,944
Capricornia	\$823,129
Casey	\$44,300
Charlton	\$154,700
Chisholm	\$10,000
Cook	\$22,740
Corangamite	\$1,253,372
Corio	\$566,200
Cowan	\$29,100
Cowper	\$1,116,998
Cunningham	\$34,888
Curtin	\$124,460
Dawson	\$1,337,224
Deakin	\$3,200
Denison	\$397,802
Dickson	\$90,500
Dobell	\$21,470
Eden-Monaro	\$1,659,757
Fadden	\$100,074
Fairfax	\$180,449
Farrer	\$2,430,378
Fisher	\$29,200
Flinders	\$297,708
Forde	\$297,081
Forrest	\$1,419,491
Fowler	\$24,225
Franklin	\$586,038
Fraser	\$79,445
Fremantle	\$111,450
Gellibrand	\$7,575
Gilmore	\$214,616
Gippsland	\$1,911,466
Goldstein	\$189,300
Grayndler	\$9,550
Grey	\$3,429,762
Griffith	\$39,250

Groom	\$797,350
Gwydir	\$1,335,205
Herbert	\$192,677
Hindmarsh	\$75,000
Hinkler	\$1,130,867
Hughes	\$40,755
Hume	\$2,243,923
Hunter	\$588,148
Indi	\$1,171,980
Isaacs	\$2,670
Kalgoorlie	\$4,143,810
Kennedy	\$2,840,491
Kingsford-Smith	\$92,877
Kingston	\$12,192
Lalor	\$267,300
Leichhardt	\$496,630
Lindsay	\$2,301
Longman	\$204,872
Lyne	\$521,869
Lyons	\$4,742,934
Macarthur	\$204,474
Mackellar	\$229,079
Macquarie	\$196,779
Makin	\$4,700
Mallee	\$3,446,620
Maranoa	\$2,271,666
Mayo	\$2,127,700
McMillan	\$765,400
McPherson	\$102,540
Mcewen	\$163,500
Melbourne	\$443,750
Menzies	\$65,100
Mitchell	\$64,677
Moncrieff	\$60,145
Moore	\$20,600
Murray	\$6,359,960
New England	\$876,902
Newcastle	\$129,493
North Sydney	\$87,025
Northern Territory	\$5,933,969
O'Connor	\$6,172,729
Oxley	\$35,100
Page	\$1,022,801
Parkes	\$2,158,062
Parramatta	\$233,682
Paterson	\$421,695
Pearce	\$590,701
Perth	\$122,000
Port Adelaide	\$564,234
Prospect	\$17,500
Reid	\$5,444
Richmond	\$688,393
Riverina	\$1,892,236
Robertson	\$277,906
Ryan	\$35,200

Approved funding for Natural Heritage Trust 2000-2001 projects by single electorate Attachment 1

Scullin	\$15,000
Shortland	\$77,801
Sydney	\$68,900
Tangney	\$147,970
Throsby	\$65,785
Wakefield	\$1,798,205
Wannon	\$2,509,023
Warringah	\$70,600
Wentworth	\$29,634
Wide Bay	\$790,480
	\$94,510,887

Senate Environment, Communications, Information, Technology & the Arts

Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Department of the Environment and Heritage

Environment Australia

Additional Estimates 2000-01, (21/02/01)

Outcome 1,

Question: 18

Division: Natural Heritage Division

Topic: NHT Estimates

Hansard Page: ECITA 47

Senator Bolkus asked:

Can you provide the figures of what has been allocated so far (not what expenditure has been approved) and what is left to be allocated this financial and next financial year?

(Senator Hill - Yes, and we will give you definitions of the terms)

Answer:

The allocation for 2000-2001 (including the rollover from 1999-2000) is \$485.0 million. There is nothing further to allocate in this year. The allocation for 2001-02 is \$314.7 million.

Definitions:

Allocation - The estimates allocated to each program by year.

Approvals - The funds approved by Ministers for projects for Natural Heritage Trust and related programs.

Expenditure - Natural Heritage Trust expenditure includes actual spending on projects, Departmental expenses and overarching expenses.

Outcome 1,

Question: 19

Division: Natural Heritage Division

Topic: NHT Approvals

Hansard Page: 48

Senator Bolkus requested:

A timetable of last year's approvals process for each NHT program, including AFFA's programs.

Answer:

Landcare, Bushcare, Rivercare, Murray-Darling 2001, Wetlands, Fisheries Action Program, Farm Forestry Program and Waterwatch

Date	Activity
26 February 2000	All One-Stop-Shop applications closed
March - June 2000	Bids assessed by Regional and State Assessment Panels
Early July 2000	State/Territory bids submitted to Commonwealth
21 July to 12 September 2000	Ministerial decisions returned to the Commonwealth Departments
16 to 24 October 2000	Announcements made

The Bushcare Program also includes strategically targeted projects developed and approved on an ongoing basis.

Endangered Species Program, National Feral Animal Program and National Weed Program

Date	Activity
End March 2000	Applications accepted (including through the One-Stop-Shop process)
June 2000	Bids assessed by National Assessment Panels
21 July to 12 September 2000	Ministerial decisions returned to the Commonwealth Departments
16 to 24 October 2000	Announcements made

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National Reserve System Program

The National Reserve System Program - non Indigenous component - receives and considers application throughout the year. Similarly applications for the Indigenous Protected Area component may be received and considered at any time in the year.

World Heritage Area Management and Upkeep

Date	Activity
February - March	Proposals for funding sought from State management agencies.
August-September	Following consultation with relevant community and scientific advisory committees, the State management agencies submit their proposals to the Commonwealth.
January - February	Decisions made by Commonwealth Minister and announcements made

Waste Management Awareness Program

The Waste Management Awareness Program addresses issues and projects on a national level through a waste stream or product sector approach. During November 2000, the program publicly sought expressions of interest for projects to address green waste and recycled organic materials. The proposals are being assessed for possible funding.

Air Pollution in Major Cities

Development and approval of strategically targeted projects for the Air Pollution in Major Cities Program occurs on an ongoing basis.

National Land and Water Resources Audit

Funds provided to the NLWRA for 1999-2000 are made on the basis of progress reports and payments, two payments were made last year. Programs and projects relating to the conduct of Audit activities conform to workplans that have been approved progressively as the Audit addresses each theme of its work.

Coasts and Clean Seas Local Component

Date	Activity
18 May 2000	Applications closed
18 September to 27 October 2000	State/Territory bids submitted to Commonwealth
13 December 2000	All proposal briefs to Commonwealth Minister
1 February 2001 and ongoing	Ministerial decisions returned to the Commonwealth Department
16 February 2001 and ongoing	Announcements made

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Department of the Environment and Heritage

Environment Australia

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Coastcare

Date	Activity
16 June 2000	Applications closed
September 2000 to January 2001	State/Territory Recommended projects sent to Commonwealth Minister
December 2000 to January 2001	All proposal briefs to Commonwealth Minister
December 2000 and ongoing	Announcements made

Coastal Acid Sulfate Soils Program

Date	Activity
31 March 2000	Applications closed
15 June 2000	Proposal brief to Commonwealth Minister
4 August 2000	Ministerial decisions returned to the Commonwealth Department
8 September 2000	Announcements made

Marine Waste Reception Facilities Program

Date	Activity
August 2000	Applications closed
2 January 2001 to 31 January 2001	Proposal briefs to Commonwealth Minister
10 January 2001 to 18 February 2001	Ministerial decisions returned to the Commonwealth Department
23 January and ongoing	Announcements made

There are also Coasts and Clean Seas, Oceans Policy and Water programs where strategically targeted projects are developed and approved on an ongoing basis.

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Environment Australia

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Cape York Natural Heritage Trust Plan

Date	Activity
15 October 1999	Closing Date for CYNHT Round 8
24-25 November 1999	Assessment by CYRAP
28 February 2000	CYNHT Round 8 Submitted to Commonwealth
21 March 2000	Commonwealth Recommendations to Minister
19 May 2000	Ministerial Decisions Returned to Commonwealth Departments
29 June 2000	Proponents Notified
22 January 2000	Closing Date for CYNHT Round 9
24-25 February 2000	Assessment by CYRAP
13 June 2000	CYNHT Round 9 Submitted to Commonwealth
19 July 2000	Commonwealth Recommendations to Minister
4 August 2000	Ministerial Decisions Returned to Commonwealth Departments
18 August	Proponents Notified
14 April 2000	Closing Date for CYNHT Round 10
24-25 May 2000	Assessment by CYRAP
2 November 2000	CYNHT Round 10 Submitted to Commonwealth
6 December 2000	Commonwealth Recommendations to Minister
21 January 2001	Ministerial Decisions Returned to Commonwealth Departments
14 February 2001	Proponents Notified
21 July 2000	Closing Date for CYNHT Round 11
4-6 September 2000	Assessment by CYRAP
December 2000	Minister Truss Approval of AFFA Projects from Rounds 6 through 10
18 January 2001	CYNHT Round 11 Submitted to Commonwealth
23 February 2001	Commonwealth Recommendations to Minister

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Environment Australia

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RFA Private Forest Reserve Program

Development and approval of proposals occurs on an ongoing basis.

Date	Activity
11 January 2000	Bid 2 received from State
10 February 2000	Bid 2 to Minister
27 February 2000	Bid2 approved
27 January 2000	Bid 3 Projects reviewed by Advisory Committee
22 February 2000	Bid 3 received from State
15 March 2000	Bid 3to Minister
8 April 2000	Bid 3 approved
11 May 2000	Bid 4 Projects reviewed by Advisory Committee
14 July 2000	Bid 4 received from State
6 November 2000	Bid 4 to Minister
4 December 2000	Bid 4 approved
3 August 2000	Bid 5 Projects reviewed by Advisory Committee
16 August 2000	Bid 5 received from State
4 September 2000	Bid 5 to Minister
7 September 2000	Bid 5 approved
10 August 2000	Bid 6 Projects reviewed by Advisory Committee
02 October 2000	Bid 6 received from State
6 November 2000	Bid 6 to Minister
4 December 2000	Bid 6 approved
30 October 2000	Bid 7 Projects reviewed by Advisory Committee
14 November 2000	Bid 7 received from State
04 December 2000	Bid 7 to Minister
21 December 2000	Bid 7 approved
07 December 2000	Bid 9 Projects reviewed by Advisory Committee
28 December 2000	Bid 8 received from State

Outcome 1

Question 20

Division: Natural Heritage Division

Topic: Interest revenue from NHT fund

Hansard Pages: 48-49

Senator Bolkus asked:

“What is the level of interest accruing from the \$300 million in funds set aside? I would like to know how they work it out and, secondly, what the amount is.”

Answer:

Background

Section 42 of the *Natural Heritage Trust of Australia Act 1997* (NHT Act) stipulates that as from 1 July 2001, the Minister for the Environment and Heritage must take all reasonable steps to ensure that, throughout each financial year, the balance of the NHT Reserve must not fall below the base amount for that year. For the 2001/02 year, the base amount is set at \$300 million. For each subsequent year, the base amount is the product of the base amount for the previous year and the indexation factor for the current year as specified by the Minister for Finance and Administration in a written determination.

Section 6 of the NHT Act enables interest revenue to be earned on the uninvested balance of funds in the NHT Reserve. Up to and including the financial year 2001/02, this rate is set at the higher of 8% per annum or the rate determined by the Minister for Finance and Administration.

For 2002/03 and beyond, the applicable rate for interest calculation purposes will be the higher of the interest rate earned by the Commonwealth at 30 June of each year on deposits held with the Reserve Bank of Australia or the rate determined by the Minister for Finance and Administration.

Calculation of interest on the NHT reserve

The NHT Reserve itself has two major funding sources: proceeds from the two Telstra share sales and the annual budget appropriations which include a deemed interest payment component for interest earned during the year on the uninvested balance in the Reserve at 30 June of that year.

At the inception of the Trust when funding arrangements were being put in place, the interest payment component was calculated on the basis of a fixed 8% annual interest

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rate, applied to the 30 June uninvested balance in the Reserve each year, in accordance with section 6 of the NHT Act.

2001/02 is the first year that a minimum balance will be required to be held in the Trust. For that year the base amount is \$300m and the interest rate is at least 8%, resulting in \$24m interest revenue for that year. For subsequent years, the interest revenue cannot be calculated as the base amount and interest rate applicable are not currently known. If, for example, the base amount remained at \$300m and this was the full value of the uninvested balance in the NHT Reserve at 30 June 2003, the interest revenue earned in 2002/03 would be \$15m if the Reserve Bank of Australia's interest rate was 5% at 30 June 2003 (provided the Reserve Bank rate was higher than the rate determined by the Minister for Finance and Administration).

Note: all figures quoted are in nominal, rather than real terms.

Outcome 1

Questions 21

Division: Natural Heritage Division

Topic: NHT Mid-term review

Hansard Page: 49

Senator Bolkus asked:

Is the Ministerial Board response to the mid-term review of the NHT on the public record? Is it available on the web?

Answer:

Yes the Ministerial Board response to the mid-term review of the NHT is on the public record. It is available on the web. A copy of the response is attached.

Outcome 1,

Question: 22

Division: Natural Heritage Division

Topic: NHT Mid-term review

Hansard Page: 51

Senator Bolkus asked:

Twenty five per cent of the NHT review recommendations we were told last time relate to future delivery of natural resource management. Can you give us a list of those?

Answer:

A list of the mid-term review recommendations of the Natural Heritage Trust which were considered to relate to natural resource management policy initiatives is attached. The list contains 128 recommendations, or 20.6% of the 620 recommendations made by the various consultants who worked on the mid-term review.

Please see the table attached to QoN 21 – <i>Review of Administrative arrangements</i> pp. 174-260

Outcome 1

Question 23

Division: Natural Heritage Division

Topic: Cape Wide Assessment

Hansard Page: 54

Senator Bolkus asked:

What stage is the Qld Govt's Peninsula Wide Assessment of Natural Conservation Values at?

Answer:

My Department has been advised that the consultants forwarded the final draft report of this assessment directly to the former Queensland Minister (Mr Welford) shortly before the calling of the State's recent election.

I understand the report has not yet been made publicly available. In fact the Queensland Environment Protection Agency advise that to this date (6 March 2001) they have not received a copy.

Delivery of the report is some three months overdue.

Outcome 1

Question 24

Division: Natural Heritage Division

Topic: Cape York Peninsula Weeds

Hansard Page: 55

Senator Bolkus asked:

What is the Minister's considered view of the recommendations in Acumen's Nov 2000 report on the Cape York Peninsula Weeds and Ferals Project?

Answer:

The recommendations in the report are sound and largely supported by the Commonwealth, both within EA and AFFA. A number of the recommendations are directed to modifying the existing administrative and consultative arrangements to

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improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the project. The implementation of these recommendations is being addressed by the Queensland Government agency responsible for managing the contract in consultation with the funding recipient the Cook Shire Council.