

Senate Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Treasury Portfolio

Budget Estimates 30 May – 1 June 2006

Question: bet 80

Topic: Investment Infrastructure and the COAG review

Hansard Page: E11

Senator MURRAY asked:

Minister, could you take it on notice to advise the committee whether this particular area is likely to fall within the overall COAG review?

Senator Minchin—I do not know if you have more information than I have off the top of my head on this, Mr Feil.

Mr Feil—There is obviously COAG consideration of the export task force report and the response is, I think, in hand for that. We are not involved in that directly. I think much of the debate about multiple regulators and the like is one level lower, about who sets the prices, who sets the access conditions, who gets to regulate. Does the ACCC, who would be the arbitrator under a part IIIA matter, have the same approach as the economic regulatory authority in the west, who would be the arbitrator cum regulator under a state access regime? It is more at that level than at the level of ‘what is in and what is out’ of declaration. We can take that on notice and get you—

Answer:

At its meeting on 10 February 2006 and as part of its new National Reform Agenda, agreed following its review of National Competition Policy, COAG signed a Competition and Infrastructure Reform Agreement to provide for a simpler and consistent system of economic regulation for nationally-significant infrastructure — including for ports, railways and other export-related infrastructure. The agreed reforms aim to reduce regulatory uncertainty and compliance costs for owners, users and investors in significant infrastructure and to support the efficient use of national infrastructure.

The 10 February 2006 COAG Communiqué records the Commonwealth's view that, while it welcomes the new arrangements, it considers a single regulator for export infrastructure is preferable and that it reserves the right to legislate to that effect if the new arrangements are not effective.

At its meeting on 14 July 2006 COAG reaffirmed its commitment to progress the National Reform Agenda.