

**Senate Standing Committee on Economics**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Treasury Portfolio**

Budget Estimates

1 June – 3 June 2010

**Question: BET 108**

**Topic: Infrastructure Australia**

**Hansard Page: E53-54 (03/06/2010)**

**Senator BUSHBY asked:**

**Senator BUSHBY**—Has Treasury given any thought to the future role of Infrastructure Australia? One of its core functions when it was established was to advise on funding from the Building Australia Fund. That fund has now only \$705 million left unallocated. What is Infrastructure Australia going to do in the future?

**Mr Archer**—Once again, that is probably a portfolio responsibility matter for the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government. It is not a Treasury agency matter. It is probably not appropriate for us to comment.

**Senator BUSHBY**—But I would have thought this section of Treasury would have had policy input into the future of Infrastructure Australia.

**Dr Kennedy**—It is fair to say we think about all these issues but it is difficult for us to go to the specifics of policy advice that we might be developing for government. That broader set of issues you have identified, around infrastructure governance and the roles of various institutions, are certainly issues that we think about and would, in the normal course of events, provide advice to government on.

**Senator BUSHBY**—Is the minister able to assist on policy position?

**Senator Sherry**—No. One, because if it were policy I would not be and (2) we are getting into the position now where it is a bit like some of the questions we get at Finance. It is not the role of Finance nor is it the role of Treasury, indeed this area of Treasury, to comment about another department's responsibilities.

**Senator BUSHBY**—Treasury has 12 market group outputs and one of them is 'measures to promote the efficient use of national infrastructure including in transport, communication and energy markets'. It is one of the 12 core market group outputs. I am not asking for the details of who spends what and how you do this, that and the other; these are overarching policy questions about how these things are approached. I would have thought that it was reasonable to ask Treasury, given that is one of their 12 key outputs.

**Senator Sherry**—I think you are fundamentally misunderstanding it, as Senator Joyce is. I know it is difficult sometimes, because I have been in your place when I have sought, in this area and others in Finance, more detailed responses and have not had them because the carriage of the policy is in another department or in another division of a department.

**Senator BUSHBY**—I am not asking how the policy is being delivered; I am asking what policy direction there is.

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**Senator Sherry**—We will see where we can help you but I will give you the caveat that we may or may not be able to help you on particular issues.

**Answer:**

Infrastructure Australia advises Australian governments about the nation's infrastructure priorities. Its recent report to COAG, released on 2 July 2010 and available from its website, indicates the range of its activities that it is undertaking. Its report outlines its work in relation to, among other things, development of a national freight network and a national ports strategy, and to promote well-functioning cities. The report also includes Infrastructure Australia's current list of national priority infrastructure projects and reforms.

Infrastructure Australia is within the portfolio of the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government. Consequently, it would be appropriate for any further information on the future role of Infrastructure Australia to be sought from the Minister or the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government.