

Senate Standing Committee on Economics

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Treasury Portfolio

Budget Estimates

1 June – 3 June 2010

Question: BET 216

Topic: Population Strategy

Hansard Page: Written

Senator BERNARDI asked:

1. During the 12 months of the development of the strategy, will there be any benchmarks/timelines set up? (eg ‘at the six month mark we expect *this*, *this* and *this* to have been achieved’)
 - a) If so, what are the benchmarks and timelines?
 - b) If not, how will the Minister know that he is on track with the development of the strategy?
2. On 5 April, the Minister said that he was going to have his “first briefing with Treasury tomorrow morning.”
 - a) Did this briefing take place?
 - b) Who attended this briefing?
 - c) Are you able to tell me what was discussed at the meeting?
 - d) What were the outcomes of this meeting?
 - e) Since that meeting on 6 April, has the Minister had any other briefings from Treasury?
 - f) Are there any briefings scheduled for the future?
3. The Minister has stated that “there will be a very broad range of consultation getting down to how this affects different parts of the country differently.” He has also said “I am determined...to have a very serious path of consultation in the coming months to make sure that the different views and the different challenges in different parts of Australia, are all on the table as we develop the strategy.”
 - a) Can you provide further detail about his consultations?
 - b) Who does he plan to consult with?
 - c) Have any meetings been set up yet with stakeholders and interested persons? If so, please detail.
 - d) Has any travel been planned for the Minister related to consultations for the strategy? If so, please detail.
 - e) Will his consultations involve any public forums that general members of the public can attend? If so, please detail.
 - f) Will these consultations be advertised?

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- g) Who has Minister Burke met with already since his appointment as Minister for Population?
4. The 2010-11 Budget allocates \$1.3 million “to support the development” of the population strategy.
- a) What is the breakdown of this \$1.3 million?
- b) Do you expect to come in under the budget of \$1.3 million?
- c) The \$1.3m appears to only be allocated for the 2010-11 financial year – do you expect that further funds will be required in the coming financial years?
5. With reference to the strategy, and immigration and population numbers and projections, the Minister has said that “you will still need to review those numbers year to year” and “we will certainly work out how you make those decisions year by year.” Does this mean that the strategy will include an annual review?
6. The Minister has said that the strategy would “take into account regional differences.” How many regional areas/towns does the Minister plan on visiting as part of the strategy development?
7. Minister Burke has said that “part of the job [of] developing the strategy over the next 12 months is to look at all the different levers. Some will be at the Commonwealth level, some at state and some at the local level.” Will the Minister be consulting all state and territory government as part of his consultations?
8. What about the various councils – will they all have an opportunity to voice their ideas and concerns?
9. When discussing projections, Minister Burke said that “You’ve got to have Treasury come up with modelling and say if you change nothing this is where you’d land. If you reduce things a little bit, this is where you’d land. My questions, and my job, is to say, where should we land, where should we get to?” By saying this, does this mean the Minister will come up with projections of his own, about ‘where we should land’?
10. The Minister mentioned that he would look at the issue of encouraging people to live in areas that required a bigger population – eg “I do believe there is probably more that we can do than we’ve done in the past in the immigration program saying, if you’re coming to Australia there are parts of Australia where we need you to get your first job...I’m not talking about cash incentives. I’m saying we can set the rules by which people come to the country if they’re coming under those business programs...” Will this definitely be considered as a part of the population strategy?
11. It has been reported that the Minister may establish regional population projections. Is this something that the Minister will be looking at as part of the strategy?

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12. The Treasury Portfolio Budget Statements say that “Treasury has been given responsibility of supporting the new Minister for Population with the task of developing Australia’s first comprehensive population strategy.” What exactly is the Treasury’s role – how will Treasury be “supporting” the Minister?
13. Aside from the \$1.3 million allocated to the Population Strategy in the Budget, will any other Treasury resources of finances be used for the development of the strategy? If so, what is the total cost of these resources?
14. Will the Minister have complete access to Treasury’s information/modelling to help him develop the strategy?
15. Minister Burke has said that there are no “formal terms of reference” for the strategy. But are there any guiding principles or guidelines to assist with the development of the strategy, so that you don’t miss any important issues? If there are some guidelines, what are they?
16. Minister Burke has said that “once we devise the strategy, you can only deliver on it by working cooperatively with state and local government.”
 - a) Will the Minister seek a guarantee from state and local governments that they will help to deliver the strategy?
 - b) What happens if the states or the local governments have a problem with the strategy and refuse to help implement it?
 - c) How does the Minister plan to tackle any issues like that between the Federal Government and state/local governments?
17. Does the Government have any plans set out to deal with the implementation of the strategy? If so, what are these plans?

Answer:

To questions 1,3,6,7,8:

The Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, the Hon Tony Burke MP, has stated that he intends to conduct a two-stage consultation process. As a first step, on 16 June 2010 the Minister announced the establishment of three Sustainable Population Strategy Advisory Panels that will provide input on the different and contradictory issues that a sustainable population strategy may consider. These issues will then be compiled into an issues paper that the Minister will release for public comment.

The three advisory panels are:

- a Demographic Change and Liveability Advisory Panel, chaired by Professor Graeme Hugo;
- a Productivity and Prosperity Advisory Panel, chaired by Ms Heather Ridout; and
- a Sustainable Development Advisory Panel, chaired by the Hon. Bob Carr.

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The full membership of the panels is set out in the Minister's press release of 16 July 2010, which can be found at <http://ministers.treasury.gov.au/listdocs.aspx?doctype=0&PageID=003&min=tsb>. The next phase of the consultation process will be informed by the outcome of the work of the advisory panels.

To question 2:

The Treasury met with the Minister on 6 April 2010. Since that time, the Treasury has met with and briefed the Minister on numerous occasions. The Minister has also met with and received briefings from other agencies in the public service. The subject of the briefings is a matter of policy advice.

To questions 5,9,10,11,16,17:

Three advisory panels have been established to scope the range of issues that a sustainable population strategy will need to consider. The panels are scheduled to report to the Minister by mid-December 2010. This process will inform the issues paper which will be the springboard to the broader analysis and consultation that will inform the development of the sustainable population strategy.

To questions 4, 13:

Funding of \$1.3 million in 2010-11 was allocated to the Treasury in the 2010-11 Budget to partly fund the Sustainable Population Strategy Taskforce. The funding covered 6 additional ASL positions and some of the other relevant costs for the Taskforce including any travel and consultancies. The remaining funds have now been transferred to the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities. The Treasury absorbed the costs of the Taskforce in 2009-10.

To questions 12, 14:

While the Minister was located in the Treasury portfolio, Treasury support included provision of factual information, policy analysis and advice, and secretariat support for the advisory panels and any subsequent consultations. The Minister had access to Treasury modelling. The ongoing servicing of the Minister is now a matter for the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities

To questions 15:

There are no formal guidelines or Terms of Reference at this stage. The work of the advisory panels will inform phase two of the Sustainable Population Strategy Taskforce.