

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
Additional Estimates Hearing – February 2010
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Topic: Renewable Remote Power Generation – Coober Pedy

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Question: (Senator Birmingham)

Senator BIRMINGHAM—The minister and Premier Rann said, ‘When it is completed, at the end of 2009, it will generate about 1,860 megawatt hours a year—13 per cent of Coober Pedy’s total electricity requirements.’ Quite clearly, the first part of that statement has long since passed us by, in terms of its completion at the end of 2009. When will it be completed?

Mr Carter—I do not have that information so I will have to take that on notice. As I mentioned, the funding agreement is currently being negotiated.

Senator BIRMINGHAM—Is the funding agreement for the same amount, of \$3.55 million, under the Renewable Remote Power Generation Program?

Mr Carter—I understand that it is, but I might just confirm that. My understanding is that it is for the same quantum, but I will have to check that and take it on notice.

Senator BIRMINGHAM—If you could take that on notice it would be appreciated. And, related to that, could you check that it is for the same specs, in terms of the amount of energy that will be generated, that there will be 26 dishes, each one 14 metres high and tracking the arc of the sun, and all of those statements the minister and Premier Rann were quoted as making at the time.

Answer:

The Australian Government offered to provide funding for 50 per cent of eligible cost for a solar extension to the Coober Pedy power stations under the Renewable Remote Power Generation Program. The Government has made every effort to facilitate these proposals within the program requirements.

In February 2010, the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts entered into funding agreement negotiations with the new proponent for the construction of a solar power extension to the Coober Pedy power station. This followed from the withdrawal of the original proponent.

On 11 March 2010, before a funding agreement had been formalised, the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency received advice from the new proponent that they were unable to proceed due to commercial considerations. As a funding agreement had not been formalised, construction had not commenced.