

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government

Budget Estimates 25 May 2011

Question: 70

Topic: Christmas Island Infrastructure

Asked By: Senator CASH

Type of Question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 8 July 2011

Number of pages: 2

I refer to the answer given to QoN 311 from the February Additional Estimates for Immigration & Citizenship, in which the department stated that the upgrade to the sewerage system on Christmas Island is being funded by the Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government. Please provide further details in relation to the upgrade of the sewerage system including cost and capacity of the system.

Answer:

The Christmas Island wastewater infrastructure is undergoing essential upgrades to cope with an increased demand for wastewater services on the Island. In December 2009, the Australian Government approved a funding package of \$50 million for Christmas Island infrastructure, including \$22.6 million for wastewater infrastructure. A further \$4 million was announced in the 2010-11 Budget to continue support for the newly expanded wastewater infrastructure.

The Christmas Island wastewater treatment plant at Smith Point is operated by the Western Australian Water Corporation on behalf of the Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government. The plant, as built, operated an Intermittently Decanted Extended Aeration (IDEA) system consisting of floating aerators and a mechanical weir decanting system. The original capacity of the treatment plant was 0.65ML per day, which met the sewage output from the community.

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The wastewater treatment plant has now been upgraded to a Modified Ludzack-Ettinger (MLE) Biological Nitrogen Removal Plant, a continuous processing plant capable of meeting flows of up to 1.75ML per day, which meets the demand from the increased population. The project is now in the final commissioning phase, with practical completion expected to be by the end of July 2011. The upgraded plant will meet both licensing conditions and an increasing demand for wastewater facilities on Christmas Island.

The additional \$4 million enabled the continued operation of the expanded waste water services while the plant was being upgraded. The plant continued to meet its operating licence requirements, including output quality, during the upgrade.

The 2011-12 Budget included a further \$10.5 million to upgrade the sewerage pumping station servicing the Immigration Detention Centre to increase pumping capacity, increase new on-site emergency storage, upgrade the pressure main from the Immigration Detention Centre to Smith Point and upgrade the pipeline to increase flow capacity. This work is scheduled for completion in 2012.