

**Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration**

**ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE**

**Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearing – October 2008**

**Department of Finance and Deregulation**

**Finance and Deregulation Portfolio**



**Outcome 1, Output 1.2.3**

**Topic: Transparency of Building Australia Fund decisions**

**Question reference number: F30**

**Type of Question: Hansard F&PA 110 on 21 October 2008**

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 5 December 2008**

**Number of Pages: 1**

**Senator Fifield asked:**

**Senator FIFIELD**—We might ask the minister. Minister, can you guarantee that the recommendations and prioritisations of bodies such as Investment Australia will be made public so that there is transparency?

**Senator Sherry**—The process has not been concluded yet. I am happy to take it on notice and take it up with that minister.

**Senator FIFIELD**—If you could it would be appreciated because these are significant funds that we are talking about. Fingers crossed—the budget surplus is decent and there is \$20 billion in the Building Australia Fund. \$20 billion is a not insignificant figure, and for there to be no transparency—no public disclosure—as to the priorities as determined by Infrastructure Australia would be disturbing. So if you could take that on notice that would be appreciated.

**Senator Sherry**—I will take it on notice.

**Answer:**

The *Nation-building Funds Bill 2008* (the Bill) requires the advisory bodies to make recommendations against relevant evaluation criteria, to the relevant Ministers. Projects can only be funded when the advisory body recommends the project and Government agrees to fund the project. The Bill does not require the public release of these recommendations.

The drawing right limits that will be included in the Annual Appropriation Acts will provide transparency and parliamentary scrutiny of spending from the Nation-building Funds. The creation of special accounts in each of the relevant portfolios to disburse payments will provide transparency on infrastructure spending within specific policy areas.

Matters relating to the priority lists developed by Infrastructure Australia, which is covered by the *Infrastructure Australia Act 2008*, should be directed to the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government.