

Senate Finance and Public Administration Standing Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES HEARINGS

PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET PORTFOLIO

Department/Agency: Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government

Outcome: 2

Topic: Christmas Island Rehabilitation Planning

Senator: SIEWERT

Question reference number: 24

Type of question: Hansard F&PA page 57, Tuesday 19 October 2010

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 3 December 2010

Mr Yates—I just need to clarify: when you say the sites previously, are they the sites that the park has been previously working on or are they mine sites that the mine is working on?

Senator SIEWERT—I mean mine sites that the mine was working on that were subject to the applications for expanding mining. Some of those already had regrowth on them, as I recall, and I am wondering if there are any other of those areas that need further rehabilitation work.....

Mr Yates—We certainly provide funding but they work through the program. We can certainly take it on notice and develop that answer with them, yes.

Senator SIEWERT—If you could, about what areas and are there any other areas within that that are the high-priority sites? Without trying to be judgmental, we also talked about the relatively slow pace of the rehabilitation process in terms of funding. As I understand from what they said last night, and I hope I am not misinterpreting their words, they are working to the pace for which the funding is available. I am aware, having talked to them in the past, it is fairly slow.

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Answer:

The application by Phosphate Resources Limited (PRL) to mine eight additional sites on Christmas Island was recently rejected by the former Minister for Environment Protection, Heritage and the Arts, the Hon Peter Garrett AM MP. PRL has not mined these eight sites.

A conservation levy, paid by PRL, funds the current rehabilitation program undertaken by the Director of National Parks under a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government. Rehabilitation areas on Christmas Island are prioritised by Parks Australia to benefit the habitat of a large endangered seabird (the Abbott's Booby) found on the Island and improve ecosystem connectivity at sites that PRL surrenders to the Commonwealth as it finishes mining. The current rehabilitation program does not encompass the areas that were subject to the application by PRL to expand its operations.