

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates 15-18 October 2012

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Outcome/Program: 1.1.1 Domestic Policy

Topic: National Environmental Significance Matters

Senator: Ms Waters

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Question:

Senator WATERS: Can you confirm that the government is intending to draft standards that will cover all matters of national environmental significance?

Mr Burnett: The government has not yet finalised its position. There is a set of draft standards which are the subject of consultation with the states, but there has been no decision yet on the final scope of those standards.

Senator WATERS: Which matters of NES do those draft standards cover so far?

Mr Burnett: I cannot answer questions about the content of the draft standards. They are still the subject of current negotiations with states.

Senator WATERS: But in terms of the work the department-obviously the officers outposted with PM&C-is doing, can you advise that, so far, the drafting is intended to cover all of those matters of NES? Obviously all of that is subject to negotiation with the states, but, in terms of the drafting time of the department, has that been covering all the matters of NES?

Mr Burnett: As I said, the scope of what the standards might cover relates to the content of the document, so I would have to take it on notice if you were asking to see a copy of that draft document.

Senator WATERS: I would love to see a copy but I did not envisage that I would be able to. I was simply asking which matters of NES the standards are covering.

Answer:

To inform the development of approval bilateral agreements under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) with the States and Territories, the Commonwealth has drafted a framework of standards which reflects the specific accreditation requirements of the EPBC Act. The draft standards were made publicly available on 2 November 2012 to provide an opportunity for the public

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to understand the approach of the Commonwealth to the development of these agreements.

The draft standards describe the matters of national environmental significance to which they apply, and are available at the website of the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities at:

<http://environment.gov.au/epbc/publications/accreditation-standards-framework.html>.