

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Transport and Regional Services

Department of Transport and Regional Services

Consideration of Additional Budget Estimates February 2005

Question No.: PTLG 01

Topic: Commonwealth AusLink Road Responsibility

Hansard Page: p. 43 (Monday, 14/2/05)

Output: Programmes (Transport & Local Government) Group

Senator Johnston asked:

I will ask you to provide me with some information about the publication, to the State Government of Western Australia, of the AusLink road responsibility pertaining to the Commonwealth: when that was published and, if it is appropriate, a copy of the correspondence to the Western Australians telling them where the line lies in terms of responsibility. This road is a very important road, and we are told that it is a Commonwealth responsibility. You can see that the background to that is, I think, very emotionally-charged, given that we are told that it is ours and I am now convinced—as I have been for some long time—that it is in fact a State responsibility. I would like to see the evidence so that I know just what is actually going on in terms of the denial of liability.

Answer:

Attached are the following:

- A copy of a letter dated 7 June 2004 (**Attachment A**) that was sent to the Western Australian Minister for Planning and Infrastructure advising of the Australian Government's framework to build Australia's national transport through the release of the *AusLink White Paper*. A copy of Western Australia's *AusLink Forward Works Programme for 2004-05 to 2008-09* (**Attachment C**) and a copy of the *AusLink White Paper* (**Attachment B**) that details the network were included in the original letter.
- A map (**Attachment D**) of Western Australia's National Highway Network, prior to AusLink: The Eyre, Coolgardie-Esperance and Great Eastern highways on the Perth-Adelaide link, the Great Northern and Victoria highways on the Perth-Darwin link; and in Perth, the National Highway link comprised the Roe Highway from its intersection with the Great Eastern Highway to its junction with the Great Northern Highway.
- A map (**Attachment E**) of the AusLink National Network in Western Australia: The Eyre, Coolgardie-Esperance and Great Eastern highways on the Perth-Adelaide corridor, the Great Northern and Victoria highways on the Perth-Darwin corridor, and the section of the Roe highway that joins them, the inter-state railway connecting Perth and Adelaide via the trans-continental, Port Augusta and Whyalla railway lines, the Perth to Bunbury road and rail links; and the key urban corridors: the Roe, Leach and Tonkin highways, the

Kwinana Freeway and possible Fremantle Eastern bypass, the links to Fremantle Port via the Stirling Highway, Queen Victoria Street, Beach Street and Tydeman and Port Beach Roads; and rail links to Mundijong via Yangebup and to Kewdale inter-modal terminal, Fremantle Port and outer Harbour.

Both the maps are public documents.

PTLG 01 – Attachment A to Attachment E:
A – 2 pages
B – over 131 pages in hard copy
C – 1 page
D – 2 pages
E -3 pages

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Transport and Regional Services

Department of Transport and Regional Services

Consideration of Additional Budget Estimates February 2005

Question No.: PTLG 02

Topic: Strategic Funding Projects

Hansard Page: p. 47 (Monday, 14/2/05)

Output: Programmes Group – Transport & Local Government

Senator Bishop asked:

What degree of work had been done by the Department on each or any of those 18 proposals prior to the Government making its electoral commitment?

Answer:

The response is yet to be submitted.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Transport and Regional Services

Department of Transport and Regional Services

Consideration of Additional Budget Estimates February 2005

Question No.: PTLG 03

Topic: Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) Investment Proposal

Hansard Page: p. 55 (Monday, 14/2/05)

Output: Programmes (Transport & Local Government) Group

Senator Bishop asked:

One hundred and nineteen million dollars over the next five years will go to the ARTC to:

... increase passing opportunities and improve signalling systems on the rail track between Newcastle and Brisbane.

Mr Hogan—Sorry, for the what?

Senator MARK BISHOP—For the North Coast rail link; it is on page 37 of the *White Paper*.

Mr Hogan—It is \$119 million, is it?

Senator MARK BISHOP—It says:

The [ARTC] proposes to invest an estimated \$119 million over the next five years to increase passing opportunities and improve signalling systems on the rail track between Newcastle and Brisbane.

Mr Hogan—I heard you asking earlier about investment of the \$450 million. I think the best thing is to provide you with the proposal on that, and that will show the intentions with regard to that project as well.

Answer:

Details of the ARTC's investment strategy for the North – South Corridor and Hunter Valley have been provided to the Committee as part of the answer to question **PR 08**.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Transport and Regional Services

Department of Transport and Regional Services

Consideration of Additional Budget Estimates February 2005

Question No.: PTLG 04

Topic: Noise Amelioration NSW Standards

Hansard Page: p. 57 (Monday, 14/2/05)

Output: Programmes (Transport & Local Government)

Senator Allison asked:

Is it possible to provide the Committee with a copy of [NSW road traffic noise standards]?

Answer:

The relevant NSW noise standards are set out in the Environment Protection Authority's *Environmental Criteria for Road Traffic Noise* (1999), pages 4-14, a copy of which is **attached**. This document is available in full on the World Wide Web at <http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/resources/roadnoise.pdf>.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Transport and Regional Services

Department of Transport and Regional Services

Consideration of Additional Budget Estimates February 2005

Question No.: PTLG 05

Topic: Bass Strait Passenger Vehicle Equalisation Scheme

Hansard Page: p. 60 (Monday, 14/2/05)

Output: Programmes (Transport & Local Government) Group

Senator O'Brien asked:

Can you give me the figure to the end of December for the Sydney-Devonport subsidy?

Answer:

The subsidy paid for the Sydney to Devonport service from its inception on 13 January 2004 to 31 December 2004 is \$1.3m

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Transport and Regional Services

Department of Transport and Regional Services

Consideration of Additional Budget Estimates February 2005

Question No.: PTLG 06

Topic: Tasmanian Wheat Freight Scheme

Hansard Page: p. 60 (Monday, 14/2/05)

Output: Programmes (Transport & Local Government) Group

Senator O'Brien asked:

Can you give me the figures on notice comparing the subsidy between bulk and containerised wheat for the previous three years?

Answer:

Financial Year	(\$ Subsidy Containers	(\$)Subsidy Bulk	Total
2001-2002	178,150.44	1,021,849.56	1,200,000.00
2002-2003	120,646.72	1,079,353.28	1,200,000.00
2003-2004	182,463.63	1,017,536.37	1,200,000.00

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Transport and Regional Services

Department of Transport and Regional Services

Consideration of Additional Budget Estimates February 2005

Question No.: PTLG 07

Topic: ARTC Works Programme on Mainline Track between Sydney and Melbourne

Hansard Page: p. 61 (Monday, 14/2/05)

Output: Programmes (Transport & Local Government) Group

Senator Bishop asked:

Are you going to provide on notice the \$432 million that ARTC has undertaken to invest on the mainline track between Sydney and Melbourne?

Answer:

Details of the ARTC's investment strategy for the North – South Corridor and Hunter Valley have been provided to the Committee as part of the answer to question **PR 08**.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Transport and Regional Services

Department of Transport and Regional Services

Consideration of Additional Budget Estimates February 2005

Question No.: PTLG 08

Topic: Eyre Highway Projects

Hansard Page: p. 64 (Monday, 14/2/05)

Output: Programmes (Transport & Local Government) Group

Senator Bishop asked:

Then there is an increase in the year 2007-08. What part of the Eyre Highway?

Answer:

It is intended under the AusLink Programme to widen and rehabilitate sections of the Eyre Highway in Western Australia at Caiguna East, Balladonia East and West and then at Heartbreak Ridge. The pavement on these sections of the highway generally exceeds 35 years of age, and has reached the end of its economic life.

The new work will involve rehabilitating the pavement and widening the road to a 9m wide pavement seal. This will provide two 3.5m travelling lanes, two 1m sealed shoulders and two 1m unsealed shoulders. The work will also involve some realignment of sub-standard horizontal and vertical curves.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Transport and Regional Services

Department of Transport and Regional Services

Consideration of Additional Budget Estimates February 2005

Question No.: PTLG 09

Topic: Bypass at Clackline

Hansard Page: p. 66 (Monday, 14/2/05)

Output: Programmes (Transport & Local Government) Group

Senator Bishop asked:

What is the \$3 million towards the bypass at Clackline for?

Is this a bypass around Clackline or is it bypassing the bridge?

Answer:

The \$3 million for the Clackline Bypass will provide for the realignment of 1.5.km of the Great Eastern Highway between Nanamullen Bridge and the western end of the town of Clackline. This will also involve replacement of the existing timber bridge over the Clackline Brook with a reinforced concrete box culvert structure including a pedestrian/equestrian underpass.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Transport and Regional Services

Department of Transport and Regional Services

Consideration of Additional Budget Estimates February 2005

Question No.: PTLG 10

Topic: Albury/Murray River Crossing

Hansard Page: p. 65 (Monday, 14/2/05)

Output: Programmes (Transport & Local Government) Group

Senator Allison asked:

Can you also indicate what penalty rates apply in different circumstances, for instance, whether delays presumably would attract penalty rates—that is delays that cause the contract to be longer than previously agreed?

Can you indicate what the penalty rates are—whether they cover construction delay due to administration delays, weather, protest action or court action? Can you indicate whether there is in the contract the provision whereby such delays would be subject to payments and, if so, how they are calculated?

Answer:

In relation to the NSW section of the project, the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) has advised that the contractor may claim damages from the RTA for an act of prevention. These acts would include some administration delays by the RTA, the RTA's representative or another agent, contractor or consultant engaged by the RTA, but not weather, protest action or court action. Damages would be assessed according to a schedule of daily rates included in the contractor's bid for the tender. The rates for the NSW section range between about \$50,000 and \$200,000 per day depending on the stage of work impacted.

The contractor would be liable to pay liquidated damages at the rate of \$62,962 per day for delays on the NSW section beyond the contract date of construction completion, unless there was an excusable cause of delay. An excusable cause of delay, consisting of an act of prevention, a force majeure event, or a change in the law, may be grounds for a delay in completing the contract. A *force majeure* event would not include protest action or court action. However, the RTA has discretion to provide an extension of time if it considers protest action or court action justified the extension. This would not involve any additional payment to the contractor. An allowance for adverse weather is built into the bid and therefore no extension of time would be given for adverse weather.

In relation to the Victorian section of the project, VicRoads has advised that the contractor may claim damages from the VicRoads for delays caused by administration

or principal. As in the case of the NSW section, these would be calculated according to a schedule included in the contractor's bid and are in the order of \$40,000 per day.

The contractor would be liable to pay liquidated damages at the rate of \$27,500 per week for delays on the Victorian section beyond the contract date of construction completion. VicRoads would consider a claim by the contractor for an extension of time for delays caused by protest action or court action. This is unlikely to involve any additional payment to the contractor unless it could be shown that it was a principal-caused delay. An allowance for adverse weather is built in to the bid and therefore no extension of time would be given for adverse weather unless the actual time lost for adverse weather conditions exceeded the time allowed in the contract.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Transport and Regional Services

Department of Transport and Regional Services

Consideration of Additional Budget Estimates February 2005

Question No.: PTLG 11

Topic: Albury/Murray River Crossing

Hansard Page: p. 65 (Monday, 14/2/05)

Output: Programmes (Transport & Local Government) Group

Senator Allison asked:

In relation to land acquisitions, how much of that was not budgeted but is now required to be made?

And if we could have a comparison between the Budget as it now stands, or as it previously stood, and the actual cost of the land acquisition, that would be useful. Is that possible?

Answer:

Land acquisition costs in NSW increased from \$10.55m in the pre-tender (2003) construction estimate to \$27.039m in the post-tender (2004) construction estimate. While there are a number of properties still subject to court action, the RTA considers the latter figure to be reasonable.

Land acquisition costs in Victoria increased from \$8.8m in the pre-tender (2003) construction estimate to \$11.1m in the post-tender (2004) construction estimate. However, VicRoads has not yet finalised actual costs of land acquisition and may not do so for some time as it can take considerable time to finalise negotiations prior to settlement in some cases.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Transport and Regional Services

Department of Transport and Regional Services

Consideration of Additional Budget Estimates February 2005

Question No.: PTLG 12

Topic: Bypass at Clackline and Tiger Brennan Drive

Hansard Page: p. 66 (Monday, 14/2/05)

Output: Programmes (Transport & Local Government) Group

Senator Bishop asked:

Can you provide me with the detail on the bypass at Clackline, in due course, on notice? In terms of the road access to the East Arm Port in Darwin?

Answer:

Refer also to answer in **PTLG 09**.

The Australian Government, through AusLink, will provide \$13.7 million from 2006/07 to 2007/08 to jointly fund the proposed extension of the national network to include Darwin's East Arm Port, via Tiger Brennan Drive (Stuart Highway to Berrimah Road) and Berrimah Road.

Traffic management on the existing section of Berrimah Road will be improved by extending the existing duplication and installing traffic signals to control traffic accessing the rail head and passenger terminal.

Berrimah Road, between the rail head and the proposed new section of Tiger Brennan Drive, will also be duplicated. This divided carriageway will include a 'road-over-rail' overpass to accommodate dual railway tracks.

Darwin's East Arm Port is the location of new wharf facilities and a logical Northern end-point for the AusLink National Network. This project is expected to provide better outcomes for:

- the movement of freight to and from the new Darwin Rail Terminal and Business Park;
- the live cattle export trade;
- the import and distribution of refined petroleum products;
- offshore oil and gas industry in the Timor and Arafura Seas; and
- border protection and defence purposes.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Transport and Regional Services

Department of Transport and Regional Services

Consideration of Additional Budget Estimates February 2005

Question No.: PTLG 13

Topic: Roadworks

Hansard Page: p. 67 (Monday, 14/2/05)

Output: Programmes (Transport & Local Government) Group

Senator Bishop asked:

What about the \$13.8 million for the works on the section between Midland and Wubin?

Answer:

The Australian Government has committed \$30.8 million under AusLink to upgrade the Great Northern Highway between Midland and Wubin.

The funding has been allocated to upgrade and widen the highway between Lennard Street and Muchea (\$9.6 million in 2004-05 and \$7.2 million in 2005-06), and construct thirteen new passing lanes, widen and reconstruct other poorly-aligned sections of the highway between Muchea and Wubin (\$5 million in 2005-06, \$5 million in 2006-07, and \$4 million in 2007-08).

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Transport and Regional Services

Department of Transport and Regional Services

Consideration of Additional Budget Estimates February 2005

Question No.: PTLG 14

Topic: Roadworks

Hansard Page: p.72 (Monday, 14/2/05)

Output: Programmes (Transport and Local Government) Group

Senator Bishop asked:

If I give you the names of five projects, can you tell me if you have the profiles for them as yet? The Gateway Bridge?

- the Brisbane urban corridor through Mt Gravatt?
- the Ipswich Motorway capacity upgrade?
- The Ipswich Motorway-Logan Motorway interchange?

Can you take that on notice and provide the answer on notice when you have it. And the traffic management programmes through the Brisbane Urban Corridor.

Answer:

The Queensland Government announced on 17 February 2005 that the State will deliver the Gateway upgrade project through the operation and collection of tolls with Queensland Motorways Ltd and with Queensland Treasury Corporation funding. The project schedule envisages a start to construction in late 2006 and target completion by early to mid-2011.

The Australian Government has agreed to fund a number of initiatives along the Brisbane urban corridor (including the section through Mt Gravatt), which are estimated to cost around \$20m. They include:

- . more than \$4m for approved minor works and additional planning investigations as a result of the Brisbane Urban Corridor Study;
- . \$10m to upgrade Granard Road intersections with Balham and Beattie Roads;
- . \$5.75m to pilot and install various technology-based improvements;

Most of these works are expected to be carried out and funded in 2004/05 and in 2005/06, subject to the satisfactory completion of planning.

The Australian Government is funding \$54.9m in *interim* works along the Ipswich Motorway, which are expected to be completed around July 2006. Funds available are \$24m in 2004/05, \$27.7m in 2005/06 and \$1m in 2006/07.

The Government has also agreed to fund the feasibility study of a northern corridor alternative to the Ipswich Motorway, which will be completed by April 2005 and funded in 2004/05, subject to receipt of further details of costs from Queensland authorities. Decisions on further capacity upgrading rest, in part, with the outcome of the study.

Queensland is currently preparing the design and considering delivery arrangements for the \$160m Ipswich-Logan Motorway interchange upgrade. An application for funding of this project, which is currently scheduled for completion by end 2008, is expected in the near future.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Transport and Regional Services

Department of Transport and Regional Services

Consideration of Additional Budget Estimates February 2005

Question No.: PTLG 15

Topic: Roads to Recovery

Hansard Page: p. 75 (Monday, 14/2/05)

Output: Programmes (Transport & Local Government) Group

Senator Bishop asked

Can the Department supply the Committee with funding by Electorate for the last financial year for the Roads to Recovery Program and the Roads of National Importance Program?

Answer:

The information requested is tabulated in the **attachments**.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Transport and Regional Services

Department of Transport and Regional Services

Consideration of Additional Budget Estimates February 2005

Question No.: PTLG 16

Topic: Ansett Levy

Hansard Page: p.76 (Monday, 14/2/05)

Output: Programmes (Transport & Local Government) Group

Senator Allison asked:

Back when decisions were being made about how the repayments would work, did you provide the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations with estimates of what the levy would collect? Is it possible to provide a figure as to what was collected?

Answer:

Yes. DOTARS originally estimated ticket levy receipts at \$8 million per month.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Transport and Regional Services

Department of Transport and Regional Services

Consideration of Additional Budget Estimates February 2005

Question No.: PTLG 17

Topic: Ansett Levy

Hansard Page: p.76 (Monday, 14/2/05)

Output: Programmes (Transport & Local Government) Group

- Did you report monthly on the amount of levy coming in or did you collect that information less regularly?
- So you were able to compare the revenue that was coming in with the estimate for each of those months and provide advice to –
- But presumably you have records of the information that was provided. Is that available?

Answer:

- Yes, the amount of levy collected was reported on a monthly basis.
- Yes. Detailed analysis by DOTARS identified that its original estimate (i.e. \$8 million/month) was made using generally-conservative assumptions. The overall mean rate of receipt from the levy was \$13 million per month. In its FY 2003-04 Performance Audit of SEESA, the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) acknowledged the difficulty DOTARS experienced in estimating levy receipts, especially given the state of the aviation market following the events of September 11, 2001.
- Yes, the **attached** table details the monthly levy revenue for the period of the levy collection. A copy is provided to DEWR each month.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Transport and Regional Services

Department of Transport and Regional Services

Consideration of Additional Budget Estimates February 2005

Question No.: PTLG 18

Topic: Staff Profile

Hansard Page: p.2 (Friday, 18/2/05)

Output: Programmes Group (Transport and Local Government)

Senator O'Brien asked:

What is the staffing profile of this branch? ...

Could you give me a breakdown by classification?

Answer:

The Branch is funded for a full-time equivalent staff of 27.3. The staffing profile for the Branch as at February 2005 was:

Classification	Number	FTE
SES Band 1	1	1
Executive Level 2	4	4
Executive Level 1	10	9.7
APS 6	6	5.6
APS 5	5	5
APS 4	1	1
APS 3	1	1
Total	28	27.3

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Transport and Regional Services

Department of Transport and Regional Services

Consideration of Additional Budget Estimates February 2005

Question No.: PTLG 19

Topic: Government Response to Hawker Report

Hansard Page: p.3 (Friday, 18/2/05)

Output: Programmes Group (Transport and Local Government)

Senator O'Brien asked:

The Department's Annual Report identifies the establishment of a Departmental task force in response to the Report. On what date was that established?

Answer:

The task force was established on 25 November 2003.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Transport and Regional Services

Department of Transport and Regional Services

Consideration of Additional Budget Estimates February 2005

Question No.: PTLG 20

Topic: Hawker Report Task Force

Hansard Page: p.5 (Friday, 18/2/05)

Output: Programmes Group (Transport and Local Government)

Senator O'Brien asked:

Would it be possible to get a copy of the letter written to the Departments (of Treasury and Finance and Administration) asking for their participation (in the Hawker Report Task Force)?

Answer:

Mr Ken Matthews, then Secretary of the Department of Transport and Regional Services, wrote in identical terms to the Secretaries of the Departments of Treasury and Finance and Administration on 1 December 2003 seeking their views about the possibility of seconding appropriately-qualified officers from the Treasury and Department of Finance and Administration to the Local Government Task Force and inviting other ideas. A copy of the letter to the Secretary of the Treasury is **attached**.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Transport and Regional Services

Department of Transport and Regional Services

Consideration of Additional Budget Estimates February 2005

Question No.: PTLG 21

Topic: Hawker Report Task Force

Hansard Page: p.6 (Friday, 18/2/05)

Output: Programmes Group (Transport and Local Government)

Senator O'Brien asked:

Apart from the two who were engaged substantially near enough to full-time on this task for three months, what other Departmental resources have been devoted to the operation of the task force? You talked about it in general terms; I am trying to get a clear understanding of the resource pull on the Department of this work.

Answer:

Staff of the Local Government Section within DOTARS contributed to the work of the task force as required. Contributing staff included an Executive Level 2 officer and 3 Executive Level 1 officers.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Transport and Regional Services

Department of Transport and Regional Services

Consideration of Additional Budget Estimates February 2005

Question No.: PTLG 22

Topic: Local Government Joint Officers Group (LOGJOG)

Hansard Page: p.7 (Friday, 18/2/05)

Output: Programmes Group (Transport and Local Government)

Senator O'Brien asked:

If you could (provide the number of meetings of the Local Government Joint Officers Group at which the Hawker Report has been discussed), and could you also give us the dates of those discussions.

Answer:

There have been 3 meetings of the Local Government Joint Officers Group since the release of the Hawker Report, one meeting of which was a teleconference.

The meeting dates were:

24 March 2004

16 September 2004

4 November 2004

There have also been 2 meetings of the Local Government and Planning Joint Committee, which includes members of the Local Government Joint Officers Group, since the release of the Hawker Report.

The meeting dates were:

15 January 2004

11 May 2004

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Transport and Regional Services

Department of Transport and Regional Services

Consideration of Additional Budget Estimates February 2005

Question No.: PTLG 23

Topic: Government Response to the Hawker Report

Hansard Page: p.9 (Friday, 18/2/05)

Output: Programmes (Transport and Local Government)

Senator O'Brien asked:

Has Mr Lloyd or the Department received any representations from Local Government associations expressing any frustration with the delayed response to the Hawker Report?

Answer:

A search of Departmental files has not revealed correspondence from any Local Government Association expressing any frustration at the delay in the Government response to the Hawker Report.

One item of correspondence from an Association mentioning the timing of the response was located, the mention expressing interest in the response and also indicating a preference that the response not be rushed or politicised because of the (then) proximity of the Federal Election.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Transport and Regional Services

Department of Transport and Regional Services

Consideration of Additional Budget Estimates February 2005

Question No.: PTLG 24

Topic: Late Answers to Notice Paper QoN

Hansard Page: p.10 (Friday, 18/2/05)

Output: Programmes Group (Transport and Local Government)

Senator O'Brien asked:

In December, I asked Mr Lloyd a question on notice about the 2003-04 Report on the Operation of the *Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1995*, known as the Local Government National Report. It is question on notice No. 279 and remains unanswered. Can you tell me on what date the Department provided the answer to Mr Lloyd's office for clearance?

Answer:

Question on notice No. 279 was provided to Mr Lloyd's office for clearance on 16 February 2005.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Transport and Regional Services

Department of Transport and Regional Services

Consideration of Additional Budget Estimates February 2005

Question No.: PTLG 25

Topic: Late Answers to Notice Paper QoN

Hansard Page: p.11 (Friday, 18/2/05)

Output: Programmes Group (Transport and Local Government)

Senator O'Brien asked:

How often is it that the Department is not able to meet the 30-day turnaround time?
That is a broad question. I am referring to this Branch.

Answer:

Apart from the answer to question on notice No. 279, there have been no other instances since January 2004 when an answer to a question on notice from the Local Government and Natural Disasters Branch did not meet the 30-day turnaround time.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Transport and Regional Services

Department of Transport and Regional Services

Consideration of Additional Budget Estimates February 2005

Question No.: PTLG 26

Topic: Local Government Financial Assistance Grants

Hansard Page: p.12 (Friday, 18/2/05)

Output: Programmes Group (Transport and Local Government)

Senator O'Brien asked:

There is additional cost in the current financial year and in each of the three out years. Is there a breakdown which shows where those increases will be allocated to or where increases and reductions have taken place in that context? Is there a public document that I can be referred to which will show it?

Answer:

No.

The amounts shown in the Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements for the Local Government Financial Assistance Grants are based on estimates of the escalation factors provided in October by Treasury for the years shown. These escalation factors reflect estimates of CPI and population increases for those years. No breakdown of the estimate of the escalation factor is provided; that is, the estimate does not contain separate estimates of the CPI or population increase, just a composite factor for the two parameters combined.

While the Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements indicate an increase in the estimated national allocation of grant in each of the reported years, it is possible for the estimated entitlement for a State to decline if that State's share of the national population (and thus, share of the national grant) is declining. However, as no data on population is provided at the time of preparing for Additional Estimates, no estimate of changes in State grants is made.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Transport and Regional Services

Department of Transport and Regional Services

Consideration of Additional Budget Estimates February 2005

Question No.: PTLG 27

Topic: Parameter Changes for Local Government Financial Assistance Grants

Hansard Page: p.12 (Friday, 18/2/05)

Output: Programmes Group (Transport and Local Government)

Senator O'Brien asked:

In understanding that, the parameter change would be helpful as well. Is there a breakdown of how that has affected individual States?

Answer:

Treasury provides to DOTARS estimates of the escalation factors for the current and three out years for use in preparing Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements. These estimates do not include separate identification of the parameters used to calculate the escalation factor; that is, no separate estimate of population change (or CPI) is provided.

Treasury has advised that the estimates of CPI and population used are not published and are not available.

As no data on population is provided, no estimate of changes in State grants is made.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Transport and Regional Services

Department of Transport and Regional Services

Consideration of Additional Budget Estimates February 2005

Question No.: PTLG 28

Topic: Local Government Financial Assistance Grants

Hansard Page: p.13 (Friday, 18/2/05)

Output: Programmes Group (Transport and Local Government)

Senator O'Brien asked:

Perhaps you can give me on notice an explanation of how we get to those figures (increases in expected grant) in the out years.

Answer:

Table – Escalation Factors for Local Government Financial Assistance Grants

	2004-05 Budget	Official Determination under LG(FA) Act*	Additional Estimates
YEAR/DATE	MARCH 2004	JUNE 2004	OCTOBER 2004
2003-04	1.0288	1.0316	
2004-05	1.0318	1.0310	1.0394
2005-06	1.0371		1.0377
2006-07	1.0364		1.0356
2007-08	1.0357		1.0363

* *Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1995*

The estimates of the escalation factors for the Local Government Financial Assistance Grants are updated several times during the financial year. In the above table, the figure for 2003-04 under *Official Determination under LG(FA) Act* is final, ie it defines the grant entitlement for that year. The figure below it in the same column is the figure used as the basis for the payments in 2004-05 and is subject to change at the end of the year when the final figure is determined. The figures in the other columns are for Australian Government budgeting purposes.

The changes quoted in the Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements arise from:

1. the change to the estimates of the escalation factors between the 2004-05 Budget and Additional Estimates, and
2. in the case of the 2005-06 adjustment, an expected under-payment in 2004-05 of \$13,208,000.

Looking at the estimated factors in the table made at the time of the Budget and then at the time of Additional Estimates, the estimates for the out years remain relatively unchanged. The significant change lies in the estimate for 2004-05, which has risen from 1.0318 to 1.0394. This change has had two effects:

- a) increasing the estimated grant for 2004-05 causes all future years to also increase as each year's entitlement is equal to the previous year's entitlement multiplied by the escalation factor, and
- b) revealing an expected under payment for that year (as mentioned in (2) above).

The increase in the 2004-05 estimated factor has increased the estimated grant for that and future years by around \$17m. When combined with the expected under-payment in 2004-05 (\$13,208,000), the expected payment in 2005-06 has increased by the \$30,960,000 contained in the Additional Estimates.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Transport and Regional Services

Department of Transport and Regional Services

Consideration of Additional Budget Estimates February 2005

Question No.: PTLG 29

Topic: Regional Flood Mitigation Programme

Hansard Page: p.14 (Friday, 18/2/05)

Output: Programmes Group (Transport and Local Government)

Senator O'Brien asked:

Has the Department drafted that response and has it gone to the Minister yet?

Answer:

The Department has drafted the response which has been signed off by Minister Lloyd. The response was provided to the Table Office on 4 March 2005.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Transport and Regional Services

Department of Transport and Regional Services

Consideration of Additional Budget Estimates February 2005

Question No.: PTLG 30

Topic: Regional Flood Mitigation Programme

Hansard Page: p.15 (Friday, 18/2/05)

Output: Programmes Group (Transport and Local Government)

Senator O'Brien asked:

- (1) What was the timing of the Ministerial appointment that occasioned the delay?
- (2) I am trying to find out, given that it is significant enough to be reported in the Annual Report, what the nature of that delay was. Do you want to take that on notice and give me a full answer?
- (3) Is it possible to get a list of the projects approved and their status during that financial year so that we can understand where the bottlenecks occurred after that initial problem?

Answer:

- (1) Senator the Hon Ian Campbell was appointed as Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads on 7 October 2003.
- (2) The Department delayed the submissions of recommended projects to the Minister to allow time to brief the Minister and his staff on relevant programmes and processes.
- (3) **Attachment A** provides details of projects funded under the Regional Flood Mitigation Programme in 2003-04 including those completed and the purpose of each. **Attachment B** provides details of dates when submissions from the States and Territories were received, sent to the Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads, and approved by the Minister.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Transport and Regional Services

Department of Transport and Regional Services

Consideration of Additional Budget Estimates February 2005

Question No.: PTLG 31

Topic: SA Bushfire Assistance

Hansard Page: p.19 (Friday, 18/2/05)

Output: Programmes Group (Transport and Local Government)

Senator Kerry O'Brien asked:

- (1) The total cost to the Commonwealth of its response to the South Australian Bushfires?
- (2) Whether the Commonwealth rejected any requests for assistance from the South Australian Government?

Answer:

- (1) The total cost to the Commonwealth of its response to the South Australian Bushfires.
- (2) Whether the Commonwealth rejected any requests for assistance from the South Australian Government.

Answer:

- (1) It is not possible to provide full estimates of the total cost of the Australian Government's response to the South Australian bushfires. The following Australian Government Departments and agencies provided information regarding their activities in response to the South Australian Bushfires:

- The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) has advised that a range of services, which fall within the ATO's normal business activities, have been provided to support the victims of the South Australian Bushfires. The value of these services provided in response to the South Australian Bushfires has not been separately costed. The services include:
 - Establishment of a specialised phone service to answer enquiries from taxpayers;
 - Provision of South Australian-based enquiry staff to utilise local knowledge in addressing issues;
 - Fast tracking refunds for those affected by the fires;
 - Granting extra time to pay debts without interest charges;

- Granting extra time to meet activity statement and other lodgement obligations;
 - Helping to reconstruct tax records damaged or lost in the fires; and
 - Tax Office Staff currently working with the South Australian Farmers' Federation to provide information and assistance to local farmers, including encouraging participation in workshops and seminars.
- The Department of Family and Community Services has advised that as at 14 March 2005, 287 claims for ex gratia payments were paid through Centrelink at a total cost of \$332,000.
 - On 25 February 2005, the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Hon Warren Truss MP, and the Minister for Environment and Heritage, Senator the Hon Ian Campbell, announced a \$2.68 million funding package for Natural Resource Management-related Bushfire recovery activities in the Lower Eyre Peninsula. The Australian Government's \$2.68 million commitment is contingent on the South Australian Government matching that amount.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has also advised that the Eyre Peninsula Natural Resource Management (NRM) team will redirect or use \$148,682 of surplus funding from NRM projects in the region for fire recovery efforts.

- Geoscience Australia (GA) has advised that it has assisted the South Australian Country Fire Service, CSIRO, the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre and the South Australian Police Department in collecting spatial and engineering data of the affected Bushfire communities. GA has estimated that the administrative and employment costs in assisting these agencies are approximately \$19,000 over and above GA's official work program.
- The Department of Defence has undertaken to provide the details and costs of its assistance to the Eyre Peninsular bushfires as soon as possible.

(2) The Australian Government did not reject any requests for assistance from the South Australian Government for Bushfire assistance.

The South Australian Government has advised that negotiation is continuing on the nature and degree of support required for longer term recovery of the affected communities.

The South Australian Premier, Mr Rann, sought an initial matching \$6 million contribution from the Australian Government towards a Bushfire recovery fund to assist victims of the Eyre Peninsula Bushfires.

The composition of Premier Rann's \$6 million recovery fund is not yet clear.

Acting Prime Minister John Anderson responded to Premier Rann on 19 January 2005 confirming that the Australian Government provided support for victims of the Bushfires through *ex-gratia* payments to those who lost homes or family members and noted that immediate assistance to the South Australian Government was also available for the partial reimbursement of Personal Hardship and Distress payments, under the Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements.

Subsequently, the South Australian Government has advised it is preparing a broad 'business case' for Australian Government partnership support with an estimated value of \$6 million for community recovery type measures. A formal approach for funding from Premier Rann to the Prime Minister had not been received by 4 April 2005.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Transport and Regional Services

Department of Transport and Regional Services

Consideration of Additional Budget Estimates February 2005

Question No.: PTLG 32

Topic: SA Bushfire Assistance

Hansard Page: p.19 (Friday, 18/2/05)

Output: Programmes Group (Transport and Local Government)

Senator Kerry O'Brien asked:

Whether the Commonwealth sought to recover any costs from the South Australian Government with respect to any assistance it provided?

Answer:

The Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) has advised that it will seek to recover costs from the South Australian Government to reimburse the Bushfire CRC's partner agencies, CSIRO and Geoscience Australia, for some costs. As at 15 March 2005, the total cost to be reimbursed to GA for one officer is \$3,240.16. There is no detail available on what costs the CSIRO may seek to recover.

No other Department or agency has advised that it intends to recover any costs.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Transport and Regional Services

Department of Transport and Regional Services

Consideration of Additional Budget Estimates February 2005

Question No.: PTLG 33

Topic: COAG National Inquiry on Bushfire Mitigation and Management

Hansard Page: p.28 (Friday, 18/2/05)

Output: Programmes Group (Transport and Local Government)

Senator O'Brien asked:

Recommendation 9.2 says:

... Insurance Council of Australia be asked to review the Industry's Code of Practice in response to the lessons learnt from the claims arising from the 2002-03 bushfires.

I assume that the Department or the Minister would have made that request?

Answer:

The Treasury has advised that it will shortly be writing to the Insurance Council of Australia asking that a review of the Industry's Code of Practice take account of lessons learnt from the claims arising from the 2002-03 bushfires.