

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates February 2007

Transport and Regional Services

Question No: AUSL 01

Division/Agency: AusLink

Topic: AusLink National Projects

Hansard Page: 13 (15/02/07)

Senator O'Brien asked:

Senator O'BRIEN—Is it possible to get an update of the spreadsheet showing the status of all AusLink related projects—expenditure, forward estimates, dates of expected completion and so on—as they currently stand, as has been provided in the past?

Ms Riggs—The schedule we have provided in the past is a schedule of all AusLink national projects. We would certainly be happy to provide that again.

Answer:

The table **attached** shows the current program for the States and Territories for funding of land transport infrastructure projects on the AusLink National Network. The table is based on the program provided to States and Territories on Budget night 2006, with some updating where they have been changes in the total Australian Government funding commitments to projects. A comprehensive review of the table will be undertaken as part of the 2007 Budget process.

The sum of the yearly profile over 2004-05 to 2008-09 for each project generally does not equal the Australian Government's funding contribution for the five-year period, 2004-05 to 2008-09.

The primary reason for this is that the 2005-06 actual outcomes vary from forecast 2005-06 outcomes, on which the yearly profiles for the period 2006-07 to 2008-09 were based. The yearly profiles have also yet to be adjusted for approved cost increases and reductions for some projects. Cost increases are approved on the basis that the State or Territory concerned will find offsetting savings from other projects within their program to keep within their AusLink funding 'envelope' for the period 2004-05 to 2008-09.

[AUSL 01 attachment]

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Question: AUSL 02

Division/Agency: AusLink

Topic: Strategic Funding Agreements

Hansard Page: 14 (15/02/07)

Senator O'Brien asked:

Senator O'Brien – Is it a standard form of agreement that each council signs, with variations?

Ms Riggs – Yes

Senator O'Brien – Can we have a copy of that standard form?

Ms Riggs – Yes

Answer:

A copy of the standard agreement used for Strategic Regional projects announced in 2006 is attached.

[AUSL 02 attachment]

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Question: AUSL 03

Division/Agency: AusLink

Topic: Signage for Strategic Projects

Hansard Page: 14 (15/02/07)

Senator O'Brien asked:

Senator O'BRIEN - Is there a direct relationship between funding and sign size?

Answer:

The AusLink Strategic Regional Programme signage requirements will generally align with the overall cost of each project and the mix of contributions to the project from the Australian Government and other stakeholders, as follows:

- Type A: Size: 900mm x 600mm
To be used to identify an AusLink Strategic Regional Programme project where the total value of the project is less than \$1 million in an urban (built up) environment, or where the posted speed limit is 80 k/p/h or less
- Type B: Size: 1200mm x 900mm
To be used to identify an AusLink Strategic Regional Programme project where the total value of the project is less than \$1 million in a rural environment, or where the posted speed limit is 80 k/p/h or more
- Type C: Size: 1800mm x 900mm
To be used to identify an AusLink Strategic Regional Programme project where the total value of the project is between \$1 million and \$5 million
- Type D: Size: 2400mm x 1800mm
To be used to identify an AusLink Strategic Regional Programme project where the total value of the project is more than \$5 million

Dimensions and design of the sign for each project are detailed in the funding agreement between the Department and the funding recipient.

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Question No: AUSL 04

Division/Agency: AusLink

Topic: Major Projects – Performance and Budget

Hansard Page: 15 (15/02/07)

Senator STERLE—Which projects have come in on budget, compared to the original applications from states and territories? Just give us a run-down on the major projects since you started.

Ms Page—I think it might be easier to take that on notice. There are literally dozens of projects. There are changed circumstances with a range of them, where the scope of the project has changed, and we would need to be able to set that in context. There are some, certainly, that have been completed. There are some that have not been started. There are some that have come in on budget, some that have come in under budget and there have been a certain number which have exceeded their budgets. But it is quite difficult, I think, to describe an entire program in a short answer.

Senator STERLE—Could you give us an idea of which ones in the last year or two have come in on budget?

Answer:

Table A lists those projects which were completed on or under budget between 1 July 2004 and 9 March 2007.

Table B provides in addition a list of projects which were completed for an amount less than \$1 million over budget between 1 July 2004 and 9 March 2007.

Table A: Projects Completed on or Under Budget

New South Wales

WestLink M7

New England Hwy - Devils Pinch

New England Hwy - Duval Creek

Newell Hwy - Higher mass limit bridges

Newell Hwy - Bogan to Coobang

Newell Hwy - Wallumburrawang Creek deviation

Newell Hwy - Causeway replacement

Newell Hwy - Ardlethan realignment

Newell Hwy – widening and reconstruction (other than Ardlethan)

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Summerland Way

Key Freight Route Bridges - Deringulla Bridge

Victoria

Hume Hwy - Craigieburn link to WRR

Goulburn Valley Hwy - Murchison East Deviation

Queensland

Bruce Hwy - Burdekin Safety Works

Bruce Hwy - Southern Cairns [Sheehy to Foster]

Bruce Hwy - Rammutt Road

Bruce Hwy - Resurfacing at Federal

Warrego Hwy - Toowoomba (Preconstruction)

Barkly Hwy - Bridge & Roadwork Planning (Buckley, Wooroona)

Barkly Hwy - Other works

Pacific Highway (Qld)

Ipswich Motorway Safety Works

Ipswich Upgrade Planning

Gateway Arterial (planning and PPP business case development)

TransApex tunnel feasibility study

Callemondah overpass, Gladstone

Western Australia

Roe Hwy

Improve rail links between Kewdale intermodal precinct and Fremantle Port

South Australia

Dukes Hwy - Shoulder sealing

Dukes Hwy - Pavement rehabilitation

Sturt Hwy - Riverland Passing Lanes

Sturt Hwy - Waikerie Curves upgrade

Adelaide to Port Augusta - Shoulder sealing

Adelaide to Port Augusta - Passing lanes

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Port River Expressway Stage 1

Tasmania

Bass-Midland junction upgrading programme

Bass Hwy - Penguin to Ulverstone duplication Stage 1

Northern Territory

Stuart Hwy - Overtaking lanes Katherine to Darwin

Salt Creek bridge (Higher Mass Limits)

Network - widening and rehabilitation NT

Network - Bridge Upgrading (Higher Mass Limits)

Key freight route bridges

Table B: Projects Completed over Budget by less than \$1 Million

New South Wales

F3 - widening (Hawkesbury R - Calga)

Hume Hwy - Table Top Creek bridge widening

Hume Hwy - Paddy's River (HML bridges)

Sturt Hwy – widening and reconstruction

Queensland

Bruce Hwy - Rehab Calen Section

Bruce Hwy - Miriam Vale (Baffle Creek Road)

Barkly Hwy - Johnson River Stage

Barkly Hwy - Nowranie Creek Stage

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Question: AUSL 05

Division/Agency: AusLink

Topic: AusLink Evaluation Strategy

Hansard Page: 17 (15/02/07)

Senator Sterle asked:

Senator STERLE—So you obviously have a plan for a certain date to do those comparisons?

Ms Riggs—Yes, we do. We have previously provided this Committee with a copy of our AusLink Evaluation Strategy, but I will be happy to provide the secretariat with a further copy for you. That sets out a quite detailed sequence of evaluation, which goes from post-program implementation, learning the lessons, adjusting administration type things, through a review of the individual components of AusLink on a program business performance basis. Then, in about 2008-09, it goes to doing the overarching review of AusLink to see if it is making a difference and how it sits in terms of its economic performance, which Ms Page has referred to.

Senator STERLE—The Committee would appreciate that.

Answer:

The AusLink Evaluation Framework and the AusLink Evaluation Technical report are **attached**.

[AUSL 05 - attachments A and B not included. Available from the committee secretariat on request.]

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Question: AUSL 06

Division/Agency: AusLink

Topic: Muchea-Wubin upgrade strategy

Hansard Page: 18 (15/2/07)

Senator Sterle asked:

Senator STERLE—Is that AusLink investment program funding confidential?

Mr Hogan—No.

Senator Ian Campbell—I think I made an announcement about it when I was roads Minister.

Senator STERLE—Great. Could the Committee have a copy?

Senator Ian Campbell—As I recall, I took a close interest in it because my dad had a farm just north of Bindoon and so it was a stretch of road I was very familiar with. I share your view that it is a very dangerous piece of road—very narrow and with massive amounts of traffic on it. I pushed very hard, with the strong support of Judi Moylan, the federal member, and Wilson Tuckey, another federal member who had an interest. As I recall, the process from the distant past when I was roads Minister was that basically you would have a fairly constructive, iterative process between the state and federal governments. They would come forward and say: these are the sorts of works that are required to bring that road up to standard. For that road, that means widening it significantly, straightening out some of the bends and generally improving the surface to bring it up to the national standard. Many parts of it are certainly substandard at the moment. It sounds to me like that process is now getting to the pointy end and the WA Government are saying: these are the stretches of road that we will improve, here is our plan for works and here are the costings. That is my memory of the process and it sounds like that is going on. Will it be quick enough for you and me and our constituents? That is highly unlikely, but we know that the road is going to be fixed and that it will be fixed very soon.

Senator STERLE—Thanks, Minister. So we can get a copy of the—(*business case for the Muchea to Wubin section of the Great Northern Highway*)

Ms Riggs—Subject to the Minister being happy with the way we compile the information, we will give you some detail on notice.

Answer:

The Australian Government has allocated \$65.1 million under the AusLink Investment Programme for improvements to the Great Northern Highway between Muchea and Wubin over the financial years 2004-05 to 2008-09.

The Department of Transport and Regional Services received, on 2 January 2007, a business case from Main Roads Western Australia detailing a programme of works to utilise the \$65.1 million.

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The Department is currently assessing the business case prior to making a recommendation to Government and has sought further information from Western Australia.

An outline of the scope of the proposed works is:

MUCHEA TO BINDOON HILL SECTION

- Overlay and widen 0.5 kilometres;
- Reconstruct and widen 7 kilometres;
- Realign, reconstruct and widen 8 kilometres;
- Improve six intersections;
- Widen and strengthen Brockman River Bridge; and
- Construct three passing lanes.

BINDOON HILL TO NEW NORCIA SECTION

- Overlay and widen 1.3 kilometres;
- Realign, reconstruct and widen 2.7 kilometres; and
- Reconstruct and widen 1.2 kilometres.

NEW NORCIA TO WADDINGTON SECTION

- Reconstruct and widen 9.8 kilometres;
- Realign 3.5 kilometres; and
- Construct two passing lanes.

WADDINGTON TO MILING SECTION

- Reconstruct and widen 17.3 kilometres; and
- Realign, reconstruct and widen 3.8 kilometres.

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Question: AUSL 07

Division/Agency: AusLink

Topic: Road Network Maintenance - Funding

Hansard Page: 19-20 (15/02/07)

Senator Sterle asked:

Senator STERLE—I do understand, and thank you. But there is a difference between disaster and serious chunks of road being affected by rushing water, potholes or whatever, which I see would come into the maintenance side. I am not talking about bridges being washed away.

Mr Elliott—If an event qualifies as a disaster, and a whole area of road is washed away—as I say, I am not sure of the definition of ‘disaster’—I think there would be some impact there. The other issue is that the Government applied additional funding in the last budget not only to Townsville to Cairns but also to the Victoria highway in the Northern Territory, which is one of the flood-prone areas.

Senator STERLE—I do understand. But there is a bit of difference between a disaster and the deterioration of a highway.

Ms Page—I am not sure that natural disaster funding covers roads. We can confirm that for you. Generally, if the magnitude of damage is of the order that you have indicated, it probably would not qualify as maintenance anyway; you would be looking at reconstruction and the types of projects that Mr Elliott has described such as the ones on the Victoria Highway.

Answer:

State expenditure on the restoration or replacement of essential public assets, including roads, damaged as a direct result of floods and other natural disasters, is eligible for reimbursement under the Australian Government’s Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements.

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Question: AUSL 08

Division/Agency: AusLink

Topic: Road Network Maintenance Funding

Hansard Page: 21 (15/02/07)

Senator Sterle asked:

So, with the maintenance figure of \$300 million, we are talking blocks of five years. What was the maintenance figure for the previous five year block?

Answer:

Compared to the maintenance allocation of \$1,500 million for the period 2004-05 to 2008-09, maintenance funding for the five year period 1999-00 to 2003-04 was \$1,455 million, including \$9 million brought forward from 2004-05.

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Question: AUSL 09

Division/Agency: AusLink

Topic: The cost of building a kilometre of road

Hansard Page: 21-22 (15/2/07)

Senator Sterle asked:

Senator STERLE—Thanks, Ms Page, but just out of pure curiosity: what does a kilometre of road cost to build?

Ms Page—It depends.

Senator STERLE—Okay, let us just say through the Kimberley. It is a dirt road, and there is your normal creek or floodplain every 300 metres.

Ms Page—We would have to take that on notice. There is huge variation.

Answer:

Road construction rates can vary greatly, especially in remote areas, depending on the soil conditions, drainage, topography, materials and labour costs.

Main Roads Western Australia advises the cost to construct a kilometre of unsealed road through the Kimberley would be approximately \$600,000 per kilometre. However, this does not take into account any cost for flood crossings or bridges, which can significantly increase overall costs.

An example of a new major crossing with sealed roads is the \$26.4 million 191 metre Dunham River Bridge, which has 6.8 kilometre sealed approach roads.

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Question: AUSL 10

Division/Agency: AusLink

Topic: Audits of Local Councils

Hansard Page: 22-23 (15/02/07)

Senator Sterle asked:

Mr Atkinson—We are hoping to have this round of audits completed in May. However, it will become an ongoing activity over the life of the program. A number of councils will be audited each year.

Senator STERLE—You say a number will be. Not all of them will be?

Mr Atkinson—Not all councils will be audited. I think around 100 councils will be audited over the program. I will just check that figure.

Answer:

It is proposed to audit around 100 councils during the current programme.

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Question: AUSL 11

Division/Agency: AusLink

Topic: Roads to Recovery Grants

Hansard Page: 23 (15/02/07)

Senator Sterle asked:

Senator STERLE—Can you provide a breakdown of the number of Roads to Recovery grants to each electorate and the total dollar value of Roads to Recovery grants to each electorate?

Ms Riggs—It is not something we would normally regard as part of our management suite, but on notice we could provide advice about—

Senator IAN CAMPBELL—It goes to council boundaries, does it not?

Ms Riggs—That is right.

Senator IAN CAMPBELL—It would be quite difficult. You would have to—

Ms Riggs—We could have a go at how councils match or do not match electorates and do it for that current four-year program. So it would not be paid; it would be allocations.

Ms Page—R2R is not a discretionary program in the sense that the funds are allocated in accordance with the same formula that the Grants Commission uses in relation to the distribution of untied local road funding paid under FAGS. It is exactly the same formula as that. We could do it by electorate, but what that will show is a distribution of funds carved up according to the Grants Commission formulas within the total, if you like, that has been allocated for R2R.

Senator STERLE—Can you give that a go.

Ms Riggs—We will give it a go.

Answer:

A document, setting out the details requested is **attached**. The document lists each councils AusLink Roads to Recovery Programme allocation for the period 1 July 2005 to 30 June 2009 and their Supplementary AusLink Roads to Recovery Programme grant. Where a council crosses an electoral boundary **the full allocation is shown in each electorate.**

[AUSL 11 attachment]

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Question: AUSL 12

Division/Agency: AusLink

Topic: Bells Line of Road

Hansard Page: 27 (15/02/07)

Senator Nash asked:

Senator NASH—No, it is not. I was of the understanding, though, with the view to those who would like to see the Bells Line become an alternative road, that the step forward for Government was to have the Bells possibility considered as part of the strategy. If you are not aware, could you take that on notice and come back to me?

Ms Riggs—I will be happy to. It is not one I have been personally involved in so I will take that on board and see what we can provide to you.

Senator NASH—Thanks.

Answer:

The Australian Government recognises the importance of improved access over the Blue Mountains and has included the Great Western and Mitchell Highways from Sydney to Dubbo in the AusLink National Network. Bells Line of Road is not part of the defined AusLink network as it is not the major freight route between Dubbo and Sydney.

However, the draft Sydney-Dubbo Corridor Strategy includes, as a strategic priority, the need to investigate alternative routes to the existing alignment on the western escarpment with a view to improving freight access from the Central West of New South Wales to national and international markets.

On 25 May 2007, the Prime Minister, the Hon John Howard MP, announced the provision of \$10 million under AusLink 2 (2009-10 to 2014-15) for a planning and engineering study, including a detailed environmental investigation, for an expressway standard connection over the Blue Mountains. The New South Wales Government would need to provide a matching contribution.

The Prime Minister indicated that existing proposals for a Bells Line Expressway should be investigated under this study.

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Transport and Regional Services

Question: AUSL 13

Division/Agency: AusLink

Topic: Milestones for Strategic Regional Projects

Hansard Page: 28 (15/02/07)

Senator O'Brien asked:

Senator O'BRIEN – Okay. So what are the milestones for the two projects that have agreements?

Ms Riggs – Can we take that on notice? We did not bring those agreements with us.

Senator O'BRIEN – Sure.

Answer:

Milestones are developed and agreed in conjunction with Councils during the development of the funding agreement.

Payments to Councils will be determined following receipt of periodic progress reports that take account of the milestones detailed in the funding agreement and cash flow requirements calculated as follows:

- actual expenditure incurred to date;
- plus, forecast expenditures for the next agreed period;
- less, payments made to date.

Huon Valley Council

Project Name: Esperance Coast Road Upgrade

Project Description: This project involves the reconstruction and sealing of the 8.36 km unsealed section of the Esperance Coast Road, together with essential rehabilitation of the 6.08km sealed section towards Dover. The project will assist both the growth of tourism activity and the future development and operations of the fish farming industry.

Milestones:

Commence survey and design work	1 February 2007
Land acquisition completed	1 February 2008
Accept design and cost estimates	30 April 2007
Commence works	31 July 2007
Commence sealing works	30 June 2007
Practical completion of works	21 December 2008
Final acquittal of the project	June 2009

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Hume City Council

Project Name: Arrundel and Annandale Road

Project Description: This project involves the upgrading of Arundel and Annandale Roads. The existing roads are narrow and gravel in parts and require the full construction and upgrading to current standards. It is proposed that the project will provide significant economic benefits through the reduction in freight costs for distributors within the area. Travel times will be significantly improved.

Milestones:

Concept plan finalised with brief for bridge consultant	August 2006
Consultant appointed to undertake bridge design	24 November 2006
Proof detailed bridge design	5 December 2006
Tender works for bridge design	16 January 2007
Report to Council meeting – bridge tender	29 January 2007
Notify bridge contractor to commence	2 February 2007
Undertake bridge works on site	3 May 2007
Concept plan with brief for consultant for road	18 December 2006
Consultant appointed to undertake detailed road design	19 March 2007
Consult with residents to discuss design	16 February 2007
Proof detailed road design	9 April 2007
Tender works for road	22 May 2007
Report to Council meeting – road tender	25 June 2007
Notify road contractor to commence	26 June 2007
Works completed on site	21 September 2007
Final acquittal of the project	December 2007

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Question: AUSL 14

Division/Agency: AusLink

Topic: Milestones for Strategic Regional Projects

Hansard Page: 28 (15/02/07)

Senator O'Brien asked:

Senator O'BRIEN - How much of the funds in this year's allocation do you expect will actually be expended of the strategic projects' money?

Ms Riggs – That is a good and fair question. Can I take it on notice please?

Answer:

Funding allocation for the Strategic Regional Programme in 2006 – 07 was \$60.3 million and it is expected that \$40.3 million of this will be expended by the end of this financial year.

Agreement to move \$20 million forward is being sought.

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Question: AUSL 15

Division/Agency: AusLink

Topic: Black Spot Committees

Hansard Page: 29 (15/02/07)

Senator O'Brien asked:

Senator O'BRIEN—Where would I find details—members and chairs—of each of the Black Spot Committees? Is that on the website?

Ms Riggs—No, they are not. If the Minister agrees, we will be happy to provide it to you on notice.

Answer:

The composition of the AusLink Black Spot Programme Consultative Panels are:

New South Wales

Chair – Mrs Louise Markus MP

plus members representing:

Local Government and Shires Association

NSW Police Service

National Roads and Motorists' Association

NSW Road Transport Association

Institute of Public Works Engineering Australia, NSW Division

Council on the Ageing, NSW

Federation of Parents & Citizens Associations of NSW

NSW Roads and Traffic Authority

Victoria

Chair – Mr Stewart Macarthur MP

plus members representing:

Royal Automobile Club of Victoria

Victorian Road Transport Association

Representative from local government

Australian Population Institute

Victoria Police

State Minister for Transport's office

VicRoads

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Queensland

Chair – Mr Paul Neville MP

plus members representing:

Royal Automobile Club of Qld

Local Government Association of Qld

Queensland Police Service

Queensland Trucking Association

Bicycle Queensland

Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety – Qld

Queensland Department of Emergency Services

Queensland Department of Main Roads

Queensland Department of Transport

Western Australia

Chair – Senator Alan Eggleston

plus members representing:

Royal Automobile Club of WA

WA Office of Road Safety

Transport Forum West Inc

Western Australian Local Government Association

State Minister for Transport's Office

Main Roads Western Australia (2)

South Australia

Chair – Senator Alan Ferguson

plus members representing:

Royal Automobile Association of SA

Motor Accident Commission

South Australian Road Transport Association

SA Freight Council

Representative from local government

Bicycle Federation of Australia

Transport Planning Agency

State Minister for Transport and Urban Planning's Office

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Tasmania

Chair – Senator Guy Barnett

plus members representing:

Royal Automobile Club of Tasmania

Local Government Association of Tasmania

Tasmanian Transport Council

Representatives from Local Government (4)

Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources (2)

Australian Capital Territory

Chair – Senator Gary Humphries

plus members representing:

National Roads and Motorists' Association

Pedal Power ACT

Motorcycle Riders Association ACT

National Capital Authority

Australian College of Road Safety (2)

ACT Department of Territory and Municipal Services (2)

Northern Territory

Chair – Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion

plus members representing:

Automobile Association of the NT

Australian Trucking Association of the NT

Local Government Association of NT

Road Safety Council of the NT

Office of Indigenous Policy Co-ordination

Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Environment (2)

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Question: AUSL 16

Division/Agency: AusLink

Topic: ARTC Major Works Program

Hansard Page: 30 (15/02/07)

Senator O'Brien asked:

Senator O'BRIEN—I might be in the wrong area; maybe it is in marine and land transport. If I cannot find the right area, I will put it on notice. Is it possible to get an update on the status of each of the ARTC projects, perhaps in a way similar to the AusLink spreadsheet information we received.

Mr Wolfe—We can ask ARTC to provide that.

Senator O'BRIEN—Is it possible to get an indication of the status of each project—any anticipated delays, cost overruns?

Mr Wolfe—Yes, I think we can get the ARTC to do that.

Answer:

Attached is a progress report provided by the ARTC of their major works program as at January 2007.

[AUSL 16 attachment]

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Question: AUSL 17

Division/Agency: AusLink

Topic: Investment of ARTC Funds

Hansard Page: 30 (15/02/07)

Senator O'Brien asked:

Senator O'BRIEN—Thank you. Does the ARTC have any funds invested; if so, how much and where, and how are they performing?

Ms Riggs—I think that we will need probably to talk to the Minister and to the chair of the ARTC. It is a company, and some details of those matters would be available from its annual report. We will consider the question.

Answer:

The ARTC advises that its current investments can be summarised as follows:

Australian Rail Track Corporation Ltd
Investment Schedule Group Consolidation (\$m) - Jan 2007

Investment Summary (\$m)	
	Total
ANZ Online Inv Account	32.6
ANZ Cash Plus Fund	202.7
Bank West Term Dep.	150.0
Commercial Papers	464.0
Total Invested Funds *	849.3

* Note: Total Invested Funds includes face value of Commercial Papers.

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Question: AUSL 18

Division/Agency: AusLink

Topic: Rail Cooperative Research Centre Projects

Hansard Page: 35 (15/02/07)

Senator O'Brien asked:

Senator O'BRIEN—Can you give us an update on the projects currently underway at the Rail Cooperative Research Centre?

Mr Mrdak—I cannot, but I can take that on notice and get some details for you.

Answer:

The Rail Cooperative Rail Centre (CRC) has undertaken 43 rail research projects since its establishment in 2001. In December 2006, \$21 million was announced for the Rail CRC in a new round of Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training CRC Programme funding. Information on the existing projects and the new rail CRC programme can be found at: <http://www.railcrc.cqu.edu.au>.