

**Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport**  
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
Additional Budget Estimates February 2009  
**Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government**

**Question No.** ONA 01

**Division/Agency:** Office of Northern Australia

**Topic:** Appropriation of \$195m East Kimberley Development Package

**Hansard Page:** 111 (24/02/09)

**Senator MacDonald asked:**

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—... Mr Rudd announced—I think it was—\$150 million for the Ord stage 2 just before Christmas.

**Ms Foster**—\$195 million.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—Where is that coming from?

**Ms Foster**—That is new money. That was part of the nation-building No. 1 statement.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—This is the December \$10 billion spending package?

**Ms Foster**—That is right.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—And \$190 million came out of that?

**Ms Foster**—\$195 million.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—That will be budgeted for in this upcoming budget, will it? Has it been appropriated already or has it been handed to anyone?

**Ms O'Connell**—We will have to check that regarding appropriation—for the appropriation.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—Okay.

**Answer:**

On 12 December 2008, the Prime Minister announced the Commonwealth Government's \$4.7 billion Nation Building Initiative. Under this Initiative, the Commonwealth Government has agreed to contribute \$195 million over 2008-09 and 2009-10 to support economic development in the East Kimberley region. The \$195 million referred to was appropriated to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government through additional estimates Appropriation Bill (No. 5).

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**Question No.** ONA 02

**Division/Agency:** Office of Northern Australia

**Topic:** Appropriation of \$195m East Kimberley Development Package

**Hansard Pages:** 111 (24/02/09)

**Senator MacDonald asked:**

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—I know the Northern Territory Government has been disinterested and uninterested—both—in the extension of the Ord scheme across the border, although someone told me when I was in the Territory last week that there has been a slight change of heart. Are you aware of the Northern Territory Government’s approach to the extension of the Ord scheme across the border, which is where it is supposed to go?

**Mr Tongue**—I would have to take that on notice.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—Nobody here is aware of their involvement?

**Mr Tongue**—I am certainly aware that, as part of our consultations, there will be discussions with the Northern Territory Government, but I cannot go further than that. I am happy to take it on notice.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—All right.....

**Answer:**

The planned expansion of the Ord River Irrigation Scheme and the implementation of the East Kimberley Development Package are expected to bring benefits to the whole East Kimberley region, including to the Northern Territory.

The Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development and Northern Australia, the Hon Gary Gray AO MP, has regularly discussed with the Northern Territory Government the Western Australia plan to expand the Ord irrigation area within Western Australian and the East Kimberley Development Package.

The Northern Territory Government has indicated it wishes to be kept fully informed on plans for the Ord and the East Kimberley Development Package.

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**Question No.** ONA 03

**Division/Agency:** Office of Northern Australia  
**Topic:** Office of Northern Australia Budget  
**Hansard Pages:** 114 (24/02/09)

**Senator Macdonald asked:**

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—Perhaps we should make this a permanent question. At every Estimates I will ask the question: what is the configuration of both the Darwin and the Townsville offices in numbers of people and that sort of thing? Has it changed since last estimates?

**Ms Foster**—Not significantly. We have six in Townsville and two in Darwin.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—Are the six in Townsville the total departmental office or are they just the Northern Australia element of it?

**Ms Foster**—That is the departmental office.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—Are any dedicated, or do they support both areas of the Department?

**Ms Foster**—They support both.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—Perchance the Secretary makes the decision on the internal budget within the next three weeks, could you on notice let us know what the budget is, if it happens to have been assessed by then.

**Ms Foster**—Certainly.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—Would you expect that it might be—

**Senator Conroy**—I am sure that is in the hands of the Minister.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—No, it is the Department Secretary, I think. Doesn't he look after the internal budget?

**Mr Tongue**—It is a question for the Secretary, but we will endeavour to get you an answer.

**Answer:**

The 2008-09 budget allocation for the Office of Northern Australia Division (ONA) is \$3,546,619. This incorporates the transfer of the Darwin and Townsville offices to ONA with effect from March 2009.

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**Question No.** ONA 04

**Division/Agency:** Office of Northern Australia  
**Topic:** Office of Northern Australia Budget  
**Hansard Pages:** 114-115 (24/02/09)

**Senator Macdonald asked:**

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—Because of the quite substantial additional work you will be doing across the whole range of the department as a result of the \$42 billion package—and, I guess, other Departments, but I will not ask you about them—will you be expecting that your departmental budget will increase?

**Mr Tongue**—Certainly we have received, for those elements associated with the package, additional resources, but, like all departments, we have ons and we have offs. We will wait and see the outcome of the May budget process as well. I think my answer would have to be that there will be some ons and offs and we will wait and see the outcome of the May budget.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—But to date you have not been allocated an additional amount for departmental expenses to cover you?

**Mr Tongue**—For those elements of the package, we have been given some—

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—Can you tell me what that is—on notice, if you do not have it with you.

**Mr Tongue**—Can I take it on notice, because some of it is in the final stages of negotiation.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—Okay. It would be fairly substantial, wouldn't it?

**Mr Tongue**—Because we act through states and through local government, the allocations depend a bit on the design of the program, but we believe it is sufficient to manage the responsibilities we have been given.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—What is your current departmental budget, in round figures?

**Mr Tongue**—In the order of \$200 million.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—Would I be right in guessing that you would be expecting something like \$20 million or \$30 million additional administration expenses?

**Senator Conroy**—I think that is asking for an opinion.

**Mr Tongue**—I am happy to provide that on notice.

**Answer:**

Additional departmental resourcing for the implementation of the Nation Building and Jobs Plan is disclosed on pages 7 and 8 of the Portfolio Supplementary Additional Estimates Statements No.2 2008-09.

The Department's current 2008-09 departmental appropriation is \$242.521m.

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**Question No.** ONA 05

**Division/Agency:** Office of Northern Australia

**Topic:** Members of Northern Australia Land and Water Taskforce

**Hansard Page:** 115 (24/02/09)

**Senator Macdonald asked:**

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—All right. I think my time has just about expired. I did ask this question before, but could you remind me what Dr Stuart Blanch's background is. I am going through the new members.

**Mr Angley**—We did provide that as a question on notice.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—Okay.

**Mr Angley**—I do have that material here.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—You have got it? Just quickly tell me Mr Richard Ahmat's background.

**Mr Angley**—In the question on notice—and I am not sure of the number now, but we provided it after the October one—Richard Ahmat is currently Chair of the Northern Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance and a non-executive director of the Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—And Dr Stuart Blanch?

**Mr Angley**—Dr Stuart Blanch is Manager of Northern Landscapes at World Wildlife Fund Australia and a non-executive director of Land and Water Australia.

And Wali Wunungmurra?

**Mr Angley**—I apologise: I have not got his biography with me. I can take it on notice.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—Okay. So we have the ACF and the WWF both there. That should make for an interesting meeting. As I say, that is about my time. Thanks for that. We look forward to getting those answers.

**Mr Angley**—Thank you.

**Answer:**

Mr Wali Wunungmurra's biography is at Attachment A.

[ONA 05 - Attachment]