

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 01

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Partnerships

Hansard Page: 21 (28/05/08)

Senator Nash asked:

Senator NASH—Following on from your previous statements, Minister—I am happy for you to take this on notice—could you provide to the committee the number of proponents that have put forward in the past a project to Regional Partnerships with whom you have had discussions?

Senator Conroy—I am happy to take that on notice.

Answer:

The Department does not hold this information.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 02

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Approved Not Contracted

Hansard Page: 42 (28/05/08)

Senator Nash asked:

Senator NASH—I want to clarify something. I am sorry to have to raise this again. Can we just ensure that in that list there is the 494 projects that were in the pipeline that had not yet reached decision stage.

Ms Page—Yes.

Answer:

At the closure of the Regional Partnerships program there were 115 projects that were approved but had not reached signed contract stage, 393 projects that had been approved and contracted and still receiving payments under their contract agreements and 494 projects that were under assessment.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 03

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Partnerships

Hansard Page: 61 (29/0/08)

Senator Nash asked:

Senator NASH—In all this deliberation that the minister took several days to arrive at the conclusion that he had better ask the proponents, what were the reasons that were discussed that he thought the proponents might not want this information released?

Senator Conroy—As you know, I have been here almost all day, so I have not been privy to all of the discussion or even much of the discussion around this in the minister's office. But I am happy to take that on notice and come back to you with an answer from Minister Albanese.

Answer:

The Department does not hold that information.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 04

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: RP Info in Media

Hansard Page: 62-63 (29/0/08)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Perhaps the cold shivers were leaking to the bottom but I will take the minister up on his offer to find out for me how it was that Mr Turnour knew of this information when we were arguing and desperately trying to get the information from the minister.

.....

Senator Conroy—Senator Macdonald was saying that he was happy to take it that I would seek information about the Mr Turnour situation. I was adding, perhaps, Mr Hartsyker. We are happy to ascertain information for Senator Macdonald on that matter—

Senator IAN MACDONALD—On how Mr Turnour was aware of the information when this committee was struggling to convince you—

Answer:

The Department does not hold this information.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 05

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: EORG Meeting

Hansard Page: 65 (29/05/08)

Senator Nash asked:

Senator NASH—A useful day without the parliamentary secretary. Did the parliamentary secretary or anyone in his office at any stage think to apply for a pair for an hour? Given that these people had been flown in at government expense from all the way around the country and were put up overnight, did nobody think to go and ask the whip to perhaps give him a pair?

Mr James—It is not a question I can answer.

Senator NASH—Perhaps somebody could take that on notice and come back to us because this just looks like a bungle, quite frankly.

Answer:

The Department has no information in relation to this matter.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 06

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: RDA

Hansard Page: 71 (29/05/08)

Senator Nash asked:

Senator NASH—Was one of those issues concerns raised regarding funding levels and the possible problems of trading while insolvent?

Mr James—I was not there. I would have to take that on notice and talk to the person who was.

Answer:

Yes. RDA committees have now received contract offers for the 2008-09 financial year.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
 Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 07

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: RP Milestones

Hansard Page: 75 (29/05/08)

Senator Conroy asked:

Senator Conroy—They do not have to provide a prospectus to you to get the million dollars?

Ms Page—The contract set out a series of milestones of various tasks under the contract which were to be achieved before the next stage of funding would be provided. If at the end we cannot get an acquitted statement then there is scope, as there is with all projects, to take legal action to recover the funds, and from time to time we do that. At this stage, however, I have no reason to understand that there is an issue.

Senator HUTCHINS—I do not quite grasp these milestones. What is this idea of milestones?

Ms Page—I think the best thing for us to do is to provide you with advice on what the actual milestones in relation to this contract were, but typically we do not provide funding for projects in a lump sum upfront. In advance of need, we calculate a schedule of payments based on the progress of the project.

Answer:

A project's key deliverables are represented as or in milestones in a *Regional Partnerships* Funding Agreement (contract). Payments are tied to the delivery of these milestones. The milestones for this project are as follows:

Milestone	Activity Milestone Description
1	Plant Design & Specifications to date & Ongoing Work.
	Planning NSW/ EIS/Planning Focus Expenditure
	Production Life Cycle Analysis
	Project Legal Fees
	Project Management/Project Development
	Office Expenditure
	Travel
2	Plant Design & Specifications to date & Ongoing Work
	Project Legal Fees
	Project Management/Project Development
	Office Expenditure
	Travel
	Promotional Activities
	Tax Structuring Advice

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

	Project Accounting
3	Project Legal Fees
	Project Management/Project Development
	Office Expenditure
	Travel
	Tax Structuring Advice
	Project Accounting
	Third Party Consulting Engineering
4	Project Management/Project Development
5	Completion of Activity

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 08

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Dysart Sports Complex

Hansard Page: 80 (29/0/08)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—It could not get the nod before. It was so bad it was withdrawn. Tell me about the Dysart sports project.

Senator Conroy—Was it an election commitment?

Senator IAN MACDONALD—I thought it was also an application for the regional partnerships which did not get a favourable response. I am choosing my words carefully. Perhaps it was also withdrawn.

Ms Page—We do not have those projects that were still under consideration.

Senator Conroy—As far as you are aware, it was not rejected? I am happy for you to take it on notice.

Senator NASH—I can remember having this discussion at last estimates and there was a very clear understanding that it had been rejected.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—That is my recollection.

Senator Conroy—I am going to hand it to the officials at the moment.

Ms Page—We have to take that on notice.

Answer:

The Dysart Sports Centre is a Better Regions Election Commitment.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 09

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: RDA

Hansard Page: 80-81 (29/05/08)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—What you are telling me is that no instructions were given to you by the minister or the parliamentary secretary, but you are also telling me that you did not give instructions to the ACCs not to talk to members of parliament?

Senator Conroy—I am happy to take on notice what you asked about the minister or the parliamentary secretary?

Senator IAN MACDONALD—I am just eliminating the department first of all.

Ms Page—I certainly gave no instructions to ACCs, nor would I.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Neither you nor any of your officers?

Ms Page—Certainly to the best of my knowledge no staff member has and I would be extraordinarily surprised if they had, because it had no authority.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—I just want to eliminate you as a suspect.

Senator Conroy—I can take on notice your question. I have no information on that.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—You have no information.

Senator Conroy—Are you alleging that there is?

Senator IAN MACDONALD—No. I am not alleging anything, but I wonder if the department knows if the minister or parliamentary secretary has issued that instruction.

Ms Page—No, I do not.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Thank you, Minister, you will take that on notice and get back to me on that.

Answer:

No.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 10

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Major Cities Unit

Hansard Page: 85 (29/05/2008)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD - Can you let me know why a city with growth rates is being especially dealt with, as opposed to a large regional town with particular growth rates?

Senator Conroy – I am happy to seek further information and, if it is available before the end of the evening, get it to you, otherwise I will take that on notice. I am happy to try and get it.

Answer:

The Major Cities Unit will include the eight capital cities and other major Australian cities and urban areas.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 11

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: RP Milestones

Hansard Page: 86 (29/05/08)

Senator Hutchins asked:

Senator HUTCHINS—Ms Page, I would like to know what the milestones were, because this company clearly met them if you gave them the payment three months after they closed.

Ms Page—We can provide that on notice.

Answer:

The milestones for this project were:

	<i>MILESTONE DESCRIPTION</i>
1	Renovation of Tasting and Sales area at All Saints Pty Ltd facility at Rutherglen.
2	Renovation and fit out of manufacturing site at Wangaratta.
3	Fit out of Tasting and Sales area at All Saints Pty Ltd facility at Rutherglen (cool room and tasting benches).
4	Label/packaging design and printing for cheese products.
5	Website design for Indigo Cheese venture.
6	Review of business plan, operations, procedures, KPIs, performance measurement, marketing strategy etc Year 1.
7	Representation at trade fairs.
8	Review of business plan, operations, procedures, KPIs, performance measurement, marketing strategy etc Year 2.
9	Legal/accounting/financial administration and account preparation.
10	Final evaluation of project carried out and report prepared.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 12

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Indigo Cheese DRAP

Hansard Page: 86 (29/05/08)

Senator Hutchins asked:

Senator HUTCHINS—We have got this company, Indigo Cheese. I am sure you will have to take this on notice. Have we got other companies or other people who were recipients of grants from the Dairy Regional Assistance Program that equally went bust and we still paid money to them after they had ceased operating?

Ms Page—We would have to take that on notice.

Answer:

The Department does not have any further information on Dairy Regional Assistance Program funding recipients ceasing operation.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 13

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development Division

Topic: RP Rorts

Hansard Page: 89 (29/05/08)

Senator Adams asked:

Senator ADAMS—Could you take on notice the number of rorts that have been discovered by the audit and how many Regional Partnerships funded projects and projects that have been in the system have not been rorted? I have had a number of local government people ring me and just say how disgusted they are that they are all considered to be rorters. I can assure you that I spend a lot of time going through the projects that I actually endorse. There is no way that I will write a letter of recommendation to any project that I have not gone through and looked very carefully into.

Answer:

The ANAO's performance audit of the *Regional Partnerships* program queries the manner in which decisions were taken observing "*the manner in which the program had been administered...had fallen short of an acceptable standard of public administration.*" The report looked at the administration and decision-making procedures in *Regional Partnerships* and made 20 recommendations. It also presented a range of case-studies. The report can be found at <www.anao.gov.au>.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 14

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: WA RP Projects

Hansard Page: 91 (29/05/08)

Senator Adams asked:

Senator ADAMS—Minister, would it be possible for me to have the number of Western Australian projects that have been cast aside?

Senator Conroy—Could you have what?

Senator ADAMS—They have been told no more, that is it; they will not be reviewed, and that is the end.

Senator Conroy—I think you may not have been here when we discussed this. What we are doing, in the past program, allocations that are passed have obviously been public information. In the past, applications that have failed and the previous government's policy was not to release them on the basis that it might be a little embarrassing—

Senator ADAMS—That is fine, I just want the number.

Senator Conroy—No; so there is a grey area around ones that were never assessed. We are writing to all of those asking them if we can release that information to the Senate committee. They are happy and comfortable.

Senator ADAMS—That is not the question; I just want to know the number.

Senator Conroy—No, I am just giving you the background, because you were not here.

Senator ADAMS—I was here; I heard that.

Senator Conroy—But I do not think we actually have that information at the table, so I am happy to take that on notice.

Senator ADAMS—Take it on notice?

Senator Conroy—Yes.

Answer:

At the closure of the Regional Partnerships program there were 69 projects from Western Australia which were under assessment by the Department. Also one project from Western Australia was approved but not contracted at the closure of the program. This project will not be reconsidered for funding as it is a private company.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 15

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Gnowangerup Community Centre

Hansard Page: 91-92 (29/05/08)

Senator Adams asked:

Senator ADAMS—Thank you very much. On a specific project, I would like confirmation that the Gnowangerup Community and Medical Centre project is a medical infrastructure project of the Western Australian Great Southern Area Consultative Committee; and has that gone across to DoHA?

Mr Angley—Sorry, could you say that again please?

Senator ADAMS—It is very difficult; it is called Gnowangerup; it is one of the number of ‘up’ places in WA.

Ms Page—No, senator, that has not been passed across. We are not aware of the status of that project.

Senator ADAMS—Well, we have huge problems associated with that one. It is a small community in the Great Southern, the problem being they have a medical centre that is full of asbestos. They have a doctor and a pharmacist in the town; they are the only doctor and pharmacist—the catchment is huge—for that particular area.

Mr Carmichael—Senator, if it is application, we are negotiating for all the applications to go across, but it does not seem like it is an approved not contracted project. So, it is not that it will not go across; it is just that we are in the process of negotiating all the RMIF applications, and they will all go across once we have permission from the proponents to send them across.

Senator ADAMS—This one worries me because it is a community centre, and it was under the Regional Partnerships, but it also has the medical centre involved with that community centre.

Ms Page—It could be that it is an RP project rather than an RMIF one.

Senator ADAMS—I think it is.

Ms Page—Particularly if it involves removal of asbestos. I think we will just have to take that one on notice to tell you the status of that project.

Senator ADAMS—It is a very important one, simply because the medical centre was to be involved with the library, toy library, telecentre and complementary medicine, but the underpinning of that one, because of the asbestos, is the fact that, if the doctor is no longer resident and working in Gnowangerup, the pharmacist will no longer be there, and as with all rural communities, the pharmacist is reliant completely on a doctor. If the doctor is not in town, they lose the pharmacist as well. So, I am very perturbed about that particular project. If you could just note it, please?

Ms Page—Yes, we will take that on notice and advise you what category that project fits into.

Answer:

The Rural Medical Infrastructure Fund has been transferred to the Department of Health and Ageing.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 16

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Peaceful Bay Sea Rescue

Hansard Page: 92 (29/05/08)

Senator Adams asked:

Senator ADAMS—Another very small project that was under assessment prior to budget is the Peaceful Bay Sea Rescue. Peaceful Bay is a little community right down on the southern coast, and the problem is that it has six times its population during the summer season. This project was for a rescue boat; they already have their shed from Regional Partnerships. They have to use their own boats to go out and rescue people who come from the metropolitan area and other areas and who are not familiar with that coastline. It can be very rugged, the weather changes dramatically, and this project is really and truly more of a safety issue than anything. The project has raised \$250,000 overall; they are asking for \$25,000.

Ms Page—We will take the status of that project on notice.

Answer:

Applications that were under assessment under the former *Regional Partnerships* program are not being considered for funding

The Minister announced during the Budget a new program, the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program for the next financial year.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 17

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Tree of Knowledge

Hansard Page: 96 (29/05/08)

Senator Parry asked:

Senator PARRY—If I could just deal with the original application prior to withdrawal. Do we know the value of the original application prior to the withdrawal of that application? What was being sought in the way of funding?

Ms Page—I think we will have to take that on notice. It is quite sometime ago.

Answer:

As the application was withdrawn, the Department is not able to provide this information.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 18

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Better Regions Projects

Hansard Page: 100 (29/05/08)

Senator Parry asked:

Senator PARRY—The million dollar question, minister, is: do these five programs I have just highlighted, which would have a bill of some two point something million dollars, without adding it up—will these five projects come from the Better Regions program?

Senator Conroy—I am not in a position to announce that.

Senator PARRY—Can it now be taken on notice?

Senator Conroy—What you can take home is that they will be funded. Which program they will be funded from, we will take on notice and let you know.

Answer:

Please refer to Senator Conroy's comment below:

“The Prime Minister, on behalf of all ministers, has provided the following answer to the honourable senator's question: the election commitments made by federal Labor, the great majority of which were accompanied by an estimate of costs, are on the public record.” (draft Hansard, 28 May 2008, p8)

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 19

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Tree of Knowledge

Hansard Page: 106 (29/05/08)

Senator McGauran asked:

Senator McGAURAN—How pretentious—the Tree of Knowledge. How pretentious, and how even more pretentious it is that you think you can open a museum and the public will come to it.

CHAIR—Is there a question, Senator McGauran?

Senator McGAURAN—The question is: have you done a business plan?

Senator Conroy—Oh dear. I am sorry, are you actually asking me the details of an election commitment? I would have to genuinely take that on notice; I do not have that detail.

Answer:

Consistent with past practice, the Department has never done business plans for project proponents.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 20

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: BR Project in Seat of Flynn

Hansard Page: 106 (29/05/08)

Senator McGauran asked:

Senator McGAURAN—Blind Freddy can see that it is in the marginal seat of Flynn, this grant. But there is another museum in the marginal seat of Flynn, and was there any consideration of at least just linking up with this museum and using one of their roots?

Senator Conroy—I will have to take that on notice. I am afraid I have no information on that.

Senator McGAURAN—The other museum is the dinosaur museum; I would have thought it fitted very neatly.

Senator Conroy—I said I would take it on notice.

Answer:

The Government intends to honour its election commitments.

Please refer to Senator Conroy's comment below:

“The Prime Minister, on behalf of all ministers, has provided the following answer to the honourable senator's question: the election commitments made by federal Labor, the great majority of which were accompanied by an estimate of costs, are on the public record.” (draft Hansard, 28 May 2008, p8)

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 21

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Better Regions Funding

Hansard Page: 107 (29/05/08)

Senator McGauran asked:

Senator McGAURAN—I have a picture here of the dead stump of knowledge being jacked out of the ground. Is it where the museum is going to go, or are you going to go looking for this stump? Is the museum going to be fitted around the stump?

Senator Conroy—You know you are asking details which, as you know, I—

Senator McGAURAN—Well, for \$2.6 million, why would you ask for details?

CHAIR—Senator McGauran, you have asked the minister a question; please let him answer it.

Senator McGAURAN—Why can I not ask details about a \$2.6 million project?

CHAIR—Let him answer it, please Senator McGauran.

Senator Conroy—You can, and I am taking them on notice. I just do not have them. But I am actually looking for the details which I did partially read out, and in deference to Senator Macdonald, I did not read out all of it, but I do have a detailed note on what the actual money is for. So I am just looking at that to respond to your questions.

Answer:

The Government intends to honour its election commitments.

Please refer to Senator Conroy's comment below:

“The Prime Minister, on behalf of all ministers, has provided the following answer to the honourable senator's question: the election commitments made by federal Labor, the great majority of which were accompanied by an estimate of costs, are on the public record.” (draft Hansard, 28 May 2008, p8)

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 22

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Better Regions Funding

Hansard Page: 108 (29/05/08)

Senator McGuaran asked:

Senator McGAURAN—Will it be funded by Better Regions?

Senator Conroy—As I said, we will take that on notice. We have not made those decisions.

Answer:

The Government intends to honour its election commitments.

Please refer to Senator Conroy's comment below:

“The Prime Minister, on behalf of all ministers, has provided the following answer to the honourable senator's question: the election commitments made by federal Labor, the great majority of which were accompanied by an estimate of costs, are on the public record.” (draft Hansard, 28 May 2008, p8)

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 23

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Ballarat Aquatic Centre

Hansard Page: 110 (29/05/08)

Senator McGauran asked:

Senator McGAURAN—There are three projects I just want to bring to your attention to seek the status of each one. In Ballarat there was a pre-election commitment for the Ballarat Aquatic Centre of \$1.5 million. Is that to be funded under Better Regions? It cannot be found for love nor money in the budget?

Senator Conroy—We will take it on notice. As we have indicated, that those decisions have not been made yet.

Answer:

The Government intends to honour its election commitments.

Please refer to Senator Conroy's comment below:

“The Prime Minister, on behalf of all ministers, has provided the following answer to the honourable senator's question: the election commitments made by federal Labor, the great majority of which were accompanied by an estimate of costs, are on the public record.” (draft Hansard, 28 May 2008, p8)

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 24

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: RP in Gippsland and Sale

Hansard Page: 110 (29/05/08)

Senator McGauran asked:

Senator McGAURAN—Two Regional Partnerships applications were—at least they got into the department—the Gippsland Stratford RSL Hall, to redevelop it into a community hall, and the Sale TAFE, a \$5 million application to move the Sale TAFE into Sale and to build certain sporting facilities. It must be just on the outer regions. What is the status for those two projects?

Ms Page—I think we will have to take those on notice, as with Senator Adams's projects, and advise you of their status.

Answer:

Applications that were under assessment under the former *Regional Partnerships* program are not being considered for funding.

The Minister announced during the Budget a new program, the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program for the next financial year.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 25

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Tree of Knowledge

Hansard Page: 110 (29/05/08)

Senator McGauran asked:

Senator McGAURAN—He said he would take some questions on notice. I was quite serious about where is the dead stump of knowledge now—

Senator Conroy—I will have to take that on notice.

Senator McGAURAN—Is it in the same place? Also—

CHAIR—You have asked that and the minister has said that he will take it on notice.

Senator McGAURAN—I want to be sure. Also, those measurements that I judged it at, I want to know whether it is a four foot stump, or not?

Senator Conroy—We will endeavour to gain as much information as we can on notice.

Answer:

The Government intends to honour its election commitments.

Please refer to Senator Conroy's comment below:

“The Prime Minister, on behalf of all ministers, has provided the following answer to the honourable senator's question: the election commitments made by federal Labor, the great majority of which were accompanied by an estimate of costs, are on the public record.” (draft Hansard, 28 May 2008, p8)

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 26

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: RP Projects

Hansard Page: 111 (29/05/08)

Senator Fisher asked:

Senator FISHER—They are not on the list of 86.

Senator Conroy—They were just applications that were never assessed?

Senator FISHER—That is actually a question I want to ask you, but if I provide you with the details—

Senator Conroy—That is fine.

Senator FISHER—of the projects I would welcome that information coming back as soon as possible to clarify it for the applicants. One application was in respect of the Ceduna airport redevelopment, a project worth over \$6 million. The Regional Partnerships request was for \$1 million. Port Lincoln foreshore redevelopment is the second project. The total project value was about \$1.5 million and the Regional Partnerships request was \$441,000. The final project also in the federal electorate of Grey was a KESAB, APY Lands Palya, cleaner communities project; total project value \$363,000 and the Regional Partnerships request was \$228,000. In respect of those three—

Senator Conroy—Obviously, I will have to take the finer details of that on notice. I am happy to get back to you as quick as we can. I suspect—and departmental officials might want to jump in—

Mr Angley—No, I think they must be applications—

Senator Conroy—They are all, we suspect, in the category that is described as applications that have never been assessed. But if we find anything different from that or there is any other information we can find, we will.

Senator FISHER—My information is that the applications were submitted between May and September 2007.

Answer:

Applications that were under assessment under the former Regional Partnerships program are not being considered for funding.

The Minister announced during the Budget a new program, the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program for the next financial year.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 27

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Barker Electorate

Hansard Page: 111 (29/05/08)

Senator Fisher asked:

Senator FISHER—The final project that falls into that category about which I would like the details as to the status is an application in respect of the Concordia Kindergarten in Murray Bridge in South Australia in the electorate of Barker. It was an application that would have extended part of the kindergarten facilities. It is actually a project that had been the subject of discussion, as I understand it, between the Regional Partnerships team and the project proponents for approximately two years. It is actually a project that the South Australian government had agreed to partly fund, in fact, fund to the tune of \$40,000—

Senator Conroy—We are happy to come back for that. I am happy to find out whatever information we can on that for you.

Senator FISHER—Obviously, that community is in some difficulty trying to work out what to do with partially progressed state government money, so I would appreciate details as to the status of that application.

Answer:

Applications that were under assessment under the former Regional Partnerships program are not being considered for funding.

The Minister announced during the Budget a new program, the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program for the next financial year.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 28

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: 86 Projects

Hansard Page: 112 (29/05/08)

Senator Fisher asked:

Senator FISHER—To the extent that Mr Gray's letter reflected a standard, are you able to provide the committee tonight with that standard?

Mr Angley—Could I check on that?

Ms Page—We do not have a copy of the signed letter at this stage.

Senator FISHER—Minister, to the extent that Mr Gray's letter to the list of 86 was a standard letter, are you able to procure a copy for the committee tonight?

Senator Conroy—Parliament has risen in the House of Representatives and I think both minister Albanese and—

Senator FISHER—Minister. Minister, I think—

Senator Conroy—Parliamentary Secretary Gray have left the building.

Senator FISHER—I think you have heard about the importance of this issue to the communities concerned.

Senator Conroy—I will take that on notice and endeavour to get as much information to you as fast as we can.

Answer:

The text of Mr Gray's letter to the 86 approved and uncontracted is **attached**.

[LGRD 28 attachment]

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 29

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Kojonup Medical Centre

Hansard Page: 118 (29/05/08)

Senator Adams asked:

Senator ADAMS—The other one is the Kojonup medical centre—a fairly recent one—for \$400,000. That was put under rural and regional partnerships. I just wonder whether you have received it and whether you know anything about the medical centre in Kojonup in the great southern.

Ms Page—I think we will have to take that on notice.

Senator ADAMS—If you could take that on notice, I would be very keen to know. Thank you very much.

Answer:

There is no record of an application for the Kojonup Medical Centre being received under the Regional Partnerships program.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 30

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Macedon Ranges

Hansard Page: 119 (29/05/08)

Senator Nash asked:

Senator NASH—I do understand that. Minister, given that it did not get to the approval stage, could I ask you to perhaps take this one to the relevant department—I do not know if that would be aged care or which department it would be—and see if there is not some funding bucket for this project. I know there is \$494 million sitting there and everybody would want to be asking for that project. But I think this is one that, given the circumstances, could do with some quick and speedy assessment if we could find somewhere to place it.

Senator Conroy—I am happy to take that matter up with Minister Albanese and see if there are potential alternative buckets that you describe.

Answer:

Funding for disability respite services is being delivered through the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 31

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: RP Proponents

Hansard Page: 122 (29/05/08)

Senator Nash asked:

Senator NASH—Why, then, would it be that the parliamentary secretary, Gary Gray, would have called a proponent yesterday to advise him that his project would be going ahead? That is circumventing the process, wouldn't you say?

Senator Conroy—I am happy to take that on notice and raise it with Mr Gray.

Senator NASH—Do you think it is very curious and interesting that, having discussed the process at length to the 31st, the parliamentary secretary responsible for this has a recently as yesterday advised a proponent that their project would be going ahead?

Senator Conroy—Well, that is—

Senator NASH—You are not aware of that, Minister?

Senator Conroy—Obviously not.

Senator NASH—Obviously not. I would say obviously not.

Senator Conroy—I will happily take it on notice and raise it with Mr Gray.

Senator NASH—I am sure you will. Could you come back to the committee with a very clear and distinct answer on why that advice was given to the proponent. Thank you, Minister.

Answer:

Please refer to LGRD 28

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 32

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: FRRR

Hansard Page: 123 (29/05/08)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—And there has been no decision made to extend it?

Mr James—I am not aware of any.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Minister, is that going to be looked at, do you know?

Senator Conroy—I will take that on notice.

Answer:

The Government has taken no decision involving the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal past the current commitment which expires 30 June 2009.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 33

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development Division

Topic: Interim Board Membership

Hansard Page: 124-124 (29/05/08)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Your department provides a secretariat. Who are the people on this?

Ms Page—We can either provide that or take it on notice.

.....
Ms Page—Mr James can provide you with advice on the members of the interim board of RDA.

Mr James—Would you like them?

Senator IAN MACDONALD—On notice, please, because we are running out of time.

Answer:

A document listing members of the Interim Board of Regional Development Australia is **attached**.

[LGRD 33 attachment]

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 34

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development Division

Topic: RDA

Hansard Page: 125 (29/05/08)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Can I ask the department to provide on notice the written instructions upon which they are working when they consider—

Senator Conroy—We will take that on notice.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Regional Development Australia.

Answer:

Regional Development Australia (RDA) is an election commitment which was announced by the Hon Simon Crean MP during the ALP's Regional Policy Launch on 20 November 2007.

In his speech, Mr Crean said:

“Regional Development Australia will replace and build on the highly successful Area Consultative Committee Network.”

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 35

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Office of Northern Australia

Hansard Page: 126 (29/05/2008)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Minister, is there any reason why the north-west of Western Australia, which contributes to a very substantial part of Australia's export earnings, is not included?

Senator Conroy—I will take that on notice and inquire for you.

Answer:

The north-west of Western Australia is included under the Office of Northern Australia.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 36

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Office of Northern Australia

Hansard Page: 126 (29/05/2008)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Yes. I have it now. There is \$2 million a year for the next four years. And that is to run the offices?

Mr Angley—Yes. It is to run the offices and contribute to the work of the office.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—And what do you currently spend per year on the departmental offices? I suspect not in a separate line item in the budget but within your internal budget, what do you currently spend?

Ms Page—I would have to take that on notice.

Answer:

The expenditure for the 2007-08 Financial Year:

- \$580,466 for the Townsville regional office; and
- \$262,659 for the Darwin regional office.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 37

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Offices

Hansard Page: 126-127 (29/05/2008)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—And how many staff do you currently have in Townsville and Cairns?

Ms Page—I would be guessing, but it is of the order of probably about eight in Townsville and I think two or three in Darwin.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Could you just confirm that if you find out what you are currently spending, you could find out what the current staffing arrangement is for them.

Answer:

The Townsville regional office has seven full time equivalent (FTE) staff members, plus one area manager based at the regional office.

The Department does not maintain a regional presence in Cairns, other than regular visits from the Townsville-based area manager.

The Darwin regional office has three FTE staff members.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 38

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development Division

Topic: Cairns RO

Hansard Page: 127-8 (29/05/08)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—The minister seems to have gone missing in action again. Was there ever an office in the past in Cairns?

Ms Page—I will have to take that on notice.

Answer:

The Department has not had a regional office in Cairns.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 39

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: ONA and Regional Offices

Hansard Page: 128 (29/05/2008)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Sure, that is in relation to the existing offices. My question, which I will ask you to take on notice, seeing that the minister is not here, is why Townsville and Darwin were selected. Certainly, I am delighted about Townsville, my home base, but I wonder what the rationale for Townsville and Darwin was as opposed to, for example, Cairns and Katherine. So if you could take that on notice.

Answer:

The Office of Northern Australia (ONA) has been established as an administrative unit within the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government. The Rudd Government indicated in its election commitment that ONA would have offices in Darwin and Townsville.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 40

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Office of Northern Australia

Hansard Page: 129 (29/05/2008)

Senator Heffernan asked:

Senator HEFFERNAN—The dirty dogs. I understand, because Senator Macdonald has asked some pretty good questions on the department's development of the north, that obviously there will need to be a strong connection into the untapped potential of a lot of the Indigenous freehold land up there for economic opportunity. As I said last night, plain as the nose on your face, there is a need in Australia to get some downstream development, fertiliser, et cetera, off the North-West Gas Shelf, and how you hub that up will be

an argument amongst the various players there. But there is a lot of information, which a decent administrative office rather than the scientists can already put together through those departments, which is in isolated silos all over the place. I thought that the previous government had allocated to the Bureau of Meteorology and CSIRO or someone—was it \$50 million to look at some work on the Great Artesian Basin?

Mr Angley—Yes, I am pretty sure you are right about that. I do remember that being a budget measure a couple of years ago.

Senator HEFFERNAN—I wonder what happened to that money?

Mr Angley—I could provide you with some written advice on that.

Answer:

The previous Government allocated \$42.7 million over five years (2004-05 to 2008-09) for Phase 2 of the Great Artesian Basin Sustainability Initiative (GABSI - the bore-capping and piping program), which included \$1.4 million for the Carnarvon Artesian Basin in Western Australia.

The current Australian Government has committed to GABSI Phase 3 under the 'Water for the Future' package, with indicative total funding of \$85 million over 7 years (2007-08 to 2013-14).

Further information is available from the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 41

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Office of Northern Australia

Hansard Page: 129 (29/05/2008)

Senator Heffernan asked:

Senator HEFFERNAN—There are some pockets of money that are in the system now. Rather than go through a great long spiel again tonight, I suppose the best way to summarise it is, could we have an update?

Answer:

In March 2008 the decision was made to transfer responsibility for the Northern Australia Land and Water Taskforce (the Taskforce) from the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, to be located within the new Office of Northern Australia. Based on the original costings from the Taskforce and Assessment programs, \$837,410 has been transferred from DEWHA to meet the operating costs of the Taskforce. The balance of remaining funds remains with DEWHA and the Assessment.

The Australian Government has committed \$2 million per year over four years (from 2008-09) to meet the operating costs of the Office of Northern Australia.

The Government has also committed \$85 million over 7 years (2007-08 to 2013-14), under the 'Water for the Future' package, for GABSI Phase 3 to continue the bore-capping and piping program.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 43

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: 86 Projects

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

Is the following quote (in bold) from David Koch, co-host of Channel Seven's Sunrise Program Wednesday 20th May 2008 Transcript of David Koch at 8.07 am an accurate reflection of the conversation between Minister Albanese and Mr Koch?

"Just a quick update this time yesterday we were talking to, Anthony Albanese, the new Federal Minister about the scrapping in the budget of the Regional Partnerships programme that has affected so many communities and community projects who thought they were promised money and now its gone out the window quite a fiery discussion with Albo as Joe Hockey calls him yesterday, he gave me a call last night at home and said that he didn't realise how many community groups were affected he said their understanding is that the whole partnerships program was a bit of a rort but there are some really good community projects in there so he is going to fast track the examination of all the applications and do it quickly which is a terrific assurance and to back that up Ken Wilson remember he was the one yesterday with the playground in Bundaberg that was affected; Ken sent me an email yesterday afternoon saying that he had received a personal phone call yesterday from Anthony Albanese who said he'd personally read the file and is looking at finding alternative sources of funding for it, no promises but he is looking... "

Answer:

The Minister's announcement on 28 May 2008 stated that "...86 not-for-profit and local government projects [will have] until 31 July 2008 to complete contract negotiations with my Department. In addition, they will be required to meet strict timetables and requirements to begin construction. This is to ensure they are sustainable and genuine projects."

The Government has offered 86 not-for-profit and local government organisations with an approved and uncontracted Regional Partnerships projects the opportunity to finalise their contract with the Commonwealth. This offer is subject to the proponents meeting the following conditions:

1. the project still meets the Regional Partnerships program criteria;
2. money has already been spent or commitments entered into in good faith based on the advice from the previous government;
3. the conditions of the original funding offer can be met;
4. finalise contract negotiations and sign a contract by 31 July 2008; and

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

5. projects that involve construction or require a tender process will have until 31 December 2008 to commence the project and/or have the tender process completed. All other projects must commence within 6 weeks of contract execution.

The Department has contacted all 86 organisations to confirm the current status of each project and whether the organisation is able to meet the conditions of offer.

The Department of Finance and Deregulation was required to agree that projects met criteria 1 and 2 above.

Once the proponent has demonstrated that they are able to satisfy these conditions, the Department will move to finalise contract negotiations.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 44

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: 86 Projects

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

Which of the 590 Regional Partnerships projects abolished by the Government will be subjected to a fast tracked examination and which will be funded?

Answer:

Please refer to LGRD 43

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 45

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Projects

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

Will they be funded through the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government?

Answer:

Yes

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 46

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: RP Playground Bundaberg

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

Given the Minister's personal assurances in two telephone calls to Ken Wilson who has been fighting for the disabled playground in Bundaberg which was approved for Regional Partnerships funding but was axed in the Budget; that the Minister had personally read the file and is looking at finding alternative sources of funding for the disabled playground, what action has the Department taken on the Minister's personal commitment to Mr Wilson?

Answer:

Please refer to LGRD 43

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 47

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Partnerships

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

Is this the only Regional Partnerships file that the Minister has personally read?

Answer:

No

The Minister had discussions with a number of community groups and local councils. These discussions highlighted that many believed that funding negotiations had been finalised with the previous government.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 48

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: 86 Projects

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

Which of the other 115 community based RP projects approved but not contracted and subsequently abolished will be subjected to fast-tracked examination by the Government?

Answer:

Please refer to LGRD 43

A list of these projects is **attached** and has already been tabled by the Department on 29 May 2008.

[LGRD 48 attachment]

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 49

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: 86 Projects

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

Which of the 490 community driven RP projects which were awaiting consideration prior to the Budget will be subject of a fast-tracked examination?

Answer:

Please refer to LGRD 43

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 50

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Partnerships

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

Isn't it a fact that the only reason for the late night phone call to David Koch of the Sunrise program and the fast tracking of the examination of Regional Partnership projects by the Minister a result of the negative publicity surrounding the disable children's playground in Queensland on the Seven Sunrise Program?

Answer:

The Minister had discussions with a number of community groups and local councils. These discussions highlighted that many believed that funding negotiations had been finalised with the previous government.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 51

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: 86 Projects

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

When was a new review (or fast track examination) of the 116 community based RP projects which were approved but subsequently slashed by the Government ordered? (provide a date) *116 projects is the figure given in the February Budget Estimates.

Answer:

On 28 May 2008, the Minister announced that 86 not-for-profit and local government organisations with an approved and uncontracted Regional Partnerships projects would be offered the opportunity to finalise their contract with the Commonwealth.

The Government has offered 86 not-for-profit and local government organisations with an approved and uncontracted Regional Partnerships projects the opportunity to finalise their contract with the Commonwealth. This offer is subject to the proponents meeting the following conditions:

6. the project still meets the Regional Partnerships program criteria;
7. money has already been spent or commitments entered into in good faith based on the advice from the previous government;
8. the conditions of the original funding offer can be met;
9. finalise contract negotiations and sign a contract by 31 July 2008; and
10. projects that involve construction or require a tender process will have until 31 December 2008 to commence the project and/or have the tender process completed. All other projects must commence within 6 weeks of contract execution.

The Department has contacted all 86 organisations to confirm the current status of each project and whether the organisation is able to meet the conditions of offer.

The Department of Finance and Deregulation was required to agree that projects met criteria 1 and 2 above.

Once the proponent has demonstrated that they are able to satisfy these conditions, the Department will move to finalise contract negotiations.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 52

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Partnerships

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

What are the terms of reference for this fast track examination and who will be undertaking the review?

Answer:

The Government has offered 86 not-for-profit and local government organisations with an approved and uncontracted Regional Partnerships projects the opportunity to finalise their contract with the Commonwealth. This offer is subject to the proponents meeting the following conditions:

11. the project still meets the Regional Partnerships program criteria;
12. money has already been spent or commitments entered into in good faith based on the advice from the previous government;
13. the conditions of the original funding offer can be met;
14. finalise contract negotiations and sign a contract by 31 July 2008; and
15. projects that involve construction or require a tender process will have until 31 December 2008 to commence the project and/or have the tender process completed. All other projects must commence within 6 weeks of contract execution.

The Department has contacted all 86 organisations to confirm the current status of each project and whether the organisation is able to meet the conditions of offer.

The Department of Finance and Deregulation was required to agree that projects met criteria 1 and 2 above.

Once the proponent has demonstrated that they are able to satisfy these conditions, the Department will move to finalise contract negotiations.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 53

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Partnerships

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

Had the Minister or Parliamentary Secretary actually reviewed any of the 116 community driven projects which were approved by the Government but since abolished by Labor Government prior to the Budget being handed down?

Answer:

The Minister has reviewed a range of *Regional Partnerships* projects, as well as the ANAO report which found that "*the manner in which the program had been administered...had fallen short of an acceptable standard of public administration.*"

The Minister had discussions with a number of community groups and local councils. These discussions highlighted that many believed that funding negotiations had been finalised with the previous government.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 54

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Partnerships

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

What has the Department been doing for the past six months with the Regional Partnerships programme if the Minister was not aware there were some really good community projects in the Regional Partnerships?

Answer:

The Department has been managing the existing contracted Regional Partnerships projects and providing advice to the Government on a range of related matters.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 55

Division/Agency: Regional Development and Local Government Division

Topic: RP Reviews

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

Did the Department actually undertake a review of the Regional Partnerships Programme?

Answer:

The Department has provided a range of advice regarding the *Regional Partnerships* program to the previous and current governments.

In addition, the ANAO has conducted an extensive audit of the *Regional Partnerships* program which found that "*the manner in which the program had been administered...had fallen short of an acceptable standard of public administration.*"

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 56

Division/Agency: Regional Development and Local Government Business Division

Topic: RP Reviews

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

What were the terms of reference for that review?

Answer:

Please refer to LGRD 55.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 57

Division/Agency: Regional Development and Local Government Business Division

Topic: RP Reviews

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

Please table all the findings of that review and the names of the people within the Department who undertook that review?

Answer:

Refer to LGRD 55.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 58

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: RP Rorts

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

Given the Minister told David Koch of the Seven Sunrise program on the 20th May that his '*understanding is that the whole partnerships program was a bit of a rort*' which projects does the Minister, or Parliament Secretary believe were rorts?

Answer:

The Australian National Audit Office outlined its concerns and criticisms of the administration of the *Regional Partnerships* program in an extensive report. This report listed a number of case studies in addition to examining decision-making processes.

The report can be found at <www.anao.gov.au>.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 59

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: RP Rorts

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

Did the Department have concerns that any of the 116 community inspired projects approved by the Government but since abolished because they had not been contracted, were projects which were 'rorts' and if so which projects did the Department identify as rorts?

Answer:

All projects were assessed by the Department with recommendations made to the previous government.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 60

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Sustainable Regions

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

What is happening with projects which were approved for funding under the Darling Matilda Way Sustainable Regions programme but subsequently cancelled?

Answer:

Uncontracted projects are not being considered for funding.

The Minister announced during the Budget a new program, the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program for the next financial year.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 61

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Sustainable Regions

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

Will the Government make them the same offer they have made to the 86 Regional Partnerships projects which were approved, but not contracted, cancelled and then re-instated?

Answer:

No

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 62

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Cost of 86 projects

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

How much will it cost to re-instate the 86 Regional Partnerships projects? Will there need to be an additional budget allocation or will the funding come from the existing budget?

Answer:

The process of assessing and negotiating with these projects is ongoing and costs are yet to be finalised.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 63

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: ACC's

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

Has the Minister or Parliamentary Secretary issued any instructions to the Department or Area Consultative Committee staff not to talk to Members of Parliament, Local Government, the media or any other group or individual about individual projects under the Regional Partnership which have been abolished?

Answer:

The Department is not aware of the Minister or Parliamentary Secretary issuing any such instructions.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 64

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: WA Local Govt and Shires RP

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

Why did the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government in Canberra and the Area Consultative Committees (ACC) refuse to provide a list of projects affected by the decision to abolish the Regional Partnership Programme to the Western Australian Local Government and Shires Association?

Answer:

The Department has no record of such a request.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 65

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: WA Local Govt and Shires RP

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

Who refused to give the Western Australian Local Government and Shires Association a list of affected RP projects and under whose instructions?

Answer:

The Department has no record of such a request.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 66

Division: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Better Regions Program

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

What is the Better Regions Programme and can any community group apply for funding under this programme?

Answer:

The Better Regions Program implements election commitments announced by the Government in the lead-up to the 2007 Federal Election.

The Minister announced during the Budget a new program, the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program for the next financial year.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 67

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Better Regions Funding

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

How much funding has been allocated to the Better Regions Programme? (\$176m)

Answer:

In the 2008-09 Budget, the Better Regions Program was allocated \$176 million over four years. (2008-09 Portfolio Budget Statement, Page 61)

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 68

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Better Regions Funding

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

I refer to Budget Related Paper NO.1.13 page 62 under the heading Better Regions which states; *Better Regions; which delivers on the Government's 2007 election commitments...*

Has any funding been allocated to projects in the 07-08 financial year? If so, which Projects have been funded, approved or contracted?

Answer:

No funding has been allocated to individual projects in the 2007-08 financial year.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 69

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Better Regions Program

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

Please provide a breakdown electorate by electorate of each of the 105 projects promised to be funded by the Government under the Better Regions Programme prior to the last election including the amount of funding promised by the Government?

Answer:

Please refer to Senator Conroy's comment below:

"The Prime Minister, on behalf of all ministers, has provided the following answer to the honourable senator's question: the election commitments made by federal Labor, the great majority of which were accompanied by an estimate of costs, are on the public record." (draft Hansard, 28 May 2008, p8)

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 70

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Better Regions Program

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

Please provide an electorate by electorate breakdown of each project to be funded under the Better Regions Programme, its value (Commonwealth contribution) and the total value of the project, and what year the project will be funded.

Answer:

Refer to LGRD 69.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 71

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Due Diligence

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

What due diligence has been undertaken for each of these projects?

Answer:

The *Better Regions* program will reflect the *Financial Management and Accountability (FMA) Act* and the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) Review of the Administration of the Regional Partnerships program.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 72

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Better Regions Program

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

How many projects will be funded by the Better Regions Programme? (105)

Answer:

Refer to LGRD 69.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 73

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Letters to BR Proponents

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

Have letters been sent to Better Regions proponents? If not when will they be sent?

Answer:

Yes.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 74

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Funding Agreement Letter

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

Will these letters include an offer of funding?

Answer:

These letters advised that provision of committed funding is contingent upon the execution of appropriate funding agreement (contract) documentation and settling of relevant project details.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 75

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Partnerships

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

I refer you to a Doorstop media interview with Kevin Rudd on Friday 16th November, 2007 in relation to approvals under a Rudd Government for the Regional Partnerships Program he states:

Rudd: "...is that it must pass through three stages. Number One, for anything to be considered by us under this programme it would need to have the endorsement of either a) the local council, b) the local Area Consultative Committee, or c) the State Government. Secondly, it would need to form part of that community's local economic or community infrastructure, and thirdly it would then need to pass the departmental seal of approval in order for it to proceed."

Journalist: ...Ministers wouldn't be able to overturn the recommendations of the department, is that what you are saying?

Rudd: "According to the three stage procedure I've outlined, absolutely."

How will this policy be implemented?

How many projects were given as election commitments and what is the dollar value by the Government prior to 24th of November with the funding to come from a Regional Partnership type program to be known as the 'Better Regions' Program'?

Given the statements made by Kevin Rudd (*see above quote*) how will the Government deliver on its election commitments? Will it bypass the three stages as outlined by the Prime Minister?

Answer:

Please refer to Senator Conroy's comment below:

"The Prime Minister, on behalf of all ministers, has provided the following answer to the honourable senator's question: the election commitments made by federal Labor, the great majority of which were accompanied by an estimate of costs, are on the public record." (draft Hansard, 28 May 2008, p8)

The Government is considering the Guidelines for implementing its election commitments through the Better Regions program.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 76

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Tree of Knowledge

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

Is it a fact an election commitment of \$2.6 million was made by the Government to fund the Barcaldine Tree of Knowledge project?

Isn't it a fact that this project has already been rejected by the Department? How will this election commitment be fulfilled? Has the Minister or Parliamentary Secretary personally intervened in this project to ensure that the \$8 million tender could be advertised?

Isn't it a fact this project has now called for tenders for the \$8 million project? Has the Government allocated any funding yet to the project or approved funding for this project?

Answer:

Refer to LGRD 69.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 77

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Partnerships

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

How many regional Partnership projects were approved by the Government in the 06-07 and 07 – 08 financial years? (including Sustainable Regions projects and Regional Medical Infrastructure Fund)

How many have been approved since the Caretaker period began last year?

How many projects have been approved since November 24th 2007?

How many of these projects have been announced and the successful applicant been informed but were awaiting contracts to be signed?

How many contracts for RP projects have been finalised this financial year and the funding paid to the organisations?

Answer:

There were 343 Regional Partnerships projects, including Rural Medical Infrastructure Fund, approved in 2006-2007 financial year. There were 189 Regional Partnerships projects, including Rural Medical Infrastructure Fund approved in the 2007-2008 financial year prior to the federal election.

There were 12 Sustainable Regions projects approved in the 2006-2007 financial year and 16 Sustainable Regions projects approved in the 2007-2008 financial year.

There have been no Regional Partnerships projects approved since the Caretaker period began prior to the 2007 federal election.

There have been no projects approved since November 24th 2007.

There have been 178 contracts for Regional Partnerships projects finalised in the 2007-2008 financial year, these projects received \$34,248,619 in 2007-2008.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 78

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Partnerships

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

- a) Provide an electorate by electorate breakdown of all Regional Partnerships projects which were funded in the 07-08 financial year and also the ones which will be funded in the 08-09 financial year? Include a dollar breakdown of the Federal Government's contribution and the dollar contribution which other parties were making to the project.
- b) Provide an electorate by electorate breakdown of all RP projects which were approved by the Government in 07-08 but were not contracted. Include a dollar breakdown of the Federal Government's contribution and the dollar contribution which other parties were making to the project.
- c) Provide an electorate by electorate breakdown of 490 RP projects which were awaiting approval by the Department in 07-08 but were subsequently abolished. Include a dollar breakdown of the Federal Government's contribution and the dollar contribution which other parties were making to the project.
- d) Why has \$41.485 million been allocated in 2008-09 for Regional Partnerships when the Minister's Media release clearly states that the Regional Partnerships programme has been abolished?

(*note budget paper Portfolio Budget Statements 2008 – 09, Budget Related Paper No 1.13 states \$73.131 million estimated actual allocated in 07-08 and a further \$41.485 million estimated to be allocated in 08-09 for Regional Partnerships).
(**Would like to get an overall value of how much these projects were worth broken down by contributors: ie the Government has ripped \$xxx million out of the community)

Answer:

- a & b) Information on approved and contracted projects was provided to the Committee on 29 May 2008.
- c) The Department has written to the applicants of all projects that were under assessment in 2007-08 asking whether they agreed for the details of their applications, to be provided to the Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport. The Department has compiled

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

the information for the projects whose applicants answered positively (**see attachment**).

- d) Budget Portfolio Budget Statement 2008-09 Budget Paper No1.13 advises provision of \$41.485m against Regional Partnerships in 2008-09. This funding is required to meet multi-year contracted commitments arising from projects approved and contracted before October 2007.

[LGRD 78 attachment]

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 79

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Partnerships

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

Who undertook the review prior to the Budget being handed down in May of the 116 projects identified during the last Budget Estimates earlier this year that had been approved but not contracted?

What was the nature of this review?

Were any of these projects found to have 'rorted' the Regional Partnerships Programme, had any abnormalities or were found they should not have been funded during the review?

Similarly of the 490 projects which were awaiting approval how many of these were reviewed and by whom?

Were any of these projects found to have 'rorted' the Regional Partnership Programme, has any abnormalities or were found they should not have been put forward for funding during the review?

Did the review look at what sort of effort, time and money was put into making a funding submission under the Regional Partnerships Programme?

What is the average time spent by community organisations in getting a Regional Partnership Programme up to a standard it could be approved for funding?

Answer:

Refer to LGRD 55.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 80

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: 86 Projects

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

Since the Budget was handed down has the Department begun reviewing any of the 116 projects approved by the Government but since abandoned and now reinstated?

Hasn't the Ministers office ordered a new review of these projects?

Will the Government be funding any of these projects following this new review?

How were the 116 individual projects informed that they would not be receiving their promised funding?

What has been the reaction from proponents of the projects?

How much has the Department spent on Media monitoring this issue (please provide all media monitoring transcripts both electronic and press ordered by the Department or Ministers/Parl Sec's office over the last six months and specifically any in relation to the Regional Partnerships Programme)

How many of the 116 projects approved by the Government were approved under the Rural Medical Infrastructure Fund, the Sustainable Regions Programme or RP program?

Provide an outline of the nature of each of the 116 projects approved by the Government but since abandoned by the Government, and subsequently reinstated.

How many projects which have been approved by the Government have had to be abandoned because the Government has not offered them a contract?

Answer:

The Department has contacted all 86 organisations to confirm the current status of each project and whether the organisation is able to meet the conditions of offer.

Projects that meet the conditions attached to the offer will have the opportunity to finalise a contract.

The Parliamentary Secretary of Regional Development and Northern Australia wrote to all project proponents regarding the closure of the Regional Partnerships program.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

The Department established an Information Line to assist organisations impacted by the decision to close the program.

It is not possible to determine the individual cost of providing media monitoring on the Regional Partnerships program from the total cost of media monitoring.

There were 7 projects approved under the RMIF component of Regional Partnerships program. There were no Sustainable Regions projects.

Refer to LGRD 48 for the list of projects that have been offered the opportunity to finalise their contracts.

The Department is not aware of any.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 82

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development Division

Topic: RDA and ACC's

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

- (a) Were members of the Executive Officers Group of the Area Consultative Committee brought to Canberra on Tuesday 27th of May 2008 (earlier this week) for a meeting with the Parliamentary Secretary, Gary Gray at 4pm?
- (b) Is it a fact that the Parliamentary Secretary booked a committee room for this meeting?
- (c) How many members of the Executive Officers Group travelled to Canberra for this meeting and where did they travel from? (they came from around Australia)
- (d)
 - a. How much did it cost to fly this group to Canberra?
 - b. Was Travel Allowance paid for overnight stays?
- (e) Isn't it a fact that the Executive officers waited for over an hour in the Committee room for the Parliamentary Secretary, before Marcus James a Departmental Officer phoned the Parliamentary Secretary's office only to be told that Parl Sec Gary Gray had forgotten about the meeting and wouldn't be able to attend?
- (f)
 - a. What was the cost for this debacle and who picked up the bill?
 - b. Will the Department apologise to these hard working staff for wasting their time and effort?
- (g) What will be the role of Area Consultative Committee (ACC) staff over the next 12 months? Why is this valuable resource being left out to dry with nothing to do?
- (h) Has a letter been sent from the Minister to the ACC network with advice on what he wants the ACC network to do between now and the end of the Calendar year?
- (i) What has the ACC staff been doing for the past six months?
- (j) Have concerns been raised by the Area Consultative Committee representatives regarding funding levels and the possible problems of trading while insolvent as a result of the Government only allocating 50 percent of the Area Consultative Committees funding in the first week of July, not 60% which has been past practise?
- (k) Will there be any job losses in any of the ACC's in the next financial year?
- (l) Will there be any job losses when the ACC's cease to exist from 1st January 2008?
- (m) Are you aware of any ACC Board members from the 54 ACC around the country who have resigned as a result of the Government's decision to abolish the Regional Partnerships Programme, in particular the Government decision not to fund community projects approved but not contracted?
- (n) Will the Government be sacking the current board members of the Local Area Consultative Committees from the 1st of January 2008?
- (o) What will be the function of the Government election commitment to create new Authority called Regional Development Australia?
- (p)
 - a. How much will this new body cost to set up?
 - b. How many staff will it employ?
- (q) How will Board members be appointed and what will be their qualifications?

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Answer:

- (a) Yes.
- (b) A committee room was on behalf of the Hon Gary Gray AO MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development and Northern Australia.
- (c) Nine members of the Executive Officers Reference Group and one Chair travelled to Canberra for the meeting. They travelled from Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, Northern Territory, South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia.
- (d)
- a. There was no direct cost to the Department. Attendees paid for their airfares and accommodation from the operational funding from their respective Regional Development Australia committees.
 - b. No.
- (e) No. The Parliamentary Secretary was required in the House of Representatives Chamber. The Executive Officers Group was aware that this was a possibility and was kept informed of the situation. The Department had a productive meeting with the Group instead.
- (f)
- a. Attendees will meet the travel costs from the operational funding from their respective Regional Development Australia committees budgets.
 - b. On 2 June 2008 the Parliamentary Secretary wrote to members of the Executive Officers Reference Group apologising for being unable to attend the meeting due to parliamentary commitments.
- (g) On 30 May 2008, the Hon Gary Gray AO MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development and Northern Australia wrote to each Regional Development Australia committee providing a work plan for Regional Development Australia, to 31 December 2008. The Government has asked each Regional Development Australia committee to consult with their communities and to advise on:
- improving the engagement of regional communities, regional development organisations and local governments with the Australian Government.
 - principles and priorities for any new regional funding programs, taking into account the Australian National Audit Office findings regarding the Regional Partnership program.
 - priorities for the types of local community infrastructure that could encourage economic development in local communities.

In addition, staff have been performing their core activities which include:

- Continuing to meet contractual requirements, including reporting and preparing business plans and budgets;
- Assisting with launches of completed Regional Partnerships projects;

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2008

Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

- Networking within their regions;
- Publishing newsletters and other information material;
- Providing advice to other federal government agencies as requested;
- Promoting other government programs;
- Attending events and conferences to promote themselves; and
- Being a link between Australian Government, business and the community.

The role of Regional Development Australia committees may change from 1 January 2009 depending on Government decisions about its ongoing role.

- (h) Yes. Refer to (g).
- (i) Staff have been performing their core activities which include:
- Continuing to meet contractual requirements, including reporting and preparing business plans and budgets;
 - Assisting with launches of completed Regional Partnerships projects;
 - Networking within their regions;
 - Publishing newsletters and other information material;
 - Providing advice to other federal government agencies as requested;
 - Promoting other government programs;
 - Attending events and conferences to promote themselves; and
 - Being a link between Australian Government, business and the community.
- (j) Yes. However, RDA Committees have now received contract offers for 2008-09.
- (k) The Government will announce the ongoing role for Regional Development Australia later this year.
- (l) Refer to (k).
- (m) No.
- (n) Refer to (k)
- (o) The Government announced on 20 March 2008 that Area Consultative Committees will transition to Regional Development Australia.
- (p)
- a. The 2008-09 Budget provides up to \$74 million over four years for Regional Development Australia.
 - b. Refer to (k)
- (q) Refer to (k)

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 83

Division/Agency: Regional Development and Local Government

Topic: Rural Medical Infrastructure Fund

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

Where has the Regional Medical Infrastructure Fund previously under the Regional Partnership Programme been located?

Will the organisations who have applied for funding under the Regional Partnerships programme for Regional Medical Infrastructure Funding have to reapply for funding or will all current applications be handed to the Department of Health to be processed?

Please provide a breakdown by electorate of all projects previously applied for under the Regional Partnerships Regional Medical Infrastructure Fund which were either approved but not contracted or were awaiting consideration?

Has the Department contacted any of these projects to inform them that funding is available from the Department of Health? If not, why not?

Answer:

The Government has transferred the Rural Medical Infrastructure Fund (RMIF) to the Department of Health and Ageing.

Projects which had been approved and contracted by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government will continue to be administered by this Department.

For other details, refer to the Department of Health and Ageing.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 84

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: MCU and Improving Women

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

MAJOR CITIES UNIT: In a Media Release dated 30 April 2008 UNLOCKING THE ECONOMIC POTENTIAL OF OUR URBAN COMMUNITIES; the Minister announced the establishment of a new Major Cities Unit to be established in his Department.

- (a) Where within the Department will this Unit be located?;
- (b) How much funding has the Major Cities Unit been allocated?;
- (c) What is the role of the Major Cities Unit?;
- (d) Will the Major Cities Unit be responsible for any grants?;
- (e) How many staff will be employed by the Major Cities Unit?;
- (f) Will the Major Cities Unit have a Board appointed? Has the Board been appointed? What qualifications will Board Members need?; and
- (g) What constitutes a Major City and which cities will be included?

Budget Papers: Assisting Regions and Local Government to Develop and Manage Their Futures

Output 3.1.1: Regional Development Policy and Programs

Improving regional women's representation in decision making *Page 61*

- (h) Given the Labor government is abolishing the improving regional women's representation in decision making program, what alternative assistance will be provided for women in this area?
- (i) How much funding will be provided for an alternative program?
- (j) What impact will this have on women in regional areas?
- (k) What impact will this have on women in regional areas when combined with the fact that the Labor government has also abolished the DAFF AAA Advancing Agricultural Industries Programme Pathways to Participation, which helped women in portfolio industries gain skills and opportunities to enable them to contribute to their industry's decision-making?
- (l) Is it the case that women in regional Australia now have absolutely no leadership and decision making programs available to them?

Answer:

- (a) The Major Cities Unit will be collocated with *Infrastructure Australia* in Sydney.
- (b) The Government will announce further details of Major Cities Unit later this year.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

(c) The Major Cities Unit role will be to identify opportunities where Federal Government leadership can make a difference to the productivity, sustainability and liveability of major cities and their residents.

(d) Refer to (b).

(e) Refer to (b).

(f) Refer to (b).

(g) The Major Cities Unit will include the eight capital cities and other major Australian cities and urban areas.

(h) No grants were awarded by the previous government in the Regional Women's Representation in decision-making program. The Government convened a National Rural Women's Summit on 27–28 June 2008. Eighty-two delegates from across Australia were supported to participate. Based on the outcomes from the Summit, the Government is now examining options to establish a National Rural Women's Network, within the context of the evaluation of the National Women's Secretariats which will be undertaken in the second half of 2008.

Australia's Farming Future provides \$130 million over four years to assist Australia's primary industries to adapt and adjust to the impacts of climate change. As part of this initiative, the Government has allocated \$8 million over four years to undertake Community Networking and Capacity Building activities focusing on women, young people (18–25 years of age) and Indigenous Australians. Programs will include those that support the development of rural women's representation and policy development input.

The Australian Government Office for Women manages the *Women's Leadership and Development* Program. The program includes a range of activities many of which benefit women in regional areas. These include provision of grants to: promote women's social inclusion; build women's capacity to take on greater leadership responsibilities; and build the capacity of women's non-government organisations to represent the views of their members and contribute to the development of public policy and service delivery in this area. The 2007-08 grants round provided \$2.1 million in grants of up to \$100,000 to national women's organisations.

(i) Refer to (h)

(j), (k) & (l) There is a range of leadership programs available around Australia, some of which are targeted directly at women in regional areas. For example the annual Rural Industries and Research Development Corporation's Rural Women's Award increases women's capacity to contribute to agriculture and rural Australia, by providing them with the support and resources to further develop their skills and abilities. The recently announced 2008 Awards provided a Bursary of \$10,000 to each

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2008

Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

of the seven State and Territory winners and the opportunity for winners and runners up in each State and Territory, to attend the prestigious Australian Institute of Company Directors' course. There is also the Australian Government's Indigenous Women's Development Program which builds the leadership skills and capacity of Indigenous women through effective training, networking and forums.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 85

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Partnerships

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

Is the Department aware that the abolition of the Regional Partnerships programme is putting the lives of rural and remote people at risk?

Answer:

No

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: LGRD 86

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Tuross Rescue Squad

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

Are you aware that the Tuross Rescue Squad in the Electorate of Eden Monaro is facing a financial emergency after the Government scrapped the Regional Partnerships programme?

Answer:

The Tuross Rescue Squad was not approved and contracted under Regional Partnership by the previous Government.