

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM01

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Caring for our Country Regional Allocations

Hansard Page: 125 (25/05/2009)

Senator MacDonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Mr Thompson, if you are trying to confuse us, you are succeeding very well, with no disrespect. With the \$138 million now, are you saying they did not apply for a competitive grant, that you just allocated them a figure? I mean ‘you’ the department.

Mr Thompson—The department did an analysis of the capacity of the region, the number of targets in the region, and said, ‘Here’s an allocation of money that will ensure that your regions will have funds to operate, because you know you will be getting that amount of money.’ But we then have to subsequently look at the projects which we are going to fund from that amount of money.

Senator SIEWERT—So you had to then do an investment plan essentially.

Mr Thompson—Yes, essentially.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—So you make an assessment, on what material you have before you, of what each NRM region is to get—is that right?

Mr Thompson—Yes.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Can you let us have details of that assessment?

Mr Thompson—I would have to take that on notice, because I do not have the details of the assessment in front of me.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—I am sure you do not have them in front of you, but you can give that to us?

Mr Thompson—The regions were notified of their regional allocation back in April.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—No. We will get there a lot quicker if you answer the questions. Can you give us those figures? Not now, but on notice.

Mr Thompson—The regional figure, the amount of money per region?

Senator IAN MACDONALD—No, the amount of money you told each region that they could be allocated

Answer:

Attachment A identifies the guaranteed funding allocated to each region annually.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

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Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM01 (continued)

**Guaranteed Annual Allocations for Regions between 2009-10 and 2012-13
(\$ million)**

Region by Jurisdiction	Guaranteed Annual Allocation
New South Wales	
Border Rivers - Gwydir	2.120
Central West	2.943
Hawkesbury - Nepean	2.917
Hunter - Central Rivers	3.354
Lachlan	2.804
Lower Murray Darling	1.843
Murray	4.015
Murrumbidgee	4.115
Namoi	1.659
Northern Rivers	3.410
Southern Rivers	2.839
Sydney Metro	0.764
Western	2.468
Sub-total	35.251

Queensland	
Border Rivers Maranoa - Balonne	2.489
Burdekin	1.843
Burnett Mary	2.028
Cape York	1.530
Condamine	1.982
Desert Channels	1.543
Fitzroy	2.304
Mackay Whitsunday	1.033
Northern Gulf	1.171
South East Queensland	2.304
South West Queensland	1.390
Southern Gulf	1.122
Torres Strait	0.822
Wet Tropics	1.459
Sub-total	23.020

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM01 (continued)

Region by Jurisdiction	Guaranteed Annual Allocation
South Australia	
Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges	2.209
Alinytjara Wilurara	1.751
Eyre Peninsula	1.843
Kangaroo Island	1.187
Northern and Yorke	1.567
South Australian Arid Lands	1.659
South Australian Murray Darling Basin	4.741
South East	2.389
Sub-total	17.346

Tasmania	
North	2.028
North West	1.843
South	1.843
Sub-total	5.714

Victoria	
Corangamite	2.765
East Gippsland	2.335
Glenelg Hopkins	2.541
Goulburn Broken	3.993
Mallee	2.724
North Central	3.484
North East	1.843
Port Phillip and Westernport	2.996
West Gippsland	2.535
Wimmera	2.304
Sub-total	27.520

Western Australia	
Avon	3.926
Northern Agricultural	3.915
Rangelands	3.963
South Coast	4.713
South West	5.282
Swan	2.304
Sub-total	24.103

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM01 (continued)

Region by Jurisdiction	Guaranteed Annual Allocation
Northern Territory	
Northern Territory	3.687
Sub-total	3.687
Australian Capital Territory	
Australian Capital Territory	1.359
Sub-total	1.359
Australia Wide	
TOTAL	138.000

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM02

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Caring for our Country

Hansard Page: 126 (25/05/2009)

Senator Siewert asked:

Senator SIEWERT—You said some regions were consulted. Could you tell us which regions?

Mr Thompson—They were consulted on the process, not on the numbers. We can tell you the regions that participated in that process.

Senator SIEWERT—That would be appreciated, thanks.

Answer:

Consultation of the process for the allocation of guaranteed regional funding under Caring for our Country took place with the National Natural Resource Management Regions Working Group, a group of representative regional Natural Resource Management organisation Chairs from across Australia. There was one chair in attendance for each state and territory (membership list is attached).

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM02 (continued)

National NRM Regional Working Group Chairs

Name	Position	State
Christine Mucha	Chair	Tasmania
Joan Burns	Chair	Victoria
Brian Foster	Chair	South Australia
Pam Green	Chair	New South Wales
Chris King	Chair	Western Australia
Kate Andrews	Chair	Northern Territory
Sarah Ryan	Chair	Australian Capital Territory
Mike Berwick	Chair	Queensland
Cath Lyons	Policy Officer, Dept of Agriculture and Food	Western Australia
Kevin Williams	Natural Resource Management Board (NT) Inc.	Northern Territory
John Feint	Chief Executive Officer	Australian Capital Territory
John Gavin	General Manager, Arid Lands	South Australia
Vanessa Elwell-Gavins	Chief Executive Officer, South	Tasmania
Kerryn Richardson	CMA Chair's Council	New South Wales
Andrew Drysdale	Qld NRM Groups Collective	Queensland
Mary Colreavy	Assistant Secretary	Australian Government
Danny O'Neill	Secretariat	Victoria

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM03

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Caring for our Country

Hansard Page: 126 (25/05/2009)

Senator MacDonald asked:

Mr Thompson—The department provided advice to the minister, as I said. The process was subject to some consultation with a scientific panel, some of the regions, and the states were advised as well.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—No. You said there was not a scientific panel. You said there was a process.

Mr Thompson—There was a scientific panel that helped advise us on the nature of the process, but the absolute numbers were by the advice from the department.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—A scientific panel? What, are they scientific mathematicians?

Mr Thompson—No. They were helping us with the process of saying, ‘If you have so many targets in a region, what might be a way of balancing that between the regions?’

Senator IAN MACDONALD—So they are not environmental scientists. They are mathematical or process scientists.

Mr Thompson—Some were environmental scientists. Some were mathematical scientists as well.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Can you give us the names of who that ‘scientific’ panel were?

Mr Thompson—Yes, we can do that.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—You don’t have it with you?

Mr Thompson—No, I do not.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Okay.

Answer:

The allocations of regional guaranteed funding under Caring for our Country were determined by the use of a model that incorporated the identification of targets and priority areas for Caring for our Country investment located in each region.

Consultation on the development of this model was undertaken with a range of scientists and other experts, including representatives of: the NSW Natural Resources Commission (Di Bentley, Alex McMillan, Felicity Calvert and Elisabeth Ross); Dr David Pannell - University of Western Australia; Dr Stefan Haljkowicz -CSIRO; Kathryn Sanford-Readhead - ERIN; Dr Michele Barson - BRS; and Dr Santhi Wicks - ABARE.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM04

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Caring for our Country regional allocations

Hansard Page: 126 (25/05/2009)

Senator MacDonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—As I understand it, you do not allocate. You advise the two ministers, who then allocate. Dr O’Connell or, if not, Senator Sherry, can you tell us then whether the ministers conduct other assessments inquiries, or do they simply use their own understanding to approve or deny, or do they, as a matter of course, simply tick off departmental advice?

Senator Sherry—Are you asking about this particular issue and this particular department or more generally?

Senator IAN MACDONALD—No, on the things we have been talking about for the last half-hour.

Senator Sherry—Yes, okay. Don’t get steamed up! I thought the inference was that you might have been asking me generally. But, no, I will have to take that on notice and ask the minister.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—You are aware of what I am after?

Senator Sherry—Yes.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Do they make their own assessments, and then, if they do, could they let us know what other investigations they make, apart from the advice they get from the department?

Senator Sherry—Yes.

Answer:

Ministers were provided with advice by their departments in determining their decisions on the allocations for regional natural resource management organisations under Caring for our Country. The ministers also received advice, through forums such as the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council and meetings with representatives of the regional bodies, of the views of the regional organisations, jurisdictions and other stakeholders on future investment arrangements under Caring for our Country.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM05

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Caring for our Country

Hansard Page: 127 (25/05/2009)

Senator MacDonald asked:

Mr Thompson—As part of the business plan process, groups, regions, non-government organisations, government departments across Australia can put in applications for funding against the business plan. Those applications closed last month. Those projects, which were the ones we were talking about earlier, the 1,300 projects, are now going through a process of assessment by a range of panels—community panels, government panels and scientific panels—and then advice gets provided to the ministers on whether those projects should be funded.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—So when you get to that there are community panels?

Mr Thompson—Yes, there are community panels.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Can you give us a list of the community panels and the personnel of those community panels across Australia?

Mr Thompson—We are able to do that.

Answer:

The three Caring for our Country Community Advisory panels and the members of each were:

New South Wales/Victoria Panel	Tasmania/Western Australia/South Australia Panel	Queensland/Northern Territory Panel
Ms Alison Russell-French (Chair)	Mr Ian Sauer (Chair)	Ms Olwyn Crimp (Chair)
Ms Jenny O'Sullivan (Deputy Chair)	Ms Sharon Starick (Deputy Chair)	Mr Anderson Lauder (Deputy Chair)
Mr Matthew Fox	Mr Peter Sims OAM	Mr John Christophersen
Ms Barbara Armitage OAM	Mr Wolford Parsons	Dr Gabriel Crowley
Mr John Klem	Ms Anna Barbara Wind	Mr James Forwood AM
Ms Coral Love	Mr Rex Edmondson AO	Mr Peter Alden
Mr Collon Mullett		Ms Emma Robinson
Mr Jack Speirs		
Mr Wade Whitelaw		

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM05 (continued)

The chairs and deputy chairs of the three Community Advisory panels listed above formed the National Community Advisory Panel.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM06

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Probity advisers on the Caring for our Country applications

Hansard Page: 128 (25/05/2009)

Senator MacDonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—I am serious about these things. The department is dealing with \$260 million worth of money, which really means the jobs and livelihoods of many people working in these NRM groups. What probity assessments do you have in the department to make sure that these recommendations are appropriate?

Mr Thompson—The whole process for applying for and receiving applications and assessing applications has been done on the advice of a probity auditor.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—That is the department's internal probity audit?

Mr Thompson—The department's legal service provider has provided us with a probity auditor.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Do they sign off a certificate saying, 'These are probity qualified'?

Mr Thompson—On each of the steps in the process—the application form, the assessment forms and the steps we have taken along the way—they have signed off that we have met appropriate probity guidelines.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Is that told to the applicants? Are they given a copy of the probity auditor's report?

Mr Thompson—I am not sure whether they are given a copy of the whole probity auditor's report, but the probity guidelines under which we operate have been made available to applicants.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Is it possible for the committee to have a look at just one of the probity auditor's tick offs so that we know what you are talking about? Any one. You pick it.

Mr Thompson—We would be able to provide you with some advice on notice as to the probity auditor's advice on part of the process—on the assessment process or the application form or something.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—What I am wanting to see is where the probity auditor actually ticks off what he says, what form he uses. As I said, pick any one. I just want to try and understand the system, and I know a lot of the NRM groups would like to understand it too. Could you make that available to the committee?

Mr Thompson—Yes. I can see what form it is in and we can make something available to you.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—A representative one, of course. I am sure you will do that.

Mr Thompson—Yes.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM06 (continued)

Answer:

The attached report (Attachment A) from Blake Dawson, the probity advisers for the Caring for our Country Open Grants investment round undertaken in 2008, sets out the probity assessment process undertaken in that round. A similar process is being used for applications submitted through the 2009-10 Caring for our Country business plan.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM07

Division/Agency: Australian Government Land and Coasts

Topic: Caring for our Country – Marine Targets

Hansard Page: 128 (25/05/2009)

Senator IAN MACDONALD asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—No limits. Good. There were no marine targets in the Caring for our Country applications. Is that correct?

Mr Thompson—That is correct.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Why is that?

Mr Thompson—That was a policy decision by the government.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Do you know why that is, Senator Sherry?

Senator Sherry—No, I do not. I would have to take that on notice.

CHAIR - Could you find out for me why marine targets were not in Caring for our Country when they were in the previous similar program. Could you give me a breakdown of how many applications have been received in the large, medium and small categories from each state? Is it readily available, on notice?

Mr Thompson- Yes, that is readily available. We can do that.

Answer:

Caring for Our Country is a targeted initiative that focuses on a number of national priorities where outcomes can be achieved over the life of the initiative.

The focus of the Caring for our Country outcomes in relation to coastal issues is on water quality into the Great Barrier Reef lagoon, coastal hotspots, and community projects on the coast including the near shore coastal waters.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM07 (continued)

In the Caring for our Country Business Plan 2009-10 call for applications, the breakdown of applications in the large, medium and small categories for each state are as follows:

State	Small	Medium	Large	Total
NATIONAL	23	105	8	136
ACT	1	2	0	3
NSW	107	159	3	269
NT	18	34	1	53
QLD	131	205	12	348
SA	78	108	1	187
TAS	37	26	0	63
VIC	79	81	1	161
WA	70	120	2	192
Total	544	840	28	1412

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 08

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Caring for our Country assessment

Hansard Page: 130 (25/055/2009)

Senator Ian McDonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—I do hesitate to be too specific. I know there would be no retribution from the department, but by the same token can I tell you that NRM groups in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia are all concerned and have been in touch with me about the lack of understanding apparently by departmental officials, who expect them to drop everything and be practically summoned to meetings in capital cities at what they consider—and I agree—is relatively short notice, bearing in mind that some of these people live in places whereby you certainly cannot hop in a car and slip down to Sydney in a couple of hours.

Dr O'Connell—I would be quite happy to take an examination of that and try to make sure that we have an engagement where those NRM groups are comfortable that they are not being pushed on time.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Thank you for that, Dr O'Connell. I appreciate that. It was suggested to me that groups in the Northern Territory were given two days, but perhaps that is not correct. I do not want to be more specific than that

Answer:

The Australian Government Land and Coasts has a policy of undertaking consultation with proponents in regard to new or major revisions to initiatives for implementation of Caring for our Country. In planning and organising meetings for regional centres or capital cities, invitees are given as much notice as possible. As a rule this is a minimum of five working days and generally much more, given that proposed meeting dates are usually circulated for agreement and meeting venues have to be organised.

In some instances there has been limited notice for meetings. This was driven by the desire to undertake targeted consultation with key stakeholders such as state government, regional bodies and non-government organisations prior to going out to the general public.

Invitees are always offered the opportunity to make submissions in writing, either electronically or by mail, or can join some meetings by teleconference if they can not attend in person. Dedicated email addresses have also been set up for some consultation processes through which the key stakeholders and the community can submit comments on the issue in question.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM09

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Caring for our Country

Hansard Page: 131 (25/05/2009)

Senator Siewert asked:

Senator SIEWERT—I would like to go back to the assessment of the \$122 million. I understand the scientific panel consulted for developing the methodology assessment for the \$138 million. What I would like to know is what process is being used for the \$122 million for deciding, of the \$3.4 billion worth of applications, who gets the \$122 million. There are \$3.4 billion worth of applications for \$122 million worth of funding. That is correct, isn't it?

Mr Thompson—Yes. The process involved is that initially departmental staff assess each application received using a standard assessment tool, by which they can extract information from the projects in a consistent form.

Senator SIEWERT—Could we have a copy of that assessment tool?

Mr Thompson—I would have to take it on notice. I do not have it here.

Answer:

A copy of the Caring for our Country 2009-10 Investment Merit Assessment Tool is attached (Attachment A).

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM10

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Caring for our Country

Hansard Page: 132 (25/05/2009)

Senator Siewert asked:

Senator SIEWERT—How many panels do you have and how are they divided up in terms of expertise?

Mr Thompson—I would have to take on notice the detail of the number of panels and how they are divided up.

Dr O’Connell—Mr Bartlett can provide some further information.

Mr Bartlett—I can tell you there are three panels. One is meeting today, another is meeting later this week and the third is meeting early next week. The one that is meeting this week is looking after Victoria and New South Wales, so they are largely divided up on geographic representation. The next one is meeting up in Queensland at the end of the week.

Answer:

The information provided below details the areas of expertise of the three Community Advisory panels. The chairs and deputy chairs of these three panels formed the National Community Advisory Panel.

NSW/Victoria Community Advisory Panel	Area of Expertise
Ms Alison Russell-French (Chair)	Biodiversity, Sustainable farming, Coastal and aquatic, Community engagement
Ms Jenny O’Sullivan (Deputy Chair)	Sustainable farming, Community engagement
Mr Matthew Fox	Biodiversity, Coastal and aquatic, Community engagement
Ms Barbara Armitage OAM	Coastal and aquatic, Community engagement
Mr John Klem	Biodiversity, Sustainable farming, Community engagement
Ms Coral Love	Sustainable farming, Community engagement
Mr Collon Mullett	Biodiversity, Coastal and aquatic, Community engagement (Indigenous expertise)
Mr Jack Speirs	Sustainable farming Community engagement
Mr Wade Whitelaw	Biodiversity, Sustainable farming Practices, Community engagement(Indigenous expertise)

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM10 (continued)

Tasmania/Western Australia/South Australia Panel	Area of Expertise
Mr Ian Sauer (Chair)	Sustainable farming, Natural resource management
Ms Sharon Starick (Deputy Chair)	Biodiversity, Sustainable farming, Coastal and aquatic, Northern and remote natural resource management (NRM)
Mr Peter Sims OAM	Biodiversity, Coastal and Aquatic environments, Community engagement
Mr Wolford Parsons	Sustainable farming, Community engagement
Ms Anna Barbara Wind	Community engagement, Natural resource management
Mr Rex Edmondson AO	Sustainable farming, Community engagement

Queensland/Northern Territory Panel	Area of Expertise
Ms Olwyn Crimp (Chair)	Biodiversity, Coastal and aquatic, Northern and remote NRM, Community engagement
Mr Anderson Lauder (Deputy Chair)	Coastal and aquatic, Northern and remote NRM, Community engagement
Mr John Christophersen	Biodiversity, Coastal and aquatic, Community engagement, Indigenous matters, Sustainable farming, Northern and remote NRM
Dr Gabriel Crowley	Biodiversity, Community engagement, Northern and remote NRM
Mr James Forwood AM	Community engagement, Sustainable farming, Northern and remote NRM
Mr Peter Alden	Sustainable farming, Biodiversity, Community engagement

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM11

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Caring for our Country

Hansard Page: 133 (25/05/2009)

Senator Siewert asked:

Senator SIEWERT—I know the criteria from the business plan. What I am interested in is a deeper sort of analysis that goes on about whether the project is achievable or the best value for money et cetera.

Dr O'Connell—I think we could probably give you on notice the assessment guidance that is given to the panel. I do not think that will be problematic, if that is helpful

Answer:

A copy of the Caring for our Country 2009-10 Investment Merit Assessment Tool is attached (Attachment A). This document provided guidance to assessors and advisory panels on issues such as public benefit, value for money, and matters relating to the specific Caring for our Country targets.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM12

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Caring for our Country

Hansard Page: 134 (25/05/2009)

Senator SIEWERT asked:

Senator SIEWERT—In terms of the \$3.4 billion, I presume that includes funding requests for more than one year?

Mr Thompson—It includes funding for up to the end of Caring for our Country. The target can take three years to complete, and people can make applications for those three years, so that is \$3.4 billion for most of them for multiyear projects.

Senator SIEWERT—Yes. Out of the \$3.4 billion, how much is being requested against the \$122 million; in other words, the first year's worth of funding?

Mr Thompson—I do not have that split by year with me. We could take that on notice.

Answer:

Multi-year proposals were encouraged in the Business Plan and most proposals sought multi-year funding. It is estimated that approximately \$3 billion was requested overall for 2009-10 to 2012-13 for the competitive funding element of Caring for our Country excluding the regional base-level allocation.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM13

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Caring for our Country

Hansard Page: 134 (25/05/2009)

Senator Siewert asked:

Senator SIEWERT—I appreciate you might need to take this on notice: how much of the \$3.4 billion are actually requests from regions?

Mr Thompson—We would have to take that on notice.

Answer:

Of the \$3.4 billion requested by Caring for our Country applications in 2009-10, \$1,131,780,279.32 was requested from regional natural resource management organisations.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM14

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Caring for our Country

Hansard Page: 136 (25/05/2009)

Senator Back asked:

Senator BACK—Sure. As these are audited, are they made public progressively during the course of a project as well as, obviously, at its conclusion?

Mr Thompson—There will be a report card produced each year on the progress of Caring for our Country. It will list, at a high level, the progress of the program initially against its targets and, underneath that, it will list some further detail on achievements against particular targets and the details of progress of individual projects and milestone payments. I am not sure how we intend to make that available at the present time—I would have to take that on notice—but how fast projects are progressing is not secret information?

Answer:

The progress of the Caring for our Country initiative and its component projects are reported in a number of ways. These include both statutory reports and non statutory reports and listings. The Caring for our Country Report Card will provide an assessment of progress towards the 2008-2013 outcomes set for the initiative.

Caring for our Country includes funding under the *Natural Heritage Trust of Australia Act 1997*. The Annual Report as prescribed in the *Natural Heritage Trust of Australia Act 1997* sets out in further detail in the financial statement on the operation of the Trust on a financial year basis. Program information and financial data are included to assist the reader to appreciate the results over the year. The financial account is audited by the Australian National Audit Office and is publicly available. (Please see website: <http://www.nht.gov.au/publications/annual-reports/2005-06/index.html>)

The implementation of projects and their status in achieving the milestones defined in the agreement between the Commonwealth and the proponent is recorded by the Department. Project progress may also be recorded by state and territory governments where they are responsible for coordinating the delivery of Caring for our Country funding through regional natural resource management organisations.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM14 (continued)

Caring for our Country project proponents will also report to community members in accordance with their own reporting guidelines / articles of incorporation.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM15

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Ghost Nets

Hansard Page: 137 (25/05/2009)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Dr O’Connell, in relation to your very helpful comment earlier that the minister is about to make an announcement, will that cover groups like the ghost nets group? They will not, as I understand it, really know until September if their funding is going to be continued. Who is going to cover the recurrent costs between July and September until they find out if it is going to be continued and, if the NRM group can do it out of its own funds, will they be reimbursed for funding it?

Dr O’Connell—The comments I was making earlier on were to do with the regional bodies, where the issue had been raised. I am not aware of the situation with the ghost nets project, but I could take that on notice and let you know.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Okay, if you would not mind, because there is a concern. It is a separate allocation but it is supported by an NRM group, and if they know they are going to get funding they would underwrite it through to September. If they did that, would they get reimbursed?

Mr Thompson—I think the ghost nets program you are referring to is the one that is run through the Northern Gulf Natural Resource Management Region.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Yes, that is right.

Mr Thompson—They received funding last year outside the open grants process. I am not sure whether they have put in a competitive bid—I have not gone through all the projects yet—or whether their project is part of the funding that would be received as part of Northern Gulf’s base level of funding. To the extent that that project is supported through a regional body, the work that we are doing to try and ensure that regional bodies can survive and maintain key projects would try and pick that sort of work up. I just do not have the detail on that particular project at the present time.

Dr O’Connell—We will take that on notice.

Answer:

In December 2008, the Australian Government agreed to provide \$397,000 funding to the Ghost Nets Program to extend the project until 30 June 2009 and bridge the gap between the previous Natural Heritage Trust and the current Caring for our Country funding rounds. During the January 2009 Queensland floods, program staff were unable to access project sites and have subsequently requested an extension of the

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Question: SRM15 (continued)

project until 30 September 2009. The extension was agreed and the existing project will cover the period to 30 September 2009.

A competitive bid for funding the Ghost Nets Program was submitted under the 2009-10 Caring for our Country Business Plan. On 2 July 2009 Australian Government Ministers Burke and Garrett jointly announced funding of \$403 million under Caring for our Country. This included \$2.8 million to support the Ghost Nets Program from 2009-10 to 2012-13.

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Question: SRM16

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Project Delays for the program

Hansard Page: 141 (25/05/2009)

Senator Colbeck asked:

Senator COLBECK—I will come in on the back. I am assuming that the project that Senator Macdonald just mentioned was funded through the Recreational Fishing Community Grants Program.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Yes.

Senator COLBECK—So that is correct. And all of those projects are now completed?

Mr Pittar—No, not all of those projects are completed.

Senator COLBECK—Is all the funding allocated?

Mr Pittar—The funding has been allocated and there is a small movement of funds into next financial year.

Senator COLBECK—Is that about \$400,000?

Mr Pittar—Correct, to accommodate those projects that have experienced delays.

Senator COLBECK—Is there, anywhere on the website, a complete list of the recipients of those grants?

Mr Pittar—I cannot answer that. I will have to take that on notice. I believe that our Recreational Fishing Community Grants Program website should contain that information, but I am not entirely sure.

Dr O'Connell—It should be up on the web.

Senator COLBECK—If it is not, is it possible to provide us with a list of those grants?

Mr Pittar—Yes.

Senator COLBECK—And could you give us an indication of those projects that have had some delay?

Mr Pittar—Do you mean an indication of the reasons for delay or which projects have been delayed?

Senator COLBECK—I would be interested to know which projects have been delayed, and that constitutes that \$400,000 that we talked about, and some sense of the reasons for the delay.

Mr Pittar—I think we will take that on notice.

Mr Thompson—There are a range of reasons for the delay. They can include access to land and that sort of stuff.

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Answer:

There is a complete list of projects of the Recreational Fishing Community Grants Program available at <http://www.daff.gov.au/fisheries/recreational/recfishinggrants>

There are 16 projects which have been delayed and are approved to finish in financial year 2009-2010. These projects and reasons for delay, are tabulated below:

Project Number	Project Title	Reasons for Delay
R1051	ANSA NSW Branch Angel Ring/NSW Police Project	Using project savings to extend project
R2028	Establish Communications base at Southern end of Port Phillip	Changes to project personnel and reporting difficulties
R4052	Boardwalk to access the Burrum Street Jetty	Delayed land tenure approval by state department
R4068	Campaspe River Accessible Fishing Jetty	Construction delays
R4102	Sustainable recreational fishing programs for Sydney schools and communities through the New Marine Discovery Centre Bondi Beach	Implementation delays
R4014	Shoal Bay Boat Ramp Upgrade	Delayed development approval
R4064	Middle Beach Boat Ramp Facilities Upgrade	Delayed state ministerial approval for co-contributor funds
R1069	Construction and interpretation of four fish ladders in Parramatta CBD	Delayed third party and heritage approvals, plus delayed construction from wet weather
R1088	Construction of access road for recreational fishing at Alva Beach	Delayed Environment Protection Authority approval
R2047	Fish Cleaning Pontoon/Table, Merimbula Lake	Rejected engineering report and delayed council approval
R2045	Carnarvon One Mile Jetty Recreational Fishing Upgrade	Fire damage requiring re-construction
R2055	Currarong Boat Launching Ramp Improvement	Delayed planning approvals

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Question: SRM16 (continued)

R3046	Fishers with Disabilities – fishing beyond the limits	Variation to project scope
R3028	Fish identification and measuring depots - stage 2 - state-wide program	Delays to review of stage 1 of project, tenders and planning approvals
R5052	Lake Lenthall Sustainable Fishing Platforms and Habitat Restoration	Construction delays due to wet weather
R5110	Replacement of Volunteer Marine Rescue vessel, Merimbula NSW	Delayed due to amalgamation of marine rescue organisations

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Question: SRM17

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Recfish Australia funding options report

Hansard Page: 142 (25/05/2009)

Senator Colbeck asked:

Senator COLBECK—So not funded by government—that is the idea. If the report is supposed to provide a process where the government does not fund Recfish Australia, what role does the government have in considering the report?

Mr Pittar—The government contributed funding to the development of that report, so the government will consider the findings from that report.

Dr O'Connell—My understanding is that that project is not yet finalised, so that has not been considered yet. I think it is in the process of being finalised.

Mr Pittar—Yes.

Dr O'Connell—In April-May. I could clarify that on notice if I have not got that right.

Answer:

A final report, entitled *Scoping Study of Options for Strategic Revenue Sources for the Recreational Fishing Sector in Australia* was published in October 2008. It is available at <http://www.recfish.com.au/projects/pdf/SRO%20Final%20Report.pdf> This report was approved by the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation in March 2009.

The project is partially funded by the Recreational Fishing Community Grants Program. As the grantee, Recfish Australia received the final payment and will complete the project upon lodgement of a final audit report by 30 July 2009.

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Question: SRM18

Division/Agency: Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Topic: Coral Sea Fishery species, fishing activity and permit holders

Hansard Page: 8 (26/05/2009)

Senator Colbeck asked:

Senator COLBECK—Do we know what species have been taken from there [Coral Sea Fishery]?

Prof. Hurry—There are a couple of different fisheries in there. There is a trawl fishery for just coral trawl species which are reef species. There is also a hand collectables fishery in there for aquarium species. There are two businesses based out of Cairns which supply marine aquarium fish to some of the major aquariums around the world. That is part of that fishery. Whether we count that in tonnes or whether we count that in value, I am not sure. There is a range of different sorts of species come out of that to feed that fishery. There is hand collection for smaller aquarium fish as well.

Senator COLBECK—What about sea cucumbers?

Prof. Hurry—There are sea cucumbers on that part of the coast but they are not part of the fishery. I understand that all those reefs are closed. We do not take sea cucumbers until we come into the top part of the Torres Strait. There is a sea cucumber fishery on the Torres Strait, but, from memory, that is closed as well.

Senator COLBECK—I was talking to one of the permit holders last week and he indicated to me that there might have been a sea cucumber—

Prof. Hurry—I am happy to check that for you, Senator. But my understanding was that the sea cucumber ones were closed. Let me check and I will come back to you on that.

Senator COLBECK—If you could give us a sense of the species that are coming out of there, that would be good. It is effectively a trawl fishery. Again, my understanding was that there was some longlining done there too

Prof. Hurry—There is tuna longlining in the Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery. There is a fleet of boats in Cairns and another fleet of boats that fish out of Mooloolaba further south. The Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery is a longline fishery. If you like, I will get you a sketch map of the two fisheries and the species and the types of fishing activity that is done up there. We can provide that.

Senator COLBECK—Thank you. Is it possible to get a list of the permit holders?

Prof. Hurry—Yes, sure.

Answer:

The attachment includes details of the Coral Sea Fishery species, Coral Sea Fishery – Sea Cucumber Sector management arrangements and lists of concession holders for both the Coral Sea Fishery and the Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery.

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Note: Prof. Hurry's original answer in respect to sea cucumbers was incorrect. They are part of the Coral Sea Fishery and information in relation to this fishery is included.

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM19

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Securing our Fishing Future Package

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Siewart asked:

With respect to the buyback of over 550 fishing concessions at a cost of more than \$149 million:

- 1) How much was spent purchasing the 99 longline concessions in the Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery (ETBF) that were bought back?
- 2) What was the annual average Gross Value of Production of the 99 ETBF longline concessions bought back for the previous three years?
- 3) How much was the buyback cap for individual concessions in the ETBF?
- 4) What was the lowest purchase price paid for an ETBF longline concession?
- 5) What was the highest purchase price paid for an ETBF longline concession?
- 6) What was the mean purchase price paid for an ETBF longline concession?
- 7) How many longline concessions were purchased in Cairns?
- 8) How much was spent purchasing longline concessions in Cairns?
- 9) How many longline concessions were purchased in Mooloolaba?
- 10) How much was spent purchasing longline concessions in Mooloolaba?
- 11) Has the average value of longline fishing concessions in the ETBF increased, decreased or stayed the same since the purchase of the 99 concessions? Please provide detail if possible.
- 12) How much active effort in the longline sector of the ETBF did the buyback package remove?

Answer:

- 1) \$34.58 million was spent purchasing concessions in the Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery (ETBF). This bought 99 longline permits and 112 minorline permits. It is not possible to split the total spend for the ETBF into minorline and longline concessions as concessions were often bundled with other concessions and then offered as a tender.

For further information please see the Australian National Audit Office's Performance Audit Report No.38 2008-2009: Administration of the Buyback Component of the Securing our Fishing Future Structural Adjustment Package. Website address: www.anao.gov.au/director/publications/auditreports/2008-2009.cfm

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Question: SRM19 (continued)

- 2) Gross Value of Production data is not available for these concessions or the vessels associated with them.
- 3) There was no cap placed on the price paid for concessions.
- 4) As concessions were often bundled with other concessions in a tender (see answer (1)) it is not possible to provide a breakdown of prices paid for individual concessions within each tender.
- 5) See answer to question 4.
- 6) See answer to question 4.
- 7) Three longline concessions were purchased where Cairns was nominated as the boats' home port.
- 8) See answer to question 4.
- 9) Thirty-two longline concessions were purchased where Mooloolaba was nominated as the boats' home port.
- 10) See answer to question 4.
- 11) The department does not monitor this information.
- 12) Twenty-seven active ETBF longline concessions were removed due to the buyback.

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Question: SRM20

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Securing our Fishing Future Package

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Siewart asked:

With respect to the Skipper and Crew Assistance Program component of the buyback:

- 1) How many of the 39 skippers who received assistance under the Program were operating in the ETBF?
 - a) Of these, how many were in Cairns?
 - b) How many in Mooloolaba?
- 2) How many of the 60 crew members who received assistance under the Program were operating in the ETBF?
 - a) Of these, how many were in Cairns?
 - b) How many in Mooloolaba?
- 3) What is the average number of crew on a longline ETBF boat?

Answer:

- 1) Five of the 39 skippers who received assistance under the program were operating in the Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery (ETBF). Of these five none had their homeport in either Cairns or Mooloolaba.
- 2) Of the 60 crew members who received assistance under the program 15 were operating in the ETBF. Of these 15, none had their homeport in either Cairns or Mooloolaba.
- 3) AFMA advised that according to anecdotal evidence the number of crew on a longline ETBF boat ranges from three to six.

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Question: SRM21

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Securing our Fishing Future Package

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Siewart asked:

With respect to the Business Advice Assistance (BAA) component of the buyback:

- 1) What was the total amount spent on this component of the buyback?
- 2) Of this total amount, how much was spent assisting longline concession holders in the ETBF?
- 3) How much was spent assisting ETBF longline concession holders in Cairns?
- 4) How much was spent assisting ETBF longline concession holders in Mooloolaba?
- 5) What was the total number of ETBF businesses that received assistance under the BA?
- 6) Of these, how many in Cairns?
- 7) How many in Mooloolaba?

Answer:

- 1) The total amount spent on the Business Advice Assistance (BAA) component of the buyback is \$553,537.49.
- 2) \$96,235 was spent assisting Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery (ETBF) longline concession holders.
- 3) In Cairns \$3,000 was spent. The location of these recipients is based on the home port of their boat.
- 4) In Mooloolaba \$21,076.50 was spent. The location of these recipients is based on the home port of their boat.
- 5) 91 fishing businesses that were in the ETBF received BAA.
- 6) Two fishing businesses in Cairns.
- 7) Eighteen fishing businesses in Mooloolaba.

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Question: SRM22

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Securing our Fishing Future Package

Hansard Page: Written On Notice

Senator Siewart asked:

With respect to the three components of assistance to onshore businesses and communities (the Onshore Business Exit Assistance; the Onshore Business Development Assistance; and the Fishing Community Assistance at a cost of \$33.6 million:

- 1) Of this total amount, how much was spent assisting onshore businesses in Cairns?
 - a) Was the amount spent in Cairns due exclusively to buyback of ETBF longline concessions? If not, please provide more details.
- 2) How much was spent assisting onshore businesses in Mooloolaba?
 - a) Was the amount spent in Mooloolaba due exclusively to buyback of ETBF longline concessions? If not, please provide more details.
- 3) Of the 144 approved applications, how many businesses in Cairns received assistance? How many businesses in Mooloolaba received assistance?

Answer:

- 1) The total committed amount of funding in Cairns is \$779,229 based on project location. Some of these projects are ongoing and payments are still to be made.
 - a) The department does not have information to allow it to draw links between the buyback of concessions in specific fisheries with the amount of funding committed through the three assistance programs in Cairns or other regional centres. Cairns onshore businesses provide services to businesses operating in a number of fisheries and/or operating out of different ports.
- 2) The total committed amount of funding in Mooloolaba is \$1,614,826. Some of these projects are ongoing and payments are still to be made.
 - a) see answer 1) a) the same applies for Mooloolaba.
- 3) Of the 144 applications approved, six businesses whose projects are located in Cairns received assistance and six businesses whose projects are located Mooloolaba received assistance.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

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Question: SRM23

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Securing our Fishing Future Package

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Siewart asked:

With respect to the \$15 million allocated to AFMA over three years to offset the expected reduction in levies received from fishing concession holders as a result of the Structural Adjustment Package:

- 1) What proportion of this total figure is due to the 99 ETBF longline concessions removed from the fishery?

Answer:

- 1) There is no link between this funding amount and the successful tenders in any fishery.

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Question: SRM24

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Recfish Australia

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Colbeck asked:

- 1) Has the Minister met with representatives from RecFish since November 2007?
- 2) Is the Minister aware this group has been seeking a meeting with him since that date?
- 3) Why has the Minister not obliged?
- 4) Why is there no funding for RecFish this year?
- 5) Has Recfish lost its funding because it was publicly critical of the Government and/or Department?

Answer:

- 1) The Minister met with;
 - Chris Makepeace, a member of Recfish Australia, on 28 March 2008 in his capacity as Executive Officer Amateur Fishermen's Association of the NT.
 - Len Olyott on 23 October 2008 in his capacity as CEO of Recfish Australia.
 - Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee on 26 February 2009. Len Olyott is a member of this committee.
 - Len Olyott, CEO Recfish Australia, also attended the Minister's budget briefing on 12 May 2009.
- 2) Answered by question 1.
- 3) The Minister has met with Recfish Australia.
- 4) There is no permanent funding arrangement for Recfish Australia. Past funding was temporary as it was provided through a terminating grant. In addition, \$200,000 was provided to Recfish Australia to undertake a *Study of Options for Strategic Revenue Sources* to explore alternate funding opportunities. This project is now at an end.
- 5) No. See answer to question 4.

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Question: SRM25

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Grant recipients for the **Recreational Fishing Community Grants program**

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Colbeck asked:

List of grant recipients for **the Recreational Fishing Community Grants** program 2008-09?

Answer:

A complete list of projects of the Recreational Fishing Community Grants Program available at <http://www.daff.gov.au/fisheries/recreational/recfishinggrants>