

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport and Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2009
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question No.: LGRD 01

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Better Regions Projects

Hansard Pages: 98 (28/05/09)

Senator Nash asked:

Senator NASH—I am addressing the electorates written there, but I am happy just to go with the project name, if that would assist the Department.

Mr Wood—The project name?

Senator NASH—Or the location? We will just have the location.

Mr Wood—Certainly. Starting at the top, I do not actually have a project title for these. These are available on the website, I should say. But it is a project purpose, so I can read that. But it will be a slightly lengthy process. The first one is the Barcaldine Regional Council.

Senator NASH—In the interests of the Committee and moving through, seeing that there is not a project title, perhaps we can just run the 20 locations that they are in.

Mr Wood—Certainly.

Senator NASH—And if you could take that on notice and provide that to the Committee for the entire detail.

Mr Wood—Okay, yes. Starting off Barcaldine in Queensland; Bathurst, New South Wales; Ulverston, Tasmania; Davoren Park, South Australia; Grafton, New South Wales; Norlane, Victoria; Rockhampton, Queensland; Rockhampton, Queensland; Waroona, Western Australia; Leichhardt, Queensland; Booval, Queensland; Yamba, New South Wales; Moorooka, Queensland; Bannockburn, Victoria; Erina, New South Wales; South Grafton, New South Wales; Lake Macquarie, New South Wales; Launceston, Tasmania, Townsville, Queensland; and Dennes Point in Tasmania.

Answer:

All finalised agreements are on the Department's website.

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Question No.: LGRD 02

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Development Australia

Hansard Pages: 110 (28/05/09)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—So, out of what the Department has for Regional Development Australia, you will be able to continue funding the ACCs should you choose.

Mr James—We have sufficient there, we think, to cover the transition period.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Okay. For what period of time will that money last? Are you expecting this will be a week, a month, half of them for a month, a third of them for two months? On what basis have you got this money put aside and what have you assessed it at?

Ms Foster—We have an allocation going out over the forward estimates period for RDAs. We are expecting that we will have most of the transition arrangements concluded within a short period. I am thinking two or three months.

Senator Conroy—We would like to make sure we give you the exact information on that, Senator Macdonald. We are happy to take it on notice and make sure we get you a more exact response.

Answer:

Regional Development Australia has funding of \$60.4 million over the period 2009-10 to 2012-13 which includes \$14.7 million in 2009-10.

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Question No.: LGRD 03

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Development Australia

Hansard Pages: 110 (28/05/09)

Senator McGauran asked:

Senator McGAURAN—It is about costings. The Budget papers are showing that Regional Development Australia saves \$4 million a year in comparison to the ACCs. Is that correct?

Ms Foster—That is correct.

Senator McGAURAN—Where is that saving coming from?

Ms Foster—In establishing the RDA network we are concluding agreements with each State and Territory on the operation of the RDA network. We are entering into a collaborative arrangement with each of the States and Territories. We are in the process of finalising the funding arrangements between us and the States and Territories and we will allocate the money that we have available for the RDA network in that process.

Senator McGAURAN—But it is confirmed that there is a \$4 million saving. You are telling me that you are finalising everything now, but you are already noting you have saved \$4 million. Where is that?

Senator Conroy—We are forecasting to save \$4 million.

Ms Foster—We are forecasting that. We have allocated an amount of money and we—

Senator McGAURAN—You are guessing you will save \$4 million.

Senator Conroy—No, we have a target of \$4 million that we have to reach.

Senator McGAURAN—Where will that saving come from?

Senator Conroy—The indication from the officer is that they have not been made yet because we are in consultations with the State Governments, but we will happily provide you that information of targets more specifically over the next estimates. We are happy to take it on notice. They have not been made yet, Senator McGauran.

Answer:

See the answer to LGRD 02.

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Question No.: LGRD 04

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Development Australia

Hansard Pages: 112 (28/05/09)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Minister, listen to what your officer is saying. She just said that the Commonwealth and the States had negotiated arrangements and so some of the people knew what they were going to do. Now I am asking details of which people in which states know what is going to happen on 30 June.

Ms Foster—We have MOUs signed with New South Wales, ACT and Queensland. I might ask Mr James to run through the specific answer to that question.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Thank you.

Mr James—In the case of New South Wales, the new RDA bodies will be established and the new boards appointed before 1 July. Then they will consider what their business plan and staffing arrangements will be. The current approach is that new boards have been encouraged to maintain their staffing to the end of this calendar year, but that is still a matter for the Boards in question.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Okay, so in New South Wales there is no arrangement except that they will look at it?

Mr James—Basically continue.

Senator Conroy—We are happy to get you any further information from the State Government.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Mr James is doing a very good job, thank you. Continue, Mr James.

Senator Conroy—We are happy to take on notice and get you absolutely up-to-date information from the State Governments. If there is anything more the officers can give you, they are welcome to, but you are asking about a series that are almost hypothetical issues that have not been settled. If there is more information that the Department can give then we are happy to.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Minister, thank you. It has already been given. I have been told that there are three States that have these arrangements in place. I have now heard about the New South Wales arrangements. Can you tell me what the arrangements are in the other two States?

Ms Foster—We do not have precise details of what each State will agree in terms of staffing.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—I thought you said you had the agreement with each State.

Answer:

The following information is provided, as at 30 June 2009, on the status of all Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) for the establishment of new RDA arrangements:

New South Wales

MoU signed 23 February 2009.

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Victoria

MoU signed 25 June 2009.

On 19 June 2009, the Department wrote to Chairs and Deputy Chairs seeking their agreement to continue on in those positions to the end of September 2009.

South Australia

MoU signed 29 June 2009.

On 19 June 2009, the Department wrote to Chairs and Deputy Chairs seeking their agreement to continue on in those positions to the end of September 2009.

Queensland

MoU signed 14 May 2009.

On 19 June 2009, the Department wrote to Chairs and Deputy Chairs seeking their agreement to continue on in those positions to the end of September 2009.

Western Australia

MoU is still yet to be finalised.

On 19 June 2009, the Department wrote to Chairs and Deputy Chairs seeking their agreement to continue on in those positions to the end of September 2009.

Australian Capital Territory

MoU signed 25 May 2009.

On 19 June 2009, the Department wrote to Chairs and Deputy Chairs seeking their agreement to continue on in those positions to the end of September 2009.

Northern Territory

MoU is still yet to be finalised.

On 19 June 2009, the Department wrote to Chairs and Deputy Chairs seeking their agreement to continue on in those positions to the end of July 2009.

Tasmania

MoU signed 25 May 2009.

On 19 June 2009, the Department wrote to Chairs and Deputy Chairs seeking their agreement to continue on in those positions to the end of July 2009.

In relation to the employment of ACC staff by RDA, the Government is encouraging the employment of as many ACC staff as possible in the new RDA arrangements. However, as RDA committees are independent incorporated associations, governments cannot mandate RDA committee employment decisions.

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Question No.: LGRD 05

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Development Australia

Hansard Pages: 113 (28/05/09)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Which Queensland regional development bodies are joining with the former ACCs to form Regional Development Australia?

Mr Tongue—Do you mean individual ACCs with relevant regional development organisations?

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Yes.

Mr Tongue—Can we take that one on notice?

Senator IAN MACDONALD—I would have thought you would have come prepared for that, knowing my particular interest in, for example, Townsville Enterprise, which comprises the regional development body which is funded jointly by Ergon Energy, an agency of the Queensland Government, by the Townsville City Council, which is certainly not an agency of the Queensland Government, by individual members like Senator Ian Macdonald who pay \$150 a year to Townsville Enterprise, and lots of other companies in between. Are you telling me that in Townsville the Federal Government is weaving the ACC into my organisation, Townsville Enterprise and, what, giving us some money?

Senator Conroy—You do not really believe that we should all be quite as focused on your interests as you are, Senator Macdonald, but even I did not guess that you would want to go to this depth of detail and, as Mr Tongue has offered, we are happy to get you the information and pass it on to you; but you are going to quite a degree of detail and just because, ‘Hey, Macca’s coming,’ we do not automatically assume that you are going to want that level of detail.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Do you mean to tell me no-one in your Department, Mr Tongue, knows what is happening? I have mentioned Townsville. The same applies right up and down the coast.

Senator Conroy—And we said we would take it on notice and get you the information, Senator Macdonald.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—I would like the information now, thanks, Minister, and someone in the Department must have that information.

Senator Conroy—We have offered to take it on notice. You are asking a degree of detail that is quite substantial. He does not have it in front of him now.

Answer:

ACCs are being wound-up and RDAs created as independent incorporated associations. This will not involve amalgamations with any Queensland State regional development organisations as the Queensland Government does not have State regional development bodies with which to merge.

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Question No.: LGRD 06

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Development Australia

Hansard Pages: 114 (28/05/09)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Isn't it true that there will now be 12 so-called regional bodies in Queensland? I can read the Minister's media release. I certainly hope—in fact I know—your officers can help. Why they are being gagged I am not quite sure.

Mr Tongue—I will refer that to Mr James.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—You and I can both read the Minister's press release but you have been part of the negotiation, so, you must know that there are 12 ACCs in Queensland—is that right? Sorry, there were 13 ACCs; there are now 12 Regional Development Australia projections.

Mr James—That is correct.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—You are not aware of what is going to happen with the Cairns, Townsville, Mount Isa, Rockhampton and Gladstone ones?

Mr James—They are not involved. Sorry, are you talking about the ACCs?

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Yes. They are going into RDAs.

Senator McGAURAN—The Minister does know. He is now wondering whether he should answer it.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—No, keep out of it, please.

Mr Tongue—Senator, we have said we will take the detail on notice.

Answer:

See the answer to LGRD 07.

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Question No.: LGRD 07

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Development Australia

Hansard Pages: 114 (28/05/09)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—And I am saying there are 12 in Queensland and your officers do know what the arrangements are. Why will you not let them tell us?

Ms Foster—I think some of the confusion might be because, whilst the MOU, for example, will establish the broad arrangements—and as you noticed, the press statement notes that there will be 12 RDAs within Queensland—an EOI, expression of interest, process will actually start at the end of May to start the appointments to those RDAs.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—But what is the RDA? It is joining with which Queensland regional development organisation in the cities of Rockhampton, Mackay, Gladstone, Townsville and Cairns?

Ms Foster—I do not know. We will need to find that information.

Answer:

There are no Queensland State regional development organisations to merge with RDA.

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Question No.: LGRD 08

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Development Australia

Hansard Pages: 115 (28/05/09)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Can you tell me why it was that the Torres Strait ACC was shut down?

Ms Foster—I would have to take that on notice. I do not know.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Nobody knows? Do you know where the Torres Strait is?

Ms Foster—Yes.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—It is up in the north of Queensland. It had its own area consultative committee because it is a special area. It is some distance, quite remote from Cairns. You are aware of that?

Ms Foster—Yes.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—As I understand it, Torres Strait and Cairns are being joined together in an RDA. I am not sure who they are partnering with, but we will find that out in the next five weeks, I guess. Is that the intention—that Torres Strait is to join with Cairns?

Senator Conroy—We have just had a discussion about Townsville—and I appreciate you have a legitimate question about Cairns and Torres Strait, but the same applies. That level of detail the officers do not have at the table, and they are happy to take it on notice and get you the information. It was only completed in the last few days. They are now working. I am sure, hard on the ones that are not complete. It is a perfectly reasonable question that you are asking, Senator Macdonald, and we will get you the information. We are happy to take it on notice.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—I repeat the question: is it the fact that Torres Strait will now be incorporated into Cairns? If you do not know, please say you do not know.

Ms Foster—I do not know.

Answer:

The Torres Strait Northern Peninsula ACCC and the Far North Queensland ACC will be replaced by a single RDA with an out posted officer in the Torres Strait.

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Question No. LGRD 09

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Development Australia

Hansard Pages: 117 (28/05/09)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Just show your fairness in chairmanship—

CHAIR—Truth hurts.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—by making derogatory comments—

CHAIR—Have you got a question, Senator Macdonald, or are you just going to sit here and listen to your own voice? I hope you have a question. Put it to the officers or the minister please, Senator Macdonald, or we will go to your colleague.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Thank you for your fairness in your chairmanship, Mr Chairman.

CHAIR—You are welcome.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Typical Labor stuff, so I appreciate that. These are clerical questions, which I will put on notice, about things like staffing presently, funding presently. Will you be able to get me that information, if I put those on notice?

Mr Tongue—We will endeavour to answer them. Without having seen them, I cannot guarantee that we will have answers to them—

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Things like what staff have been right across Australia. Before I finish on this and pass over to my colleagues, who might have questions on Regional Development Australia—and good luck to them; I hope they do better than I did—what have these ACCs been doing since the election in November of 2007?

Mr James—They have conducted, last year, a range of consultations as part of inputting design of the future arrangements. The first consultation was on RDA arrangements going forward and what community views were about those. The second was about priorities for designing any new infrastructure programs, community infrastructure programs, and the third was about those priorities. They were all public consultation processes.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—You told me earlier that, in the past, a major part of their work was assisting people make applications for funding.

Mr James—Correct.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—I take it they have not been doing that since November 2007.

Mr James—No, they have not. They have also been continuing to run workshops, as they do for communities, to participate in regional planning activities with local government and other agencies, and continue to administer contracts that they may have with State or other government agencies, as well as *ad hoc* consultations.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—These are contracts put in place under formal Federal Government programs?

Mr James—And/or State Government.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—In State Government programs?

Mr James—Yes. They are independent bodies. They can take work and tender for work from all levels of government.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Did they generate their own funding outside of Federal Government grants?

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Mr James—Some from other contracts, but it does not form a large proportion of their budgets.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—You are saying that they would have got them from State Governments, being the administrator, so to speak, for State Government projects?

Mr James—In the main, yes.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Is there anywhere else where they would have got money?

Mr James—Not to my knowledge, but I could take that on notice.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Certainly.....

Answer:

ACCs have reported receiving funding from State and Australian government agencies under a number of programs. Some also receive income and sponsorship for workshops and community events.

In relation to what ACCs have been doing since November 2007, this question was answered in full – page 117 of Hansard (28/05/09) refers.

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Question No.: LGRD 10

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: ALGA Funding Submission

Hansard Page: 119 (28/05/09)

Senator Back asked:

Senator BACK—.....Are you aware that the Australian Local Government Association did make a submission in the budget for funding?

Ms Foster—Yes.

Senator BACK—Do you know what those levels of funds were that they were seeking?

Ms Foster—From memory, it was some \$30 million—is that right? \$13 million.

Senator BACK—The figure I had was less than \$30 million. The figure I had was \$20 million, over four years, but I do not know if that is accurate.

Ms Foster—I thought that it was \$13 million over four years.

Mr McRandle—I think the ALGA submission in the budget was \$13 million for one component and a further \$7 million for data collection, which gave a total of \$20 million, but the asset management and financial planning aspects, in my understanding, was \$13 million of that \$20 million.

Senator BACK—Can you tell us what the fate of the application was? Were they successful fully or partially in either the \$13 million or the component of the \$13 million or the \$7 million?

Mr McRandle—That is a decision for the Government.

Senator BACK—Yes, I know. But the budget is down, and I am asking do we know what the outcome was?

Mr Tongue—There was no specific budget allocation in these terms, but it is always open to the Government, in the vast range of programs that it has, to pick up those issues. In terms of what we are doing with local governments, for example, we are currently in a tendering process for the \$8 million Centre of Excellence for Local Government, which I expect will, amongst other things, touch on those issues. So, we have a fairly broad engagement with local government from our portfolio, and local government in turn has a much broader engagement across the whole Australian Government. Whilst it is not in there, there are a range of buckets for local government.

Senator Conroy—From a government perspective, all of these issues are still under active consideration.

Senator BACK—Excuse my ignorance; I am new at this process. Because there is no evidence in the actual Budget Papers of an allocation—and I cannot find it either, so I am pleased to the extent that at least I am not that ignorant—you are saying that—

Senator Conroy—It is still under consideration.

Senator BACK—it is still under consideration and it is possible that there may be—

Senator Conroy—I could not speculate.

Senator BACK—Sure. When would local government be likely—

Senator Conroy—Could I take that on notice and ask the Minister to give you some further information on that?

Senator BACK—Yes, of course.....

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Answer:

The Australian Local Government Association funding submission was considered along with other submissions in relation to the Budget outcome.

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Question No.: LGRD 11

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Community Infrastructure Program

Hansard Pages: 122 (28/05/09)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—So, there is no requirement for the recipients to spend it in the 2008-09 year; it is just the requirement for the Commonwealth to get rid of the money out of its bank account by 30 June.

Ms Foster—This means that we need to expend that money, and we would do that by paying the States when, for example, contracts are signed.

Mr Tongue—And there are specific contractual requirements for councils in terms of the expenditure, such that on the \$250 million program all of it is spent between now and September. Then for the other component there will be specific milestone payments.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—We are talking about the same thing, though, are we? That is for the \$800 million Community Infrastructure Program?

Ms Foster—That is right. There are two components.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—There are two components of it, yes. You are saying that the \$250 million going to individual councils has been expended because you have got rid of it out of your bank account and councils have to spend it by 30 September.

Mr Tongue—Yes.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—What happens if they don't? Can they apply for extensions?

Ms Foster—We will work with them to ensure that they are in a position to complete their projects. One of the conditions of that program was that the projects were ready to start and were able to be completed by September.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Can you tell me the date on which the first funding agreement with the local authority was signed?

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

Senator IAN MACDONALD—I appreciate that.....

Answer:

Community Infrastructure Program, \$250 million component: 25 February 2009.

Community Infrastructure Program – Strategic Projects: 5 June 2009.

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Question No.: LGRD 12

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Community Infrastructure Program

Hansard Pages: 124 (28/05/09)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—I see. All right. Are you aware of what, if any, of the projects that have been approved for this funding have actually been sod-turned—construction has started?

Ms Foster—We are just in the process of negotiating the contracts with those proponents, with those councils.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—That means none of them would have started?

Ms Foster—Not the stage we are funding. It is possible that we might be funding a stage in a project which is already under way.

Mr Tongue—Can I just clarify: that relates to the 550, not the 250.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Yes, I know, the 550. The deadline for applications under that 550 program, if I can call it that—you see, I am picking that up too: saying ‘550’ instead of saying ‘550 million’ or ‘billion’.

Senator BACK—We need to get back to some honesty in some of those—

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Yes, okay. I will still use the ‘550’. I have been taught by my Prime Minister. In that program, the deadline for applications was set at 6 March. Were there any applications received after that date?

Ms Foster—My memory is—and I am just trying to make sure I have got the right program—that we made, again, some special arrangements for the disaster affected councils.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—It might be better to take that on notice.

Senator Conroy—Yes, we are happy to take that on notice.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—What, if any, came in late? Were they dealt with? If so, why? For the ‘Why?’ it would be ‘Because they were’, and perhaps you could just give us details of which ones they were.

Ms Foster—Certainly.

Answer:

Five projects were received by the Department after 4pm 6 March 2009 for the Community Infrastructure Program – Strategic Projects.

These projects were from disaster-declared councils, which were given an extension to the deadline, and were processed in accordance with the Community Infrastructure Program – Strategic Projects Guidelines.

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Question No.: LGRD 13

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development
Topic: Better Regions Program – Tree of Knowledge Project
Hansard Pages: 130 (28/05/09)

Senators McGauran and Macdonald asked:

Senator McGAURAN—The locals hate what has been built by the architect. How much was the architect paid? Was there a tender process or a competition process, and how did that win?

Mr Tongue—I do not think we have that information to hand. We would need to take that on notice.

Senator McGAURAN—How was that design chosen and how much was the architect paid?

Senator Conroy—We will take it on notice.

.....
Senator IAN MACDONALD—We are probably in the wrong area. We probably should have dealt with this when we were dealing with the Australian Heritage Council in the Estimates Committee. But could you take on notice a question to the Heritage Council—

Senator Conroy—Certainly.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—referring them to that and getting their investigation.

Answer:

Selection of the architect and design were undertaken by the Barcaldine Regional Council.

The design was approved by the Barcaldine Regional Council after a period of public consultation.

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Question No.: LGRD 14

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Better Regions – Tree of Knowledge Project

Hansard Pages: 131 (28/05/09)

Senator McGauran asked:

Senator McGAURAN—Just confirming: there was no more than \$2.6 million spent of Federal Government funding, and that would include the procurement and the trip to Brisbane that it took.

Ms Foster—The funding that we provided was \$2.6 million.

Senator McGAURAN—And that includes the procurement of the stump and the transporting of the stump to Brisbane, does it—the preserving of the stump?

Ms Foster—I will have to take on notice the detail of what that \$2.6 million funded.

Senator Conroy—Thank you, Senator McGauran.

Answer:

No. The Queensland State Government and the Barcaldine Regional Council funded the removal and preservation of the tree.

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Question No.: LGRD 15

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Number of Applications for Centre of Excellence for Local Government Grant

Hansard Page: 133 (28/05/09)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Can you tell me how many applications were received?

Ms Foster—I am not sure that I can do that while the process of considering the applications is under way.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—No, I am not asking you to tell me who they were or what they were. I am saying: can you tell me how many were received?

Senator Conroy—No. We do not necessarily reveal the number either while the process is under way, Senator Macdonald. I never publicly confirmed how many people bid for the broadband tender.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—I would not go there, Minister—I just would not. Take my advice. Can you tell me if there was more than one?

Ms Foster—Yes.

Senator Conroy—No.

Ms Foster—No.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—No, there were not more than one or, no, you cannot tell me.

Senator Conroy—No, we cannot tell you.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—I cannot see what the secret is.

Senator Conroy—It is just a normal tender process rule. I am actually not trying to be—

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Hang on. I suppose it is a tender, but—

Senator Conroy—You just described it as one.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—I mean, it is for a centre of excellence for the Labor Government. Was it enthusiastically pursued, Minister, if you do not want to give me numbers? There was a bit of interest in it, was there?

Senator Conroy—I am sure there was, but I will happily take that on notice and give you any further information that the Minister can provide.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—I am quite sure that, when you take it on notice, there will be no problem in saying you have got six or whatever.

Senator Conroy—Considerable interest.

Answer:

Six applications were received.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
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Question No.: LGRD 16

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Townsville Mall – Website Details

Hansard Page: 134 (28/05/09)

Senator Ian MacDonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—You have told me that at nationbuilding.com I would see the Townsville mall mentioned.

Senator Conroy—I am sure it is .gov.au as well.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—First of all, there is no such site. You simply click on it and it goes to the department's website.

Senator Conroy—I think I said that to you a moment ago.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Why didn't you just use the Department's website, Minister? Wasting a bit more money perhaps? No response? Why did you get an address www.nationbuilding.com if, when you click on it, it just goes straight to the—

Senator Conroy—I will take that on notice, Senator Macdonald.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Thanks. I will be fascinated. I know you will be, too, as Communications Minister. But then I was told I would see the list there. I have seen Mr Garrett's press release, but I had that anyhow. Is that the only reference I am going to see to the Townsville mall, or am I missing something on the website?

Ms Foster—I understand that the press releases are on Minister Albanese's website.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—No. I wish my machine was quick enough to be doing this as we talk.

When I do 'nationbuilding.gov.au', it goes to your website, and on your website I cannot see anything about the Townsville mall. I type in, in the search thing, 'Townsville mall', and it brings up Mr Albanese's media release. Is that all we can expect?

Senator Conroy—All the releases are on the Minister's site. We can provide projects on notice, if they are not on the economic stimulus site already.

Answer:

No such address is registered by the Department.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
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Question No.: LGRD 17

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Community Infrastructure Program

Hansard Pages: 135 (28/05/09)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—What about the \$550 million?

Ms Foster—I am not sure that the \$550 million is there. I know it was tabled in parliament yesterday.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—If I am right—

Senator Conroy—It perhaps has not been uploaded yet, Senator Macdonald.

Ms Foster—Yes.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—So, we can expect it any day, you are telling us?

Ms Foster—I do not know. I will have to check when that is programmed to be uploaded. I had incorrectly assumed that, once it was tabled in Parliament, it was being uploaded to the website.

Answer:

All Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program – Strategic Projects approved projects are listed on the Department’s website.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
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Question No.: LGRD 18

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Area Consultative Committees (ACCs)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Macdonald asked:

Given that ACCs will be required to issue termination notices to their staff imminently unless they are able to operate beyond 30 June 2009, has the Department suggested to the Government that funding will be extended beyond 30 June 2009 to ACCs in these States that have not yet executed a RDA MoU or contract with the Commonwealth, so that they may continue until the RDA is established?

Answer:

Yes. Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, the Hon Maxine McKew MP, agreed to up to three months funding extensions to 30 September 2009, for ACCs in Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland and Victoria. ACCs in these States have been advised of these extensions.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
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Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question No.: LGRD 19

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Area Consultative Committees (ACCs)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Macdonald asked:

Why has the Government granted a 3-month funding extension to the end of September to ACCs in Queensland, but not in Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania and Northern Territory?

Answer:

See answer to LGRD 18. An extension is not required in Tasmania and the Northern Territory as these ACCs are not winding-up, they are being transitioned to RDA.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2009
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question No.: LGRD 20

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Area Consultative Committees (ACCs)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Macdonald asked:

Will any additional funding be provided to other ACCs that have not transitioned to RDAs by 30 June 2009?

- If so, what items would the funding cover?

Answer:

Yes. The additional funding will cover normal operating costs and/or activities required for the wind-up of ACCs and transition to RDA.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
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Question No.: LGRD 21

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Area Consultative Committees (ACCs)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Macdonald asked:

What have ACCs been doing since the election of the Labor Government?

Answer:

This Question was answered in full – page 117 of Hansard refers.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
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Question No.: LGRD 22

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Area Consultative Committees (ACCs)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Macdonald asked:

What has happened to the work plans they were required to write?

1. Has the Minister read those plans and acted on the recommendations?
2. Has the Minister provided feedback to each ACC on the work plans?
3. Has the Minister provided feedback to each ACC on the work plans?

Answer:

1. The work plans have been used in policy development, new regional programs and proposed RDA arrangements, and provide an on-going resource for the Department and the Government.
2. The plans have been provided in full to the Minister and Parliamentary Secretary, the Hon Gary Gray MP.
3. Parliamentary Secretary Gray met with the Interim RDA Board to receive its consolidated report of the work plans and provide feedback on it.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
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Question No.: LGRD 23

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Area Consultative Committees (ACCs)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Macdonald asked:

Does the Australian Government provide operational funding to ACCs to cover their administrative expenses and also the employment of staff?

Answer:

Yes.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
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Question No.: LGRD 24

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Area Consultative Committees (ACCs)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Macdonald asked:

Does the Department require a budget from each ACC that is included in the funding contract that is executed between the Department and each ACC that details specific line items, including staff positions and salaries?

Accordingly:

1. How many staff were employed in each Area Consultative Committee as of November 2007?
2. How many staff are now employed in each ACC / RDA?
3. How many jobs have been lost and what are the locations of those job losses?
4. How many jobs will be lost once the transition is made from ACCs to RDA?

Answer:

ACCs are required under their funding agreements to provide the Department with individual budgets specifying details of line items. However, these budgets are not required to include specific details of staff positions or salaries.

Accordingly, the Department does not hold the information requested as per Questions 1 to 4 above.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
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Question No.: LGRD 25

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Area Consultative Committees (ACCs)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Macdonald asked:

1. Is it true that ACCs are not able to exceed their agreed budget line items by more than 10%?
2. Given the Government provides funding for ACC staff and ACCs are unable to exceed their budget line items by more than 10%, how will ACCs fund appropriate staff redundancy payments which the Government has not made any allocation for?
3. If ACC's cannot afford to pay the legal redundancy entitlements of staff, what arrangements are in place for staff to receive their entitlements and who will fund those payments?
4. What career assistance programs and counselling services have been offered by the Commonwealth to ACC staff who may become redundant after the RDA transition process is complete?

Answer:

- 1 No. The ACC budgets can be varied by seeking approval from the Department to transfer funds between line items.
- 2 See the answer to question 1 above.
- 3 The Australian Government has funded payments for additional wind-up expenses.
- 4 None. ACC staff are engaged by the ACC, not the Australian Government.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
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Question No.: LGRD 26

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Area Consultative Committees (ACCs)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Macdonald asked:

Why have some New South Wales ACC staff been offered an employment contract under RDA in New South Wales but ACC staff in other States have not had the same offer extended to them?

Answer:

The engagement of staff is a matter for individual RDA committees, and in the case of Victoria, Regional Development Victoria, to determine within their budgets.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
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Question No.: LGRD 27

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Area Consultative Committees (ACCs)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Macdonald asked:

1. What will happen to the assets of ACCs when they become RDAs?
2. Is the Government able to control the disposal of assets by ACCs?
3. Does the Government have any capacity or authority to direct or determine the disposal of assets by ACCs?

Answer:

1. Details of transition arrangements, including assets, vary considerably between States and Territories, as well as between individual ACCs, depending on existing circumstances and proposed new RDA arrangements. Arrangements are made on a case-by-case basis with agreement of the relevant ACC. The Department has requested an asset disposal plan from each ACC for Departmental approval in accordance with their operational funding agreement.
2. Yes.
3. Yes.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2009
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Question No.: LGRD 28

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Area Consultative Committees (ACCs)

Hansard Pages:

Senator IAN MACDONALD asked:

1. As the current funding arrangements for ACCs expire on June 30 2009, what written advice has been provided by the Government to each ACC in each State, as required by their funding contracts, as to their future?
2. Has written advice been provided to each ACC outlining how they are each to be transitioned to RDA?
3. If so, what are these arrangements?

Answer:

- 1 The contract is explicit in stating that the funding period ceases on 30 June 2009.
- 2 Yes.
- 3 Details of transition arrangements vary considerably between States and Territories, as well as between individual ACCs, depending on existing circumstances and proposed new RDA arrangements.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
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Question No.: LGRD 29

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Area Consultative Committees (ACCs)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Macdonald asked:

Will any additional funding be provided to ACCs that have not transitioned to RDAs by 30th June 2009?

If so, what items would the funding cover?

Answer:

See the answer to LGRD 18.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
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Question No.: LGRD 30

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Area Consultative Committees (ACCs)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Macdonald asked:

What arrangements are in place for ACCs, their staff and committee members in those States which have not entered into a contract or MOU with the Commonwealth by 30 June 2009?

Answer:

A contract extension of up to 3 months to 30 September 2009 has been offered to ACCs in these States.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
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Question No.: LGRD 31

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Area Consultative Committees (ACCs)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Macdonald asked:

1. In the absence of an agreement or an MoU between the Commonwealth and State Governments, will those ACCs become known as Regional Development Australia?
2. What will be their role?
3. Who will they be accountable to?
4. Will any be closed?
5. If so what locations will be closed?
6. How many staff will lose their jobs?

Answer:

An MOU will be in place between the Australian Government and each State and Territory.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
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Question No.: LGRD 32

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Area Consultative Committees (ACCs)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Macdonald asked:

Have ACCs been provided with written advice, as required by their contracts, how they will be further funded or transitioned into RDA if the June 30 2009 deadline passes and the transition has not been completed?

Answer:

ACC contracts do not require written notification concerning their future funding or transition to RDA. However, the Department has written to ACCs in those States and Territories where MOUs are yet to be finalised advising of an extension to funding until 30 September 2009 to assist them with the transition process.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
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Question No.: LGRD 33

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Area Consultative Committees (ACCs)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Macdonald asked:

1. If ACCs in Queensland, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory are forced to wind up because the Government has failed to provide them with any written advice about their future funding or due to insolvency, who will be responsible for delivering RDAs role from July 1st?
2. Or will there be nothing while the Federal and State Governments argue about the RDA structure in these States?

Answer:

1. The Government has put in place transition arrangements in those areas where RDA's were not operational by 1 July.
2. Refer to answer 1 above.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
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Question No.: LGRD 34

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Development Australia (RDA)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Macdonald asked:

Can copies of the MOU for New South Wales, Western Australia, Northern Territory and Queensland be provided?

Answer:

Yes. All signed MoUs are available on the www.rda.gov.au website.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
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Question No.: LGRD 35

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Development Australia (RDA)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Macdonald asked:

What Commonwealth resources have been or will be provided to each RDA in each State?

Answer:

That has not yet been determined.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates May 2009
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Question No.: LGRD 36

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Development Australia (RDA)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Macdonald asked:

How much operational funding will each RDA be provided with by the Commonwealth?

Answer:

Refer to answer to LGRD 35.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
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Question No.: LGRD 37

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Development Australia (RDA)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Macdonald asked:

How much funding has or will the Commonwealth provide to the New South Wales, Western Australian, Victorian, South Australian, Tasmanian and Northern Territory Governments for RDA?

Answer:

Refer to the answer to LGRD 35.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
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Question No.: LGRD 38

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Development Australia (RDA)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Macdonald asked:

What is or what will be the proportion of Commonwealth funding, to funding provided by the New South Wales, Western Australian, Victorian, South Australian, Tasmanian and Northern Territory Governments for each RDA in their jurisdictions?

Answer:

Refer to answer to LGRD 35.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
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Question No.: LGRD 39

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Development Australia (RDA)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Macdonald asked:

How many FTE will each RDA have and what will be the role of each position?

Answer:

That will be a matter for individual RDA committees to determine within their budgets.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
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Question No.: LGRD 40

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Development Australia (RDA)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator IAN MACDONALD asked:

What is the role of RDA in the administration, application development process and / or assessment of the Government's *Jobs Fund - Infrastructure Employment Projects*?

Answer:

There is no formal role for RDA at this stage.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
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Question No.: LGRD 41

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: **Regional Development Australia (RDA)**

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Macdonald asked:

1. What progress has been made with the creation of the Government's national *Regional Development Advisory Council*?
2. What are the selection criteria for members of the national *Regional Development Advisory Council*?
3. What is the process for selection?

Answer:

An announcement will be made by the Government on this issue.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
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Question No.: LGRD 42

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: **Regional Development Australia (RDA)**

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Macdonald asked:

If RDA's in some States are going to be part of a State Government agency, is it the Federal Government's intention that those State agencies also deliver other Federal Government programs and services and third party contracts, as has been the role of the ACC network?

Answer:

The role of RDA in this context will be a matter for negotiation with individual Federal agencies.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
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Question No.: LGRD 43

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Development Australia (RDA)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Macdonald asked:

Why has the Government reduced its funding allocation from \$17.361m for 08/09 to \$14.704m for 09/10, \$14.936m for 10/11, \$15.250m for 11/12, and \$15.539m for 12/13 for the RDA network, after assuring the ACC network that existing funding levels would be maintained?

Answer:

The RDA network will have an overall increase in funds compared with that provided by the Howard Government for ACC's.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
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Question No.: LGRD 44

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Development Australia (RDA)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Macdonald asked:

What is the Commonwealth's role in Regional Development Australia in Western Australia?

Answer:

The role of RDA in WA is still the subject of negotiation between the Governments.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
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Question No.: LGRD 45

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: **Regional Development Australia (RDA)**

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Macdonald asked:

Why did the Commonwealth choose not to have any role in the appointment of RDA board members in Western Australia?

Answer:

Refer to answer to LGRD 44.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
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Question No.: LGRD 46

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Better Regions Project on Better Regions Website

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Bushby asked:

During the Additional Estimates I asked "*What date will the \$500,000 for the Oakleigh Park pedestrian overpass in Burnie (previously announced by the then Labor opposition on 6 September 2007) be delivered?*" I also asked "*When will the Oakleigh Park pedestrian overpass in Burnie be commenced and when will it be completed?*" and was told the project is being funded under the Better Regions program. When I checked the Better Regions website this project wasn't on it, in fact I have checked the list of approved projects. (The website is http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/regional/better_regions.aspx).

Could you please clarify if all approved Better Regions projects are on the Better Regions website?

Answer:

The Better Regions projects on the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government internet website are those where a Funding Agreement [contract] has been executed.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
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Question No.: LGRD 47

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Oakleigh Park Pedestrian Overpass

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Bushby asked:

1. What date will the \$500,000 for the Oakleigh Park pedestrian overpass in Burnie (previously announced 6 September 2007 by the then Shadow Minister) be delivered?
2. Why has the delivery of the project been delayed for so long?
3. When will the Oakleigh Park pedestrian overpass in Burnie be commenced and when will it be completed?

Answer:

- 1-3 The project is being considered for funding under the Better Regions Program.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
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Question No.: LGRD 48

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Development Australia (RDA)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Bernardi asked:

1. The Government is planning to transition the former Area Consultative Committees (ACC) into the Regional Development Australia (RDA) network. I believe that there were 5 ACCs in South Australia. Would the Department be able to provide me with how much funding these South Australian ACCs received over the last few financial years (including 2008-09)?
2. Under the new RDA scheme, how much will the new SA RDA bodies receive in 2009-10?
3. What are the forward estimates for this funding, with respect to SA RDAs?

Answer:

- 1 \$1,449, 251 (GST-exclusive) in 2008-09
 \$1,421,796 (GST-exclusive) in 2007-08
 \$1,369,810 (GST-exclusive) in 2006-07
- 2 As at 30 June 2009, the amount of funding to be granted to South Australia had not been determined.
- 3 As at 30 June 2009, forward estimates for South Australian RDAs had not been determined.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
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Question No.: LGRD 49

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Development Australia (RDA)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Adams asked:

Is there any plan to formally inform each WA RDA regarding the visions, roles, function and reporting structure of Western Australian RDAs?

Answer:

Yes.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
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Question No.: LGRD 50

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Development Australia (RDA)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Adams asked:

Are you aware that the Perth ACC has now been informed it will be 'absorbed' by the WA State Government and Development Commissions?

Answer:

Refer to answer to LGRD 44.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
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Question No.: LGRD 51

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Development Australia (RDA)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Adams asked:

Are you also aware that Statutory Commissions are unable to host many contracts?

Answer:

Refer to answer to LGRD 44.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
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Question No.: LGRD 52

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Development Australia (RDA)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Adams asked:

If you were aware of this, why then did you allow this to happen?

Answer:

Refer to answer to LGRD 44.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
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Question No.: LGRD 53

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Development Australia (RDA)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Adams asked:

Is there any plan to ensure WA RDAs have a legal identity?

Answer:

Refer to answer to LGRD 44.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
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Question No.: LGRD 54

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Development Australia (RDA)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Adams asked:

If so, why not? This then means RDAs in WA will have no legal identity and therefore be unable to delivery services that require a not for profit status.

Answer:

Refer to answer to LGRD 44.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
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Question No.: LGRD 55

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Development Australia (RDA)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Adams asked:

Are you aware on the 14th May, the Perth RDA was told over the phone to close the office, two days later they were told to start working on the jobs fund. Can you please explain how this lack of communication can lead to two separate directives?

Answer:

Many West Australian ACCs received advice around 14 May 2009, concerning the likelihood that their funding agreements would not be renewed beyond 30 June 2009. Also around this time, all ACCs received advice about opportunities to support their local communities through providing stakeholder advice on the Government's Jobs Fund initiative. The two communications are unrelated and not inconsistent.

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Question No.: LGRD 56

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Development Australia (RDA)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Adams asked:

The funding is being reduced quite considerably, can you please tell me the breakdown of this funding?

Answer:

Refer to answer to LGRD 35.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
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Question No.: LGRD 57

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Development Australia (RDA)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Adams asked:

What is being done about the approximately 150 jobs that will be lost based on the RDAs being absorbed by State governments?

Answer:

Refer to LGRD 26.

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Question No.: LGRD 58

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: AusIndustry Programmes

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Brown asked:

Please detail what activities were funded under the following budget items:

- NE Tasmania Innovation and Investment Fund which was funded \$2.275m in 08–09 and \$1.425 in 09–10
- NE Tasmanian Development Package—micro-capital loans which was funded \$300,000 in 2008–09.

Answer:

These programs are administered by AusIndustry. This question has been referred to AusIndustry.

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Question No.: LGRD 59

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Services Division Staff

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

How many people were employed in the Regional Services Division of the Department in November 2007?

Answer:

Staffing details are contained in the Department's Annual Report.

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Question No.: LGRD 60

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Services Division

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

How many FTE positions were allocated to the Regional Services Division of the Department in November 2007?

Answer:

Refer to LGRD 59.

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Question No.: LGRD 61

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Services Division

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

How many people are now employed in Regional Development Policy Branch of the Department? What is their role?

Answer:

Staffing details can be found in the Department's Annual Report.

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Question No.: LGRD 62

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Services Division

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

How many FTE positions are allocated to the Regional Development Policy Branch of the Department?

Answer:

Refer to LGRD 59.

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Question No.: LGRD 63

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Services Division

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

How many people are employed in the Regional Development Programs section of the Department? What is their role?

Answer:

These details can be found in the Department's Annual Report.

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Question No.: LGRD 64

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Services Division

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

How many FTE positions are allocated to the Regional Development Programs Section?

Answer:

Refer to LGRD 59.

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Question No.: LGRD 65

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Services Division

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

How many Canberra based positions in the Regional Development section of the Department in Canberra have been made redundant since the Government was elected?

Answer:

Three (3) staff from the Local Government and Regional Development Division have accepted voluntary redundancies between the November 2007 election and 30 June 2009.

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Question No.: LGRD 66

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Staffing – Regional Offices

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

How many positions in the Regional Development Programs Branch in Darwin, Townsville, Newcastle, Orange, Bendigo, Wollongong and Hobart have been made redundant since the Government was elected?

Answer:

One.

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Question No.: LGRD 67

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Staffing – Regional Offices

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

Given the closure of the Department's offices in Brisbane, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth, how many positions were made redundant?

Answer:

Thirty-three (33).

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Question No.: LGRD 68

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Staffing - Regional Offices

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

Has any person who was made redundant been re-employed or engaged as a consultant or contractor?

Answer:

No.

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Question No.: LGRD 69

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Infrastructure Employment Program

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

What is the Department's role in the administration and / or assessment of the Government's *Jobs Fund - Infrastructure Employment Projects*?

Answer:

All Infrastructure Employment Project (IEP) projects will be identified by the Australian Government.

The Department will manage the program in accordance with the program guidelines.

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Question No.: LGRD 70

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Community Infrastructure Program

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

Why has the Government changed the name of the “*Regional & Local Community Infrastructure Fund*” to “*Community Infrastructure Fund*”?

Answer:

The name of the program is the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program.

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Question No.: 71

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Australian Government Regional Information Directory (AGRID)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

1. Does the Department still produce the publication: *Australian Government Regional Information Directory*?
2. If not, why not?
3. Will the Government publish it in the future?

Answer:

1. No.
2. Information on Australian Government programs and services is available electronically via the Internet from the Regional Entry Point and GrantsLINK websites maintained by the Department and via the Freecall number 1800 026 222.
3. The Australian Government Regional Information Service consists of the website and the call centre which ensures the most current information is provided to the public.

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Question No.: LGRD 72

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Labor's Election Commitments

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

Why did the Government break its promise to provide an ongoing specific regional development funding program?

Answer:

The Government has provided significant funding for regional development through the Better Regions Program (\$176 million over four years) and the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program (\$1.02 billion).

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Question No.: LGRD 73

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Election Commitments

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

In its *Regional Development for a Sustainable Future* election policy document, Labor committed to 'require the individual portfolio budgets and the federal Budget to identify how much is spent in each region'. Where is the information available from?

Answer:

The Australian Government's Ministerial Regional Budget Statement - *Building our Rural and Regional Communities*, released on 12 May 2009, outlines the Government's initiatives that directly respond to the challenges faced by rural and regional Australia. The Ministerial statement is available at www.infrastructure.gov.au.

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Question No.: LGRD 74

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Development Australia (RDA)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

What is RDAs capacity to support local projects as required in Labor's Regional Development for a Sustainable Future election policy document?

Answer:

Information on the roles of RDAs across Australia is available on the RDA website at www.rda.gov.au.

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Question No.: LGRD 75

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Labor's Election Commitments

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

Why hasn't the Government retained and enhanced the *Regional Partnerships* and *Sustainable Regions* programs as promised in Labor's *Regional Development for a Sustainable Future* election policy document?

Answer:

The Australian National Audit Office Performance Audit of the Regional Partnerships programme found that: "*The manner in which the Programme had been administered over the 3-year period to 30 June 2006 examined by ANAO had fallen short of an acceptable standard of public administration...*"

The Government closed the Regional Partnerships and Sustainable Regions programs at the 2008-09 Budget.

The Government has provided significant funding for regional development through the Better Regions Program (\$176 million over four years) and the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program (\$1.02 billion).

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Question No.: LGRD 76

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Labor's Election Commitments

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

Why hasn't the Government opened its *Better Regions* program that was promised in Labor's *Regional Development for a Sustainable Future* election policy document?

Answer:

The Better Regions Program funds projects that have been identified by local communities across Regional Australia as priority investments for their region.

The Government has provided significant funding for regional development through the Better Regions Program (\$176 million over four years) and the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program (\$1.02 billion).

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Question No.: LGRD 77

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Election Commitments

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

Which of Labor's commitments outlined in its *Regional Development for a Sustainable Future* election policy document has the Government actually honoured?

Answer:

The Australian Government Labor's election commitments were laid out prior to the election. Further information is available at www.alp.org.au.

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Question No.: LGRD 78

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Regional Development Australia (RDA)

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

What is the role of each Regional Development Australia office in relation to the development of projects as mandated in Labor's *Regional Development for a Sustainable Future* election policy document?

Answer:

RDAs will be expected to support the development of local projects through close engagement with community groups, local industry and local government.

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Question No.: LGRD 79

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Better Regions Program

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

How many funding contracts has the Government entered into under its Better Regions program?

What are the projects and what electorates are they in?

Answer:

Refer to LGRD 01.

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Question No.: LGRD 80

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Better Regions

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

How many projects under Better Regions have been completed?

What are the projects and what electorates are they in?

Answer:

All contracted projects can be found on the Department's website.

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Question No.: LGRD 81

Division/Agency: Local Government and Regional Development

Topic: Better Regions Program Projects Not Funded

Hansard Page/s: Written Question

Senator Nash asked:

How many Better Regions projects will not gain funding under the Better Regions program?
What are the projects and what electorates are they in?

Answer:

Refer to answer to LGRD 80.