

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport

Budget Estimates 30 May 2013

Question: 54

Topic: Government contribution to the creation of the Regional Australia Institute

Asked By: Senator JOYCE

Type of Question: RRA&T 11

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 July 2013

Number of pages: 1

Senator JOYCE: Who else was involved with that decision of the minister to set it up as a separate company? Were there any other members of parliament involved in that process?

Ms Beauchamp: As we have mentioned previously, and I do not have the officers here to answer in detail, we did consult with other members of parliament and had a range of meetings and roundtables—

Senator JOYCE: Who were they that you are consulted?

Ms Beauchamp: I would have to take that on notice.....But I can recall that at one of the roundtables that I was at personally Mr Windsor was there.

Senator JOYCE: Mr Windsor was also part of it. With the effect of this being a separate company, can I therefore ask questions of this organisation through Senate estimates and get delivery of the facts and details of what is happening inside that separate company?

Ms Beauchamp: I would have to take that on notice.....The government provided I think in the 2011-12 budget - I would have to take that on notice—a contribution to its set-up.

Senator JOYCE: How much - \$8½ half million dollars?

Ms Beauchamp: It may have been in the order of that. I do not have those details in front of me. But we have provided this information on notice.

Answer:

These questions were answered at the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee's Senate Estimates Hearings held on Thursday 24 May 2012 (please refer to pages 45 and 49 of the Official Committee Hansard), and Thursday 16 October 2012 (please refer to pages 149 of the Official Committee Hansard).

These questions were also answered in previous Answers to Questions on Notice for Budget Estimates Thursday 24 May 2012 (please refer to Question 8 and Question 9).

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport

Budget Estimates 30 May 2013

Question: 55

Topic: Regional Australia Institute Advisory Committee Members

Asked By: Senator JOYCE

Type of Question: RRA&T 11-12

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 July 2013

Number of pages: 2

Ms Beauchamp: As we have identified in the past, and it is on the public record, Minister Crean asked his Ministerial Advisory Council on Regional Australia to look at the options for setting up what would be the best governance arrangement to set up the Regional Australia Institute.

Senator JOYCE: Who was selecting the people who were going to be on the board of this Regional Australia Institute? What was the testing group or the selecting group? Who were they?

Ms Beauchamp: I would have to take that on notice....I think, as I mentioned, there was a role for the advisory committee—

Senator JOYCE: And who was on that advisory committee?

Ms Beauchamp: The role of the advisory committee was to select a number of foundation members—

Senator JOYCE: Who was on that advisory committee?

Ms Beauchamp: Again, I do not have that information in front of me. There were people like Mr Ian Sinclair, Mr Bill Kelty, Mr Lindsay Fox, Ms Collene Longmore—I would have to—

Senator JOYCE: This is the advisory committee to select the board?

Ms Beauchamp: It was the Ministerial Advisory Council on Regional Australia.

Senator JOYCE: Was Mr Peters on that advisory committee to select the board?

Ms Beauchamp: I would have to take that on notice but I think he was, yes....Can I just say that the process for selecting the board members of the Regional Australia Institute is well documented in our questions on notice. I will ask officers to get those questions on notice and retable them. There is a lot of information there. I think you had raised at quite some length this whole issue at the last estimates committee meeting in February and I am happy to retable all of the information we have provided.

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Answer:

This question was answered at the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee's Senate Estimates Hearing held on Thursday 24 May 2012. Please refer to page 47 of the Official Committee Hansard.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport

Budget Estimates 30 May 2013

Question: 56

Topic: Gulf Water Resource Plan

Asked By: Senator MACDONALD

Type of Question: RRA&T 54

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 July 2013

Number of pages: 2

Mr Dickson: This project is absolutely looking at all the options to develop water resources in these two catchments. CSIRO is using new state-of-the art science to identify all opportunities for surface water capture and storage in these catchments as part of the option. They have identified 24 locations in these rivers, four of which have been identified previously but a lot of which have not been identified previously and are evaluating their feasibility.

Senator IAN MACDONALD: Are you aware of those, Mr Dickson?

Mr Dickson: Am I aware of all of them?

Senator IAN MACDONALD: The 24.

Mr Dickson: I am not aware of all of them. I am aware of some of them.

Senator IAN MACDONALD: Can you make us aware of those?

Mr Dickson: We will certainly take that on notice.

Answer:

One of the activities being undertaken as part of the North Queensland Irrigated Agriculture Strategy is to quantify available water resources in the Flinders and Gilbert River catchments and to identify and evaluate potential surface water capture and storage options. This work is being led by CSIRO and involves topographic mapping, automated terrain analysis and field surveys. As part of this program 24 potential dam sites in the Flinders and Gilbert River catchments have been investigated in detail.

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The locations^a examined in the each catchment are indicated in the table below.

Flinders catchment	Gilbert catchment
Alston Vale	Bundock Creek
Black Fort	Copperfield River Gorge Dam
Cameron Creek	Dagworth Dam
Cave Hill	Greenhills
Chinaman Creek Dam	Mt Alder
Corella Dam	Mt Noble
Corella River downstream	North Head
Flinders 856 km	Prestwood weir
Glendower	Rockfields weir
Mt Beckford	
Mt Oxley	
O'Connell Creek Off-stream	
Porcupine Gorge	
Richmond Dam	
White Mountains	

a At some locations up to three separate dam sites were investigated.

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Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport

Budget Estimates 30 May 2013

Question: 57

Topic: Gulf Water Resource Plan – Number of Employees

Asked By: Senator MACDONALD

Type of Question: RRA&T 55

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 July 2013

Number of pages: 1

Senator IAN MACDONALD: Can you tell me, perhaps on notice if you do not have it, how many people that are full time equivalents from CSIRO have been working on this strategy?

Mr Dickson: I am happy to do that. I can tell you the number will be far in excess of 70.

Answer:

In total, 103 researchers have been involved in the Flinders and Gilbert Agriculture Resource Assessment project since it commenced in January 2012 (not including administration or legal staff). Approximately 55 researchers have been significantly involved in the project. The total resource commitment (not including administration or legal staff) is estimated to be approximately 26 FTE.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport

Budget Estimates 30 May 2013

Question: 58

Topic: Northern Australia Expert Advisory Panel Members

Asked By: Senator HEFFERNAN

Type of Question: RRA&T 56

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 July 2013

Number of pages: 3

Ms Foster: Mr Dickson will be able to give some details.

Mr Dickson: We have an expert advisory panel that assists ministers with technical issues. The ministers request advice from the panel on essentially the question: are land tenure arrangements across northern Australia a barrier to investment, to raising capital and to raising business finance?

Senator HEFFERNAN: Could we have the names of the people on the panel?

Mr Dickson: Absolutely.

Answer:

NORTHERN AUSTRALIA MINISTERIAL FORUM

EXPERT ADVISORY PANEL

June 2013

Salutation			Position	Organisation
Dr	Andrew	Johnson	Expert Advisory Panel Coordinator; Group Executive	Environment, CSIRO
Dr	Andrew	Ash	Research Scientist, Ecosystem Sciences	CSIRO
Professor	Lyn	Beazley	Chief Scientist (WA)	Office of the Western Australian Chief Scientist
Mr	David	Carter	Chief Executive Officer	Austral Fisheries Pty Ltd
Dr	John	Chapman	Managing Director	Agri-Science Queensland
Dr	Megan	Clark	Chief Executive	CSIRO

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Professor	Chris	Cocklin	Deputy Vice-Chancellor	James Cook University
Dr	Carol	Couch	Director, Water for a Healthy Country Flagship	CSIRO
Professor	Mick	Dodson	Director, National Centre for Indigenous Studies	Australian National University
Ms	Jan	Ferguson	Managing Director	Ninti One Limited CRC for Remote Economic Participation
Dr	James	Finlay	Chief Executive Officer	Australian Fisheries Management Authority
Mr	Lindsay	Fox AC		Linfox Group
Dr	Geoff	Garrett	Chief Scientist (Qld)	Office of the Queensland Chief Scientist
Professor	Barney	Glover	Vice-Chancellor	Charles Darwin University
Mr	John	Gunn	Chief Executive	Australian Institute of Marine Science
Professor	Sandra	Harding	Vice-Chancellor	James Cook University
Mr	Winston	Harris	Chief Executive Officer	Queensland Seafood Industry Association
Dr	Tom	Hatton	Director, Wealth from Oceans Flagship	CSIRO
Mr	Don	Henry	Chief Executive Officer	Australian Conservation Foundation
Mr	Alan	Hughes	Supervising Scientist	SEWPaC
Mr	David	Inall	Executive Director	Cattle Council of Australia
Dr	Brian	Keating	Director, Sustainable Agriculture Flagship	CSIRO
Dr	Jonathon	Law	Director, Minerals Down Under Flagship	CSIRO

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Dr	Bruce	Lee	Director, Food Futures Flagship	CSIRO
The Hon	Karlene	Maywald	Chair	National Water Commission
Mr	Richard	McAllister	Acting Supervising Scientist	Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities
Mr	Joe	Morrison	Chief Executive Officer	North Australian Land and Sea Management Alliance
Mr	Andrew	Murray	Chair	Western Australia Regional Development Trust
Dr	Russell	Reichelt	Chairman and Chief Executive Officer	Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
Professor	Alistar	Robertson	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research)	University of Western Australia
Mr	Joe	Ross		Bunuba Pastoral Group
Ms	Helen	Spencer	Acting Director	Strategic Advisory Services, Qld DERM
Professor	John	Taylor	Director	Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport

Budget Estimates 30 May 2013

Question: 59

Topic: Gulf Water Resource Plan – Soil Types

Asked By: Senator HEFFERNAN

Type of Question: RRA&T 56

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 July 2013

Number of pages: 2

Senator HEFFERNAN: I have a few questions, as you would expect I could have. Will the soil typing include things like the permeability and rehabilitative capacity of the soil? That soil is depleted but it can easily be rehabilitated. Is it including that sort of stuff, Mr Dickson, or is it just saying, 'That is clay. That is loam. That is shale, sand, and whatever'?

Mr Dickson: Honestly you are stretching my technical expertise here.

Senator HEFFERNAN: Could you take that on notice?

Mr Dickson: I am happy to take it on notice.

Answer:

One of the key activities being undertaken as part of the North Queensland Irrigated Agriculture Strategy is to identify, map and quantify available soil and water resources in the Flinders and Gilbert River catchments in north Queensland and assess their suitability for a range of irrigated crops. This work is being led by CSIRO.

Digital soils maps are being developed that describe the distribution of soil types across the entirety of each catchment, with soils described and mapped in terms of clay percentage and permeability amongst a broad range of other soil attributes.

Maps of a wide range of other soil parameters are also being developed, including: the depth of the A horizon (typically referred to as topsoil); drainage class; electrical conductivity; exchangeable sodium percentage; micro relief; organic carbon; plant available water capacity; permeability; rockiness; soil depth; soil erosivity; surface clay percentage; surface condition; surface pH; surface texture; and surface structure.

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Based on these data the suitability of soils for a range of crops are being evaluated, including: cereal crops (maize/corn, millet, rice, grain sorghum); citrus; legumes (chickpea, black mungbean, navybean, soybean); forage — hay or silage (sorghum, Rhodes grass); forage — legumes (lablab, lucerne); industrial crops (coffee, cotton, sugarcane); intensive horticulture — vegetables (capsicum/chilli, cucumber, eggplant, tomato, pineapple, sweet corn); oilseeds (sunflower); root crops (cassava, peanut, sweet potato); plantation crops (African mahogany, Caribbean pine, Spotted gum, teak, Indian sandalwood); tree crops — fruit (avocado, banana, carambola, custard apple, lychee, mango); tree crop — nuts (cashew).

With respect to rehabilitative capacity, the nutrient holding capacity of soils is being measured but is not part of assessing potential suitability since fertiliser addition is an accepted management practice within high value agricultural systems.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport

Budget Estimates 30 May 2013

Question: 60

Topic: RDA Board Member Travel Claims

Asked By: Senator WILLIAMS

Type of Question: RRA&T 57

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 July 2013

Number of pages: 1

Senator WILLIAMS: Mr Atkinson, I want to ask a procedure matter here. When a board member lodges a travel claim, such as for motor vehicle travel, must that claim include the registration number of the vehicle being claimed for?

Mr Atkinson: I would have to take that on notice, because that is an internal claim against RDA funds and RDAs are actually—

Answer:

RDAs in all states and territories except Victoria are incorporated bodies and therefore responsible for determining their own policies and procedures in line with their committee constitutions. The Department does not have information on how each RDA manages matters such as individual travel claims.

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Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport

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Question: 61

Topic: Freeman House Rebuild Project

Asked By: Senator WILLIAMS

Type of Question: RRA&T 59

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 July 2013

Number of pages: 1

Mr McCormick: With the project, Freeman House rebuild for the Regional Health, Education and Communities Project—my understanding is that it is currently in progress.... The funding agreement is with the proponent, Saint Vincent de Paul....

Senator WILLIAMS: That might be the first good news that we might hear for a while, but we still need to have it checked out that all the insurance is in order and the insurance company comes good.

Mr McCormick: We will follow that up with Saint Vincent de Paul.

Answer:

St Vincent de Paul has advised the Department that they have signed a contract with the Administrators to have the work completed by the same builder to allow the use of the same contractors.

They have also indicated that any necessary insurance claims will be managed by the contractor.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport

Budget Estimates 30 May 2013

Question: 62

Topic: Round 3 of RDAF

Asked By: Senator JOYCE

Type of Question: RRA&T 61

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 July 2013

Number of pages: 2

Senator JOYCE: So, every time he made a decision it was a decision that was following the process of recommendation from the advisory panel? It might be his right, but did he ever go and say, 'Regardless of the advisory panel I'm actually picking this project over here today'?

Mr Eccles: We would have to take that on notice and do a reconciliation....

Senator JOYCE: So would I. This is not about catching you. I would expect that would definitely be the case. I am naturally enough curious about the ones where it was the minister's discretion where they were and for what purpose. I am just being an open book.

Ms Beauchamp: We will take that on notice.

Answer:

As per the Regional Development Australia Fund (RDAF) Guidelines, the RDAF Advisory Panel considers the individual and relative merits of eligible applications. The RDAF Advisory Panel prioritises projects and provides independent recommendations to the Minister on projects to be funded.

The Minister considers a range of information, including advice provided by the RDAF Advisory Panel and makes decisions on projects to be funded, taking into account whether each project constitutes an efficient, effective, economical and ethical use of public money, as required by Regulation 9 of the *Financial Management and Accountability Regulations 1997*.

Decisions of the Minister are documented as required under Regulation 12 of the *Financial Management and Accountability Regulations 1997*.

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The Australian National Audit Office, in their “The Design and Conduct of the First Application Round for the Regional Development Australia Fund” Audit of RDAF Round One, noted that the decisions made were supported by appropriate documentation.

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Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport

Budget Estimates 30 May 2013

Question: 63

Topic: RDA Western Sydney

Asked By: Senator JOYCE

Type of Question: RRA&T 65

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 July 2013

Number of pages: 1

Senator JOYCE: You talked about agitation. Do you have correspondence from the Auburn City Council and the Bankstown City Council saying that they wanted an RDA?

Ms Beauchamp: I would have to take that on notice in terms of the actual documentation but it was certainly the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils that was calling for a separate regional authority.

Senator JOYCE: When did they call for that? Do you have any correspondence?

Ms Beauchamp: I do not know the exact dates. I will have to take that on notice.

Senator JOYCE: In what form did they call for it, in a letter or a phone call?

Ms Beauchamp: I am not sure. I cannot confirm with you exactly, but I will take it on notice, unless any of the other officers have that information.

Answer:

On 7 August 2012 Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils issued a press release entitled "Western Sydney needs its own RDA".

A copy of this media release can be accessed at:

www.wsroc.com.au/index.php/resources/wsroc-media-releases/151-western-sydney-needs-its-own-rda-wsroc

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport

Budget Estimates 30 May 2013

Question: 64

Topic: Grant for Dunalley Community Hall

Asked By: Senator ABETZ

Type of Question: RRA&T 68

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 July 2013

Number of pages: 1

Senator ABETZ: Can the department confirm that they have taken on notice to tell me the date on the design plan for the new enhanced hall? Thank you.

Answer:

The date of the design plan is 9 May 2013.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport

Budget Estimates 30 May 2013

Question: 65

Topic: RDA Committee Board Positions

Asked By: Senator JOYCE

Type of Question: RRA&T 72

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 July 2013

Number of pages: 1

Senator JOYCE: How many RDA board positions does the government anticipate filling before the election?

Mr Atkinson: I will just get that information, sorry.

Answer:

The Department is not in a position to respond to this question until an election date is set.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport

Budget Estimates 30 May 2013

Question: 66

Topic: Community Infrastructure Grants Projects in New England

Asked By: Senator JOYCE

Type of Question: RRA&T 73

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 July 2013

Number of pages: 1

Senator JOYCE: How many of these Community Infrastructure Grants programs, such as the Werris Creek hall, are in the seat of New England?

Mr Eccles: Can you repeat that?

Senator JOYCE: How many of these budget line approvals such as the Werris Creek men's shed are in the seat of New England?

Mr Eccles: We would need to take that on notice and check that out. We do not look at those things.

Answer:

There are three projects funded in the seat of New England:

Proponent	Project Name	Funding
New England Regional Art Museum	New England Regional Art Museum (NERAM) Air Conditioning Upgrade project	\$250,000
Inverell Shire Council	"Linking Together Centre" Building project	\$210,000
Werris Creek Community Shed Inc.	Werris Creek Community Shed project	\$80,000

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport

Budget Estimates 30 May 2013

Question: 67

Topic: Unity Housing Affordable Housing Project

Asked By: Senator EDWARDS

Type of Question: RRA&T 76

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 July 2013

Number of pages: 1

Senator EDWARDS: I am referring to the written question on notice 74 from the additional February estimates regarding the Unity Housing Affordable Housing Project. Have the negotiations with the supplier involved in the project been completed?

Ms Fleming: I will just check that material for you.

Answer:

The proponent has informed the Department that negotiations with the new suppliers have been completed.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport

Budget Estimates 30 May 2013

Question: 68

Topic: Unity Housing Affordable Housing Project Funding Agreement

Asked By: Senator EDWARDS

Type of Question: RRA&T 77

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 July 2013

Number of pages: 1

Senator EDWARDS: Subsequent to that, can the funding agreement between yourselves, the state government and the stakeholders be made publicly available, because it could not at the time?

Answer:

As the funding agreement is a two way agreement between the Department and Unity Housing, the Department sought agreement from Unity Housing.

The proponent has indicated that they are still negotiating with a number of third parties and would prefer to release the funding agreement after these negotiations are finalised.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport

Budget Estimates 30 May 2013

Question: 69

Topic: Unity Housing Affordable Housing Project - Catering for people with a disability

Asked By: Senator EDWARDS

Type of Question: RRA&T 77

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 July 2013

Number of pages: 1

Senator EDWARDS:Lastly on this topic, will any of the houses cater for people living with disabilities and, if not, what was the rationale for doing so?

Answer:

The proponent has informed the Department that this project was developed in partnership with regional communities over the past two years and is specifically targeted at addressing key worker housing to support rural/regional based organisations and communities. The prime focus of this project is on provision of affordable housing to low income working families. This housing is not specific to people with disability, but does not preclude workers with disabilities.

Unity Housing have informed the Department that they are aware of the need for housing solutions for the aged and persons with a disability and that they are pursuing options separately to address this.

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Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport

Budget Estimates 30 May 2013

Question: 70

Topic: Murray-Darling Basin Plan

Asked By: Senator JOYCE

Type of Question: RRA&T 80

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 July 2013

Number of pages: 1

Senator JOYCE: How did RMCG report back? Do you know of any towns that they actually went to or where they could say, "I was in Saint George and I did this work" or "I was in Dirranbandi" or "I was in Surat" or "I was in Mildura" or "I was in Shepparton"?

Ms Foster: We could provide you with where they went and, yes, they did go to those places and talk to people.

Answer:

The Department held weekly teleconferences with RMCG over the two stages of the Economic Diversification Project to review progress. At the conclusion of each stage of the Project RMCG provided a written report to the Department.

RMCG led consultations and the identification of economic diversification projects in the Victorian Basin regions and the Condamine-Balonne in Queensland. RMCG conducted on-site consultations with a range of government, community and industry stakeholders across both regions, including St George in Queensland, and Mildura and Shepparton in Victoria.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport

Budget Estimates 30 May 2013

Question: 71

Topic: MDB Projects in the St George Area

Asked By: Senator JOYCE

Type of Question: RRA&T 81

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 July 2013

Number of pages: 1

Senator JOYCE: So, they did not get other industries that are still in irrigation but less intensive in irrigation; there was no discussion there or about getting the feedlotting industry going or getting the seed investment to a feedlot or seed investment into a new kangaroo works? These are all big employers and their industries are on the ground already.

Ms Foster: I am afraid it is just a bit too long since I have looked at these things. We would have to take on notice the detail.

Answer:

In the St George Area the consultants (RMCG) engaged with stakeholders including: Balonne Shire Council; Waroo Balonne Landcare; St George and District Fishing and Restocking Club Inc; and St George Elders Group. These stakeholders and others across the Queensland part of the Murray Darling Basin identified a range of projects across the agricultural, tourism and mining industries that could support economic diversification in that area. These are the sorts of projects that could be considered when the program commences in Queensland once the Queensland Government signs the Intergovernmental Agreement on the implementation of the Murray Darling Basin Plan. The Department is continuing to consult with Queensland Government officials on implementation arrangements for the program.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport

Budget Estimates 30 May 2013

Question: 72

Topic: ONA Office Budgets

Asked By: Senator MACDONALD

Type of Question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 July 2013

Number of pages: 1

In answer to questions asked at previous estimates (Additional Estimates February 2013 Answers to Questions on Notice 71 (written question) and Additional Estimates February 2013 Answers to Questions on Notice 72 (written question)) the department indicated that while it works co-operatively with other departments, it did not administer these inter-departmental projects.

1. How many person hours were devoted to these inter-departmental projects in 2012-13?
2. What was the cost to the department of providing this co-operation and assistance?
3. Is ONA's role in these co-operative arrangements a deployment role or an administrative role?

Answer:

The Office of Northern Australia (ONA) does not deploy specific staff to work on inter-departmental projects. ONA participates on project steering committees such as the Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry's Northern Australia Beef Industry Indigenous Pastoral project, it provides advice on the development of work such as the joint Australian and Chinese government report *Feeding the Future – A Joint Australia-China Report on Strengthening Investment and Technological Cooperation in Agriculture to Enhance Food Security* which focused on investment opportunities in agriculture and technological cooperation in northern Australia and China. ONA also works cooperatively on the development of other departments programs and projects that are relevant to northern Australia.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport

Budget Estimates 30 May 2013

Question: 73

Topic: Location of ONA offices

Asked By: Senator MACDONALD

Type of Question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 July 2013

Number of pages: 3

In answer to previous estimates questions (Additional Estimates February 2013 Answers to Questions on Notice 71 (written question), Supplementary Estimates October 2012 Answers to Questions on Notice 15 (written question), Additional Estimates February 2013 Answers to Questions on Notice 7(written question)) the department has indicated that ONA offices are currently located in Canberra, Townsville, Darwin, Kununurra and Perth.

1. The staffing levels in these offices are low (7, 5, 1, 1, and 3 persons respectively). Do these offices lease their own premises or are they located within the premises of other departments?
2. Which departments?
3. How is the division of rent calculated?
4. How is the division of outgoings calculated?
5. The Department quoted the cost of maintaining the Townsville office (excluding employee costs) at \$194,107.00, and the Darwin Office at \$24,612.00. What is the cost of running all the offices?
6. In Additional Estimates February 2013 Answers to Questions on Notice 71, you state there is only one (1) departmental employee in Darwin.

In Supplementary Estimates October 2012 Answers to Questions on Notice 15, you state that the operation cost of this office (excluding employee expenses) was \$24,612.00 in 2011-12.

In Additional Estimates February 2013 Answers to Questions on Notice 7, you state that this Darwin-based employee was re-located from a DoIT location that cost \$11663.00 per annum to a FaHCSIA location that cost \$20,247.00 per annum.

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- a. If, as was stated in Additional Estimates February 2013 Answers to Questions on Notice 7, a relocation is taking place FROM the \$11663.00 per annum DoIT location, then how can the cost in 2011-12 have been \$24,612.00?
Please clarify these figures.

Answer:

1. The Departmental officer located in Darwin is collocated with the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA). The officer located in Kununurra works from home. The remaining ONA & West branch staff located in Townsville, Perth and Canberra are accommodated in premises leased by the Department.
2. See 1 above.
3. In Darwin the Department pays a flat rate of \$20,247 per staff member which includes all office amenities, ICT infrastructure and support.
4. See 3 above.
5. The Department does not quantify office costs by Program or Division; costs in Perth and Canberra are not calculated separately, therefore we are unable to provide a cost of running all the offices.
6. The Department currently has six staff located in Darwin from the Regional Development, Arts and Sports areas. For operational reasons staff are accommodated in one location where possible. The annual charge for shared office accommodation in FaHCSIA's Darwin office is \$20,247 per person. Co-locating all the Department's Darwin staff in FaHCSIA's Darwin office was considered the most appropriate option when considering:
 - five staff members (from the Arts and Sports areas) were already located in the FaHCSIA office and the single staff member from the Regional Development area that was located in the Department of Infrastructure and Transport (DoIT) office retired in 2012. Locating the new officer responsible for functions relating to ONA in the FaHCSIA office would cause minimum disruption;

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- the annual lease charge for accommodation in the DoIT office did not include ongoing access to business systems, communications and ICT support; and
- the business systems used by Arts and Sports staff were not available in the DoIT office. Additional infrastructure and security costs would have been incurred to provide access and support for business, communications and ICT systems if the five Arts and Sports staff were to be moved into the DoIT location.

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Question: 74

Topic: Overheads for NW/ONA Branch

Asked By: Senator MACDONALD

Type of Question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 July 2013

Number of pages: 1

In answer to previous estimates questions (Additional Estimates February 2013 Answers to Questions on Notice 71 (written question)) the department has indicated that the combined budget of the Northwest Australia and Office of Northern Australia (NW&ONA) branch of the Department was \$2,366,114 “excluding overheads”.

1. What were the total overheads for 2011-12?
2. What are the total overheads for 2012-13?
3. What percentage of the overhead is related to human resources?
4. What percentage of the overhead is related to the lease, maintenance and operation of NW&ONA offices?
5. Is \$2,366,114.00 the total amount available to the department to deploy its programming for a financial year?

Answer:

Organisational costs are managed centrally by the Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport and are not internally service charged to functions within the Department.

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Question: 75

Topic: Etheridge Shire RDAF Application

Asked By: Senator MACDONALD

Type of Question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 July 2013

Number of pages: 1

1. Can the department provide any information on the progress of the Etheridge Shire RDAF application for assistance with works on the Hann Highway?
2. Has Etheridge Shire Council's full application been received and processed?

Answer:

1. The Etheridge Shire Council's application was assessed against the Guidelines for Round Four of RDAF, but was not selected for funding by the Minister.
2. The application was received by the due date and has been processed.

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Question: 76

Topic: Revised Evidentiary Standards - NDRRA

Asked By: Senator MACDONALD

Type of Question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 July 2013

Number of pages: 2

The National Disaster Recovery Taskforce was created under the Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport portfolio in response to damage caused by extreme weather events in 2010-11.

1. What role has The National Disaster Recovery Taskforce played in the development of the revised evidentiary standards for establishing eligibility criteria?
2. Has The National Disaster Recovery Taskforce received submissions from Local Government Authorities regarding compliance standards?
3. Have the revised evidentiary standards for National Disaster Reconstruction and Recovery Grants been backdated?
4. Can the Department advise why the Commonwealth has not acquitted in excess of \$700 million in relief and recovery funding that has already been provided out of the Queensland Government treasury?

Answer:

1. Administration of the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements ('NDRRA') is the responsibility of Emergency Management Australia ('EMA'), within the Attorney-General's Department. The National Disaster Recovery Taskforce regularly consults with EMA on issues that affect the NDRRA.

The NDRRA contains requirements for a state government to submit a claim for reimbursement. These include the requirement for a state government to provide an audited financial statement that is certified by the auditor-general of that state. This is a long standing requirement under the NDRRA and common practice for the expenditure of public monies.

The NDRRA does not specify "evidentiary standards" for receiving an audit statement. This is properly a matter for the auditor-general in the relevant state.

2. No.

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3. There are no “revised evidentiary standards” being implemented by the Commonwealth under the NDRRA.
4. The Commonwealth Government has provided the Queensland Government with \$4.2 billion in advance payments for expected liabilities arising from the 2010-11 natural disasters and a further \$1.1 billion to cover costs incurred in the recovery from natural disasters that occurred prior to 2010-11. To acquit this funding, the Queensland Government is required to submit an audited financial statement detailing its expenditure on recovery activities under the NDRRA. The Queensland Auditor General is generally responsible for conducting the audit for the purpose of fulfilling the requirements of the NDRRA.

The Queensland Auditor-General issued a qualified statement on approximately \$967 million in QLD expenditure, which equates to an approximate Commonwealth liability of \$725 million. The expenditure occurred between 2009 and 2012 and relates to disaster events prior to 2011 and the creation of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority. The Auditor General advised in the audit report that “there was a lack of sufficient and appropriate audit evidence to support the veracity of claims to meet the eligibility measures in accordance with the provisions of the [NDRRA]”. The Commonwealth has advised the Queensland Government that it requires an unqualified assessment of the expenditure from the Queensland Auditor-General before it may be acquitted

The Queensland Government has advised the Commonwealth that it is working with the Queensland Auditor-General to resolve this issue.

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Question: 77

Topic: Rural / Regional and Farming Grants - NDRRA

Asked By: Senator MACDONALD

Type of Question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 July 2013

Number of pages: 3

1. What is Rockhampton Regional Council's current Category declaration under the NDRRA? Please clarify the details of all categories.
2. Does this apply to the whole council area, or only part of it?
3. Are there any plans to extend this zone?
4. Are primary producers in the Rockhampton area eligible for the category C \$25,000 recovery grants for repairs and clean-up costs? If not, why?
5. Are small-to-medium enterprises in the Rockhampton area eligible for the category C \$25,000 recovery grants for repairs and clean-up costs? If not, why?
6. What is the evidentiary standard with which these entities must comply to be deemed eligible for finding/grants?
7. What NDRRA grants have been made available to the Banana Shire and residents of that Shire? What applications have been made by the council or individuals in that Shire? If no grants have been made, what is the reason?

Answer:

1. Emergency Management Australia ('EMA') has advised that as at 9 July 2013, the following categories of assistance under the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements ('NDRRA') are available across the Rockhampton Regional Council:
 - Category A: Personal hardship and distress assistance;
 - Category A: Essential services and safety reconnection scheme grants;
 - Category A/B: Counter disaster operations;
 - Category B: Restoration of essential public assets;

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- Category B: Concessional loans and freight subsidies for primary producers; and
- Category B: Concessional loans for small businesses.
- Category C: Clean-up and recovery grants of up to \$25,000 for affected primary producers; and
- Category D: Loans and grants of up to \$650,000 (including a grant of up to \$50,000) for affected primary producers and businesses.

This is in addition to Rockhampton receiving substantial reconstruction assistance through the Queensland Reconstruction Authority ('QRA'). QRA has approved reconstruction projects in the Rockhampton Regional Council from damage caused by events between 2010-13 to the value of \$45.9 million, as at 1 July 2013, and \$900,000 was provided under Category D of the NDRRA to restore the Rockhampton Airport following damage caused by Tropical Cyclone Yasi.

2. On 9 July 2013, the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments jointly announced to extend the cleanup and recovery grants under Category C of the NDRRA to primary producers across the entire Rockhampton local government area.

Cleanup and recovery grants have been approved to 19 primary producers and small businesses, to the value of \$119,000, as at 11 July 2013.

3. Please refer to the response provided for question two.
4. Yes, affected primary producers located within Rockhampton Regional Council are eligible for the \$25,000 cleanup and recovery grants.
5. No. The Queensland Government has not requested to activate the grants for small businesses.
6. QRAA is responsible for assessing the eligibility of applications for grants assistance under the NDRRA. To be eligible for the grant, applicants must:
 - own (whether as sole owner, in partnership or as a private company) a small business;

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- have been engaged in their small business, in the prescribed Tropical Cyclone Oswald and Associated Rainfall and Flooding, 21 - 29 January 2013 disaster area and have suffered direct damage as a result of the event;
- intend to re-establish their small business enterprise; and
- be responsible for meeting the costs they are claiming.

Further criteria apply and are included in the Guidelines found on QRAA's website: www.qraa.qld.gov.au/current-programs/Disaster-recovery.

7. EMA has advised that as at 25 June 2013, the following NDRRA grants are available across Banana Shire Council:

- Category A: Personal hardship and distress assistance; and
- Category A: Essential services and safety reconnection scheme grants.

EMA has advised that as at 25 June 2013, the following categories are available for a targeted area of Banana Shire Council:

- Category C: Clean-up and recovery grants of up to \$25,000 for affected primary producers; and
- Category D: Loans and grants of up to \$650,000 (including a grant of up to \$50,000) are available for affected primary producers and businesses.

Cleanup and recovery grants have been approved to 170 primary producers, to the value of \$1.2 million, as at 11 July 2013.

These grants are in addition to the other categories of NDRRA assistance available.

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Question: 78

Topic: Cardwell Recovery Funding - NDRRA

Asked By: Senator MACDONALD

Type of Question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 July 2013

Number of pages: 2

1. How much funding has been committed to infrastructure remediation in the Cardwell region of Queensland following Cyclone Yasi and in 2013 Cyclone Oswald?
2. How much funding has been committed to local industry support and recovery initiatives in the Cardwell region of Queensland following Cyclone Yasi and in 2013 Cyclone Oswald?
3. How much funding has been committed to employment support, retention and recovery initiatives in the Cardwell region of Queensland following Cyclone Yasi and in 2013 Cyclone Oswald?
4. How much funding has been committed across these three areas:
 - a. infrastructure remediation;
 - b. local industry support and recovery; and
 - c. employment support, retention and recovery, under the National Regional Disaster Recovery programs?

Answer:

1. The Queensland Reconstruction Authority has approved reconstruction projects in the Cassowary Coast from damage caused between 2010-13 to the value of \$192.8 million at 1 July 2013.
2. Following Tropical Cyclone Yasi in 2011, businesses and primary producers in the Cassowary Coast have received \$20.3 million in concessional loans, \$21.7 million in clean-up and recovery grants and \$23.3 million in wage assistance. Individuals received \$8 million under the Disaster Income Recovery Subsidy ('DIRS').

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The Queensland Government did not request industry support measures under the NDRRA, wage assistance or DIRS for the Cassowary Coast following ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald.

3. Please refer to the wage assistance and DIRS information provided for question 2.

4.

a. The total damage estimate for flooding and cyclone events between November 2010 and January 2013 in Queensland is \$11.7 billion, of which \$5.7 billion will reconstruct state owned roads and \$4.5 billion will reconstruction local government assets. The Commonwealth will fund up to 75 per cent of the reconstruction costs, which is approximately \$8.8 billion.

b. Following ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald, businesses and primary producers received \$11.7 million in concessional loans (at 11 July 2013) and \$31.3 million in clean-up and recovery grants (at 11 July 2013). Individuals received \$1.3 million under the DIRS (7 July 2013).

The Commonwealth announced the Queensland Floods Support Package on 28 February 2013. As part of that package, \$2 million has been allocated to the Small Business Advisory Service, \$750,000 was allocated to fund Industry Recovery Officers within agricultural organisations and \$750,000 was allocated to the Rural Financial Counselling Service.

c. Please refer to the DIRS information provided for question 4b.

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Question: 79

Topic: Regional and Rural Research and Development Grants

Asked By: Senator JOYCE

Type of Question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 July 2013

Number of pages: 1

Will there be a round of regional and rural research and Development Grants during 2012-13?

If yes, when will the Guidelines be made available?

If not, why not?

Answer:

On 22 October 2012, Senator the Hon Penny Wong, Minister for Finance and Deregulation, announced that funding for the Regional and Rural Research and Development Grants program for 2012-13 was being redirected to other government priorities as part of the review of uncommitted grants funding.

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Question: 80

Topic: Round Four RDAF Expression of Interest

Asked By: Senator NASH

Type of Question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 26 July 2013

Number of pages: 1

1. In regards to Dunn Lewis Expression of Interest for the Regional Development Fund Round Four, why was their Expression of Interest not selected to proceed to submit a full application?
2. Which part of the guidelines did the Dunn Lewis Foundation not meet?
3. Has the Dunn Lewis Foundation applied for funding through the Regional Development Australia Fund before through rounds 1, 2 and 3?
4. Was the Dunn Lewis Foundation Expression of Interest or application denied on that occasion as well?

Answer:

1. Under Round Four of the Regional Development Australia Fund (RDAF), the Regional Development Australia (RDA) South Coast did not select the 'Dunn Lewis Centre, Stage 2' project's Expression of Interest (EOI) to proceed to full application. The RDA South Coast indicated that the EOI did not rate as highly as other projects for long term regional economic benefit.
2. As the 'Dunn Lewis Centre, Stage 2' project was not selected to proceed to full application, the Department did not undertake an assessment against selection criteria in the Round Four Guidelines.
3. & 4.

The Dunn & Lewis Youth Foundation Limited submitted an application under RDAF Round One for their 'Construction of Stage 2 – Dunn & Lewis Centre in Ulladulla' project, which was ineligible and not selected for funding.

The Dunn & Lewis Youth Development Foundation Limited submitted an EOI under RDAF Round Two for their 'Dunn Lewis Centre' project. RDA South Coast selected the project as a priority and this project proceeded to full application, but was not selected for funding.

The Dunn & Lewis Youth Development Foundation Limited did not submit an EOI under RDAF Round Three.