

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2006

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question No: Whole of Department 01 & 02

Division/Agency: Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Portfolio.

Topic: Annual Reporting

Hansard Page: Written Question

Senator Ludwig asked:

With regard to each agencies (and the department itself) that fall inside the department's portfolio, could the department indicate

What date the agency's 2005-06 Annual Report was tabled before parliament?

If the annual report was not tabled by 31 October 2006, could the department indicate:

- a. When the report was tabled, or if it remains untabled what date the report is expected to be tabled by.
- b. Whether the agency's own legislation provides an alternative timeframe for its annual report. If so, could the department provide:
 - i. A description and reference to the relevant provision and legislation.
 - ii. An explanation of why the agency cannot meet the general timeframe set out in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet's Requirements for Annual Reports, and so requires an alternative timeframe?
- c. Whether the agency was granted an extension under section subsections 34C(4) - (7) of the Acts Interpretation Act 1901? If so, could the department provide:
 - i. The date for finalizing the report as set out in the extension.
 - ii. The reason given for granting the extension.
 - iii. The date that the Minister tabled in Parliament a statement explaining why an extension was granted.
 - iv. A copy of the Minister's statement.
- d. Where the agency's legislation doesn't provide for an alternative timeframe (as per question b) nor was the agency granted an extension (as per question c) could the department provide:
 - i. Explanation for why the Annual Report was tabled outside the timeframe set by DPM&C despite there being no provision alternative timeframe set out in the agency's legislation nor there being any formal extension granted.
 - ii. Details of any other arrangement in place for the tabling of the agency's Annual Report

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Answer:

The 2005-06 Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry was tabled on 27 October 2006.

An additional twelve annual reports are prepared and tabled from within the portfolio in accordance with both their enabling legislation as well as Section 9 of the *Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997* and Section 34C (3) of the *Acts Interpretation Act 1901*. Information on tabling dates for eleven of those bodies follows.

- The 2005-06 Australian Fisheries Management Authority Annual Report was tabled on 8 November 2006.
- The 2005-06 Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority Annual Report was tabled on 8 November 2006.
- The 2005-06 Australian Wine and Brandy Corporation Annual Report was tabled on 18 October 2006.
- The 2005-06 Cotton Research and Development Corporation Annual Report was tabled on 7 November 2006.
- The 2005-06 Fisheries Research and Development Corporation Annual Report was tabled on 7 November 2006.
- The 2005-06 Forest and Wood Products Research and Development Corporation Annual Report was tabled on 7 November 2006.
- The 2005-06 Grains Research and Development Corporation Annual Report was on 27 October 2006.
- The 2005-06 Grape and Wine Research and Development Corporation Annual report was tabled on 7 November 2006.
- The 2005-06 Land and Water Australia Annual Report was tabled on 7 November 2006.
- The 2005-06 Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation Annual Report was tabled on 7 November 2006.
- The 2005-06 Sugar Research and Development Annual Report was tabled on 7 November 2006.

These eleven portfolio agencies complied with their legislative requirements to submit their annual report to the Minister by 15 October 2006. The reports were tabled in Parliament in a timely manner meeting the legislative requirements of the *Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997*.

The 2005-06 Wheat Export Authority Annual Report will be tabled in February 2007. The reporting period for the Wheat Export Authority is different as the Authority's financial year runs from October to September.

No agency sought an extension of time under 34C(4) - (7) of the *Acts Interpretation Act 1901* as it was not required.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2006

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question No: Whole of Department 03

Division/Agency: Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Portfolio.

Topic: Possible Parliamentary Questions

Hansard Page: Written question.

Senator Ludwig asked:

With regard to the preparation of Possible Parliament Questions briefs or other such documents intended to brief Minister's on an issue specifically for Question Time, could the department/agency provide:

- a. The number of such briefs prepared in each of the last three financial years (2003-04, 2004-05, 2005-06).
- b. The number of staff who are responsible for coordinating such briefs and the salary level they are engaged at.
- c. The name of internal unit/team that those staff belong to and a description of its other responsibilities.
- d. 4. The total budget associated with the unit/team referred to in response to part 3

Answer:

- a) The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry reports on the numbers of briefs prepared for its portfolio Ministers as part of its Annual Report. Due to the collation methods used, it is not possible to separate the number of question time briefs from the number of total briefs prepared.

The total numbers of briefs prepared are as follows:

- 2003/04 – 3,430
- 2004/05 – 3,326
- 2004/06 – 3,649

- b) Co-ordination processes for Question Time Briefs are overseen by officers within the Department's Parliamentary Liaison Service (PLS). Generally, officers responsible for the co-ordination of briefs are at the DAFF Band 1 Level 4 range with a salary range of \$49,222 to \$53,446. Various officers within the Department's line areas are responsible for the preparation and approval of Question Time Briefs.
- c) & d) The PLS provides advice, coordination and support services for the Department's contact with portfolio Ministers and Parliamentary Secretary. Some administrative support services are also provided. Specific tasks include the co-ordination and quality control of Ministerial correspondence and Ministerial Minutes; coordination of Briefs and Speeches, Questions on Notice, Question Time Briefs, Senate Estimates co-ordination, Cabinet, Legislation and Executive Council, Tabling processes and Courier Services. The annual budget of the PLS is \$1,786,004.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question No: Whole of Department 04

Division/Agency: Management Services

Topic: Legal Services Expenditure

Hansard Page: Written Question

Senator Ludwig asked:

What sum did the department spend during 2005-2006 on external

(a) barristers, and,

(b) solicitors (including private firms, the Australian Government Solicitor and any others)?

Answer:

(a) The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (the Department) spent \$418,194.92 on external barristers during 2005-2006.

(b) The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (the Department) spent \$5,633,514.22 on external solicitors during 2005-2006.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2006

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question No: Whole of Department 05

Division/Agency: Management Services

Topic: Legal Services Expenditure

Hansard Page: Written Question

Senator Ludwig asked:

What sum did the department spend on internal legal services?

Answer:

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (the Department) did not spend anything on internal legal services in 2005-2006.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2006

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question No: Whole of Department 06

Division/Agency: Management Services

Topic: Legal Services Expenditure

Hansard Page: Written Question

Senator Ludwig asked:

What is the department's projected expenditure on legal services for 2006-2007?

Answer:

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (the Department) projected expenditure on legal services for 2006-2007 is \$5,500,000.

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Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2006

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question No: Whole of Department 07

Division/Agency: Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Portfolio.

Topic: Internal Audit Matters notified to Minister in the last year

Hansard Page: Written Question

Senator O'Brien asked:

How many particularly significant matters would have been drawn to the attention of the minister in the last year?

Answer:

No significant matters resulting from internal audit findings were drawn to the Minister's attention in the last year.

Internal and external audit findings and their associated recommendations routinely are dealt with through management actions that are reported to and regularly monitored by the Departmental Audit Committee. Biosecurity Australia has its own Audit Committee that is charged with similar functions.