

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Estimates October 2006

Transport and Regional Services

Question No: REGS 01

Division/Agency: Regional Services

Topic: Funding for Mackay Riverside Aquatic Park

Hansard Page: p.126 (30/10/2006)

Senator O'Brien asked:

Senator O'BRIEN—In relation to the Mackay Riverside Aquatic Park, the project had the full support of the local council, State Government and local community, with over 70 per cent of funds already committed. Other aquatic facilities, including the one at Nanango, have required 60 per cent of funds from Government. Why not fund this project?

Ms McNally—I do not have the specific details on that project. I would have to take that on notice.

Answer:

This project was not approved for *Regional Partnerships* funding as the application did not meet the programme's assessment criteria.

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Question No: REGS 02

Division/Agency: Regional Services

Topic: Bacchus Marsh Equine Training Centre

Hansard Page: 126 (30/10/06)

Senator Kerry O'Brien asked:

Senator O'BRIEN—What was the reason for not providing *Regional Partnerships* funds to the Bacchus Marsh Equine Training Centre?

Ms McNally—I do not have individual reasons for the range of projects that were not approved in the last financial year. I would have to take all of those questions on notice.

Senator O'BRIEN—I would appreciate, on notice, if you could give us the full detail for that.

Answer:

Regional Partnerships funding was not provided as the project failed to meet the Outcomes and Partnerships and Support assessment criteria of the programme.

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Question No: REGS 03

Division/Agency: Regional Services

Topic: Shark Lake Industrial Park

Hansard Page: 126 (30/10/06)

Senator Kerry O'Brien asked:

Senator O'BRIEN—And the reason for the decision not to provide *Regional Partnerships* funds for the Shark Lake Industrial Park in Esperance?

Ms McNally—Yes.

Answer:

Regional Partnerships funding was not provided as the project failed to meet the Outcomes and Partnerships and Support assessment criteria of the programme.

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Question No: REGS 04

Division/Agency: Regional Services

Topic: New Guidelines and Better Practices Grants Guide

Hansard Page: 127 (30/10/2006)

Senator O'BRIEN asked:

Senator O'BRIEN—On notice, can you tell us what the differences are between the processes and the better practices grants guide?

Ms McNally—I could not go into their guidelines in detail, but essentially the guidelines changed in respect of setting out more clearly what the assessment criteria are, so there are now seven defined assessment criteria. They clarified the role of the ACCs and the regional officers of the Department and the national office. The guidelines also clarified some of the terminology, such as what was meant by 'competitive neutrality' and 'cost shifting'. The guidelines also provided clarification about opportunities for a process review, if applicants chose to query the reason they were not given a project.

Answer:

The ANAO *Administration of Grants Better Practice Guide* was used as guidance for the planning, development and implementation of the *Regional Partnerships* programme including the revised guidelines.

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Question No: REGS 05

Division/Agency: Regional Services

Topic: Eligibility of ACT Government for Grants

Hansard Page: 127 (30/10/06)

Senator O'Brien asked:

Senator O'BRIEN—Is the ACT Government now eligible for Regional Partnerships grants?

Ms McNally—There is no specific reference to the ACT Government in the guidelines, but we have written to the ACT Government clarifying their eligibility and I am happy to provide that information to you.

Answer:

The *Regional Partnerships* guidelines say that Territory Governments are eligible for funding, except where funding is sought for projects that are wholly Territory Government responsibilities.

A letter clarifying the eligibility of the ACT Government for *Regional Partnerships* funding, which was sent to Mr Jon Stanhope MLA from the Hon Warren Truss MP, is **attached**.

[REGS 05 attachment]

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Question: REGS 06

Division/Agency: Regional Services
Topic: ACC Advice on Applications
Hansard Page: 127 (30/10/2006)

Senator O'Brien asked:

Senator O'BRIEN—When the ACC provides the advice, are the applicants told what that advice is on request?

Ms McNally—They could be, but I am not aware of any actual requests myself. I could look into that for you.

Answer:

No. The Department provides unsuccessful applicants with advice on the reasons their projects did not meet the program's criteria, including the extent of support for the project. The Government considers that ACCs should have the ability to provide frank and honest advice concerning the relative priority of projects.

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Question No: REGS 07

Division/Agency: Regional Services
Topic: ACC Advice on Applications
Hansard Page: 130 (30/10/06)

Senator Nash asked:

Senator NASH—Did that [the recent application for Regional Medical Infrastructure Funding] go through an ACC?

Ms McNally—I would have to get back to you on that level of detail. Most of the projects do go through the Area Consultative Committee. There are a range of reasons as to why they are sometimes withdrawn. Sometimes they get advice from the Area Consultative Committees that they are probably not going to be suitable, but they decide to have a go anyway. I am not clear that that one is in that category, but that does happen.

Answer:

Yes. However, the ACC was not involved in the development of the application.

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Question No: REGS 08

Division/Agency: Regional Services

Topic: Regional Partnerships Applications

Hansard Page: 131 (30/10/2006)

Senator Heffernan asked:

CHAIR—Is there one for Junee? [With respect to applications under the Rural Medical Infrastructure Fund].

Ms McNally—I will have to check.

Answer:

No *Rural Medical Infrastructure Fund* project has been funded in Junee. No application has been received.

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Question No: REGS 09

Division: Regional Services

Topic: Appointments to ACCs

Hansard Page: p.131 (date 30/10/06)

Senator O'Brien asked:

Senator O'BRIEN—Are there criteria available that are used in the making of the appointments?

Ms Page—There are criteria.

Ms McNally—We could make that information available for you.

Answer:

The Ministerial Committee has agreed to the following criteria:

- high level skill and knowledge in an area of regional development or a related field;
- sound communication and interpersonal skills, and the ability to effectively present community views and interests;
- high level understanding of economic, social and environmental issues within the region;
- financial management, governance and leadership skills; and
- ability to represent the diversity of the region, including gender.

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Question No: REGS 10

Division: Regional Services

Topic: Funding Increases for ACCs

Hansard Page: p.132 (30/10/06)

Senator O'Brien asked:

Senator O'BRIEN—What was the average increase for the 48 ACCs?

Ms Gosling—I would have to take that on notice. I would not know the average.

Answer:

The average increase in Operation Funding for 2006-07 for the 48 ACCs is 3.5 per cent.