

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 01

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Caring for our Country Open Grants

Hansard Page: 126 (20/10/08)

Senator Siewert asked:

Senator SIEWERT—How many projects did you get?

Mr Thompson—We received over 1,200 applications, Senator.

Senator SIEWERT—For how much?

Mr Thompson—They were worth over \$280 million.

Senator SIEWERT—And are we talking about a grants program of \$30 million?

Mr Thompson—\$25 million.

Senator SIEWERT—\$25 million. Who was on the panel?

Mr Thompson—I do not have the names of the people who were on there. We could take that on notice.

Senator SIEWERT—Could you provide that on notice?

Answer:

The Open Grants assessment process involved three panels. The panel of *Internal Departmental Assessors* consisted of staff from the Australian Government Land and Coasts (AGLC) team. The *Senior Executive Evaluation Panel* consisted of the Executive of the AGLC team. The *Independent Advisory Panel* consisted of six members endorsed by Ministers, including:

- Roger Wickes (Chair) - Former Executive Director, NRM, SA Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation
- Dr Jackie Huggins - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit, University of Queensland
- Jim Forwood - Consultant and member of Lake Eyre Basin Community Advisory Committee
- Dr Ronnie Harding - Assistant Commissioner – NSW NRC, Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientist, University of NSW
- Coral Love - National Landcare Facilitator, Rural Resources Group P/L
- Dr Belinda Robson - Senior Lecturer in Aquatic Ecology, Deakin University.

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Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 02

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Caring for our Country Open Grants

Hansard Page: 127 (20/10/08)

Senator Siewert asked:

Senator SIEWERT—The 15 per cent administration limit that was, as I recall, on all projects, has that been maintained?

Mr Thompson—I am not familiar with a 15 per cent administration limit. I would have to check whether there was or not.

Dr O’Connell—Senator, I think that is for the regional projects but Mr Shaw might be able to answer.

Mr Shaw—Yes, Senator. I think you might be referring to the regional funding—the 60 per cent and the 15 per cent? I do not believe there is a 15 per cent administration on the open grants.

Senator SIEWERT—That is interesting because that is what I have been told very clearly.

Mr Shaw—I am not aware of it.

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

Answer:

There was no allocation or limit set for the administration costs of proposals seeking funding through the Caring for our Country Open Grants. Applicants were expected to factor in *reasonable administration expenses* into their budget for the delivery of the project. All costs indicated within the project budget were to be reasonable and justified and this was considered as part of the assessment process. The *Open Grants 2008-09 Frequently Asked Questions* document included this information:

<http://www.nrm.gov.au/funding/open-faq.html>

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 03

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Employment in NRM Regions

Hansard Page: 128 (20/10/08)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—But just to follow on with Senator Siewert: it will be a matter for the committee, but I would be recommending that we get the department and the environment department back to go through these in some more issue. I see in the answer you gave me to questions at last estimates about the number of jobs lost. The thing that sticks out is you say you are not a job employment counter so you did not know. But, Mr Thompson, you would have heard or been made aware of the last person who gave evidence the other day who, of her knowledge down in the Gippsland, could name ten people who had lost their jobs in the NRM area in the last few months because of uncertainty of funding. I really ask, and put on notice because I do not think I asked this in the other one, if you can give us an indication of how many people you are aware of who have lost their jobs since 1 July 2008. I see you gave me some figures in answers previously which said there were more people employed on 7 May 2008 than there were on 20 November 2007. That just cannot be right. It just cannot be right.

Mr Thompson—Senator, those numbers that we provided you earlier this year were numbers provided to us by the regional bodies themselves or the state governments on behalf of the regional bodies. We do not employ these people, so we have to rely on the advice we receive from the bodies that employ them, and they were the numbers that they provided to us. We do not regularly update it, but if you want us to update those numbers we can.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—I would. But could you please try to get a little more—and I am not suggesting you are being dishonest; I appreciate you are just repeating—but could you get from the people that are giving them to you some honesty in the figures? All of the anecdotal evidence shows that every NRM body, with the exception of those along the Barrier Reef, have been losing staff because of lack of guaranteed funding.

Answer:

In September a response was provided to this question.

20 Nov 2007 a total of 1891.32 full time equivalent positions were employed; and
7 May 2008 a total of 1882.58 full time equivalent positions were employed.

The question was asked again in October, not all regional bodies were able to supply the employment figures within our timeframe. Therefore the interim figures are:

1 July 2008 a total of 2130.7 full time equivalent positions were employed; and
20 October 2008 a total of 2055.1 full time equivalent positions were employed.

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 03 (continued)

Both permanent employees and non-ongoing contractors are included in these totals. We will supply you with a final total when all the regional bodies figures have been made available.

The Australian Government is not responsible for monitoring employment data for regional bodies as many are state statutory bodies and others are independent incorporated bodies. This information has been provided to us by state and regional organisations and cannot be verified.

The Australian Government is not the only source of funds used to employ regional staff. Regional NRM bodies also receive significant resources from state and territory governments as well as from private corporations and philanthropic bodies. Variations in the size of contributions from these other sources will vary over time and will also impact on regional staffing levels. It is not possible for the Australian Government to accurately project future employment by regional bodies.

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 04

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Reef Rescue

Hansard Page: 128 (20/10/08)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD - What I just want to ask this department is, what work are you doing as part of the Reef Rescue package, a Labor Party pre-election policy which they are implementing with \$200 million? A lot of that will involve interaction with the sugar industry, the banana industry, the cattle industry, grazing industry up along the Barrier Reef. Have you as a department done work on that? Having asked the question, I do not think I can allow the time for the answer, so perhaps you will just have to take that on notice and give it to me in writing.

Mr Thompson—We can take it on notice.

Answer:

The \$200 million Australian Government Reef Rescue initiative will provide funding for water quality grants to build partnerships between key stakeholders, including between traditional owners and reef managers, develop Traditional Use of Marine Resource Agreements, monitor the reef lagoon and its catchment and fund priority research projects required to support and enhance Reef Rescue outcomes.

On 23 October 2008, following negotiations with regional bodies, the Regional Groups Collective, CaneGrowers, AgForce, Growcom, Queensland Dairy Organisation, Cotton Australia, Queensland Farmers Federation and the Queensland Government, the Australian Government announced a package of proposals for 2008-09 totalling \$23 million.

Delivery of Reef Rescue in the region will capitalise on the strong partnerships forged between regions and industry to engage regional farmers in a number of projects to improve water quality. These projects include:

- Providing incentives to farmers to adopt improved technologies such as GPS guided controlled-traffic farming, a soil conservation farming method that reduces compaction and erosion;
- Managing and re-vegetating cane drains to slow the movement of water to allow for the removal of excess nutrients and sediments;
- machinery conversions that provide precision spraying capabilities resulting in the more efficient use of fertilisers and herbicides in the paddock; and
- repairing chronic low ground cover in grazed areas to reduce erosion.

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 04 (continued)

This year, Reef Rescue will also fund the development of a reef wide integrated monitoring and reporting framework and ongoing monitoring and research projects that aim to improve fertiliser application in the sugar cane industry. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority will receive up to \$2 million to implement the Indigenous Partnerships component of Reef Rescue.

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 05

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Torres Strait Commercial Line Fishery Reallocation

Hansard Page: 130 (20/10/2008)

Senator Colbeck asked:

Senator COLBECK—The Torres Strait Commercial Line Fishery Reallocation, they are effectively buying out licences and reallocating them back to the Indigenous and moving them out further?

Mr Hurry—That has happened and they are now being moved back to the commercial sector for income.

As far as I am aware, that process has been completed and leasing has now occurred in both the mackerel and the coral trout fisheries in the Torres Straits.

Senator COLBECK—So that \$7.5 million is expended, effectively?

Mr Hurry—That is my understanding unless the department has any difference. I do not know whether it took the full \$7.5 million for the purchase or not.

Mr Thompson—I do not have details of the funding but that is my understanding that—

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

Mr Thompson—the buybacks on the Torres Strait were completed before the end of the financial year.

Senator COLBECK—Could you take on notice the final costs of that work?

Dr O'Connell—We will.

Answer:

The Torres Strait Commercial Line Fishery Reallocation process was completed at a total cost of \$10.53 million. The Commonwealth provided \$7.83 million through the department and the Torres Strait Regional Authority provided \$2.7 million.

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 06

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: National Climate Change and Fisheries Action Plan

Hansard Page: 133-134 and 137 (20/10/2008)

Senator Siewert asked:

Senator SIEWERT—Were any NGOs or any non-government organisations, environmental organisations, marine organisations and recreational fishing organisations consulted?

...

Dr O'Connell—Chair, just while they are coming up, I might correct one piece of information. Senator Siewert was asking about National Climate Change and Fisheries Action Plan. Our answers at that stage suggested there had not been any consultation with environment NGOs. There was a forum in May, a stakeholders forum, which did include environment NGOs. We will get the details of who was there for you.

Senator SIEWERT—That would be much appreciated.

Answer:

A stakeholder forum to provide input into the development of the National Climate Change and Fisheries Action Plan (the Plan) was held on 7 May 2008 in Canberra. WWF and TRAFFIC were invited to this forum but did not attend. Both organisations were also provided with both early and advanced drafts of the Plan for their comment and input.

OceanWatch Australia, InfoFish and RecFish Australia attended the forum and were also provided with early and advanced drafts of the Plan for comment. RecFish Australia was also represented on the steering committee that guided development of the Plan and was closely involved throughout the development of the Plan.

Representatives from the Game Fishing Association of Australia (GFAA) and the South Australian Recreational Fishing Advisory Council Inc (SARFAC) were also invited to the forum. GFAA declined the invitation for involvement and SARFAC did not respond.

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 07

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: National Reserve System - Water buy back

Hansard Page: 134 (20/10/2008)

Senator Fisher asked:

Senator FISHER—Thank you, Chair. Thank you, gentlemen. This may be a simple yes or no. In respect of the government's proposal to buy appropriately sited properties in order to realise water, to bring water back into the system, an example that the government has given of that is the recent purchase of Toorale Station. But I do not want to ask about that specifically. Has the department provided the government with any advice as to a strategy for purchasing properties in order to realise water?

Mr Thompson—The operation of those water buyback programs and the reserves program are probably better asked of the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts. This department has not provided any advice on where they should be targeted.

Senator FISHER—You have not provided any advice as to that directly to government?

Mr Thompson—Not that I am aware of. I could take it on notice but I am not aware of any.

Answer:

Toorale Station was purchased as part of the National Reserve System program (NRS). DAFF did not provide advice directly to the government on this issue. The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts is the decision maker on all activities relating to the NRS.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 08

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: National Reserve System – Water buy back

Hansard Page: 135 (20/10/2008)

Senator Fisher asked:

Senator FISHER—On targeting appropriately sited properties with significant water entitlement under the reserve scheme, I think you said.

...

Senator FISHER—Yes, I just want to keep this particular line of questioning to the purchase of properties.

I hear what you are saying, Dr O’Connell, in respect of commercial and in confidence, therefore unlikely to be specific advice in relation to specific properties. Therefore I would very much hope that there is generic advice being sought and provided as to an overall strategy to underpin the specific purchases. That is what I am trying to flesh out, the extent to which your agency may or may not have been involved in consultations leading to the provision of that advice or indeed in the provision of that advice directly.

Mr Hunter—Senator, we can take that on notice and provide you with an answer.

Senator FISHER—Thank you. And to the extent (a) whether you have been and (b) to the extent that you have been, details as to when, who and how and what, to the extent that you can. I know you cannot tell us about policy advice but you can indicate the topic.

Answer:

Toorale Station was purchased as part of the National Reserve System program (NRS). DAFF did not provide advice directly to the government on this issue. The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts is the decision maker on all activities relating to the NRS.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 09

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Natural Resources – Caring for our Country

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Williams asked:

I refer you to the Australian Government website www.nrm.gov.au which states ‘Australian Government Land and Coasts (AG Land and Coasts) is a unique cross-departmental team, comprising staff from the Australian Government departments of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, and Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. Staff from both departments work side by side to jointly manage delivery of Caring for our Country and develop and implement environment and resource management policies of joint interest.’

1. Is this a correct statement about the role of the Department in the delivery of the Caring for our Country programmes
2. What advice did the department provide prior to the purchase of Toorale Station near Bourke by the Commonwealth and NSW Government’s?

Answer:

1. Yes.
2. DAFF did not provide advice on the purchase of Toorale Station. The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts is the decision maker on all activities relating to the National Reserve System. This question was also asked of the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts and will be answered from that Department’s perspective through its Senate Estimates Questions on Notice process.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 10

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Natural Resources –Caring for our Country

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Williams asked:

What role does the Department have in administering Caring for our Country?

Answer:

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry supports the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry in his joint administration of Caring for our Country with the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts. In addition to the joint administration of the overarching Caring for our Country initiative the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry retains sole responsibility for administering the Landcare appropriation component of Caring for our Country.

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 11

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Toorale Station – National Reserve System

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Williams asked:

1. When was this program open for funding and what date did it close? (latest round, name of program)?
2. Please provide a list of all the criteria and amounts of funding that can be sought under this program, including what organisations or individuals can apply and how much funding is available in the current round of funding and when other successful applicants will be named?

Answer:

The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts is the decision maker on all activities relating to the National Reserve System. This question was also asked of the Department of the Environment, Heritage, Water and the Arts and will be answered through its Senate Estimates Questions on Notice process.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 12

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Toorale Station – National Reserve System

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Williams asked:

What is the process for funding to be provided under this programme?

Answer:

The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts is the decision maker on all activities relating to the National Reserve System. This question was also asked of the Department of the Environment, Heritage, Water and the Arts and will be answered through its Senate Estimates Questions on Notice process.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 13

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Natural Resources –Caring for our Country

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Williams asked:

Does the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry have to sign off on any funding/grants made under the Caring for our Country program?

Answer:

Under the administrative arrangements for Caring for our Country, the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has sole responsibility for the landcare element of the initiative, including the approval of funding. The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts has sole responsibility for the World Heritage, National Reserve System, and Working on Country elements of Caring for our Country. Both ministers are jointly responsible for the other aspects of Caring for our Country.

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 14

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Natural Resources –Caring for our Country – Toorale Station

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Williams asked:

Was the Department informed prior to the funding being approved [for Toorale Station]?

Answer:

DAFF was advised that the purchase of Toorale was under consideration.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 15

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Toorale Station – National Reserve System

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Williams asked:

1. Did the department receive any advice or instructions from the Prime Minister, his department, or the Minister for Climate Change and Water or her department?
2. What was the nature of this advice?

Answer:

No.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 16

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Toorale Station – National Reserve System

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Williams asked:

Has the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry signed off on the funding yet?

Answer:

No. The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts is the decision maker on all activities relating to the National Reserve System.

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 17

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Toorale Station – National Reserve System

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Williams asked:

Given that the Department jointly administers the Caring for our Country programme why were you not informed of the purchase of Toorale Station prior to the Government making the announcement it had purchased Toorale Station?

Answer:

The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts is the decision maker on all activities relating to the National Reserve System.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 18

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Toorale Station – National Reserve System

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Williams asked:

When was the Department informed that funding from the Caring for our Country programme had been used to purchase Toorale Station?

Answer:

Following the decision by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts to purchase Toorale Station, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry was advised of the funding source on 4 September 2008 as part of Caring for our Country Program management reporting arrangements.

Funds were contributed from the National Reserve System (NRS) priority area of Caring for our Country. Approval of the National Reserve System component of the Caring for our Country initiative is the sole responsibility of the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, and is assessed and administered by the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts.

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 19

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Toorale Station

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Williams asked:

What due diligence has the Department undertaken since the purchase of Toorale Station was announced by the Government in light of funding being sought from the Department?

Answer:

No money was provided from the DAFF budget and therefore no due diligence was undertaken by DAFF. The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts is the decision maker on all activities relating to the National Reserve System.

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 20

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Toorale Station – National Reserve System

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Williams asked:

Why has the funding being made available under Caring for our Country not been included on the website <http://www.nrm.gov.au/projects/nsw/west/index.html>?

Answer:

The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts is the decision maker on all activities relating to the National Reserve System. This question was also asked of the Department of the Environment, Heritage, Water and the Arts and will be answered through its Senate Estimates Questions on Notice process.

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 21

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Natural Resources –Caring for our Country – Toorale Station

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Williams asked:

Is the Department embarrassed about the purchase of Toorale Station and the lack of consultation with affected communities?

Answer:

Handling of property purchases under National Reserve System component of the Caring for our Country initiative is the responsibility of the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts. The Government has agreed that the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts is the decision maker.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 22

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Toorale Station – National Reserve System

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Williams asked:

Does the Department believe the purchase of Toorale Station represented value for money?

Answer:

The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts is the decision maker on all activities relating to the National Reserve System. This question was also asked of the Department of the Environment, Heritage, Water and the Arts and will be answered through its Senate Estimates Questions on Notice process.

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Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 23

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Caring for our Country

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Williams asked:

What are the names of the individual programmes [under Caring for our Country] in place and how much funding has been allocated to each programme to achieve each of the six national priority areas under the Caring for our Country programme?

Answer:

In March this year the Government announced that \$2.25 billion would be available to support the new Caring for our Country initiative over the next five years. This includes a guaranteed base-level allocation to the 56 regional NRM bodies of \$159 million in 2008-2009 and \$138 million annually in the next four years, \$189.2 million from 2008-09 to 2012-13 for landcare, and a number of 2007 election commitments such as the \$200 million Reef Rescue and \$100 million Community Coastcare. Since Caring for our Country commenced on July 1, the Government has announced a number of additional programs under the Caring for our Country initiative to achieve outcomes under the six national priority areas. Table 1 provides details on those programs and sub-elements that have been announced in 2008-09 under Caring for our Country

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 23 (continued)

Table 1: Caring for our Country- Funding Allocations

Title	Amount \$
General C4oC 2008-13	\$2.25 b
Regional investment (2008-09)	
Tasmania	\$5.83m
Queensland	\$25.7m
Victoria	\$32.3m
New South Wales	\$41m
Western Australia	\$29.4m
South Australia	\$18.9m
Other	
National Reserve System (2008-13)	\$180m
Reef Rescue	\$200m
<i>Monitoring & Evaluation, Research & Development & Land and Sea Indigenous (2008-09)</i>	<i>\$7.5 m*</i>
<i>Regional & Indigenous Partnerships (2008-09)</i>	<i>\$23 m*</i>
Open Grants (2008-10) (including \$8.9 million landcare grants)	\$28.5m
Landcare/ Sustainable Farm Practices (2008-11)	\$28m
Coasts (general) (2008-13)	\$100m
Stewardship (2008-11)	\$37.5m
Indigenous Protected Areas (2008-13)	\$21.65m
Indigenous Rangers (2008-09)	\$2.662m
Threatened Species Network (2008-09)	\$0.5m
World Heritage (2008-09) including:	\$13m
<i>Tasmania</i>	<i>\$3.4m</i>
<i>Wet Tropics</i>	<i>\$2.7m</i>
<i>Macquarie Island</i>	<i>\$1.77m</i>
<i>Other World Heritage</i>	<i>\$1.9m</i>

* = component of the 2008-13 funding allocation

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 24

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Caring for our Country

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Williams asked:

1. How will each of these individual programmes work?
2. Will there be rounds of funding, if so, when or will these rounds be opened?
3. Have any already been open?
4. How much funding was available and what were the assessment criteria for each one?

Answer:

1. Caring for our Country integrates a number of pre-existing measures – including Landcare, Natural Heritage Trust, Environmental Stewardship, Working on Country, and the National Reserve System – into a consolidated initiative. During the transitional year of 2008-09 a number of elements had separate calls for funding. For funding in 2009-10 and beyond, all public calls for funding will come through the Caring for our Country Business Plan. This will reduce stakeholder burdens, and increase efficiency by managing all elements of Caring for our Country through common application process and administrative arrangements.

2. Funding for 2009-10 has been called for through the Caring for our Country Business Plan released on 28 November 2008.

www.nrm.gov.au/publications/books/business-plan.html.

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 24 (continued)

3 & 4. Rounds called for in 2008-09

Program	Funding available	Dates of calls
Landcare Sustainable Practices	\$28m*	Applications for these grants opened on 17 November 2007 and closed on 25 February 2008.
Community Coastcare	\$20m	Applications opened on 20 May 2008 and closed on 25 July 2008.
Open Grants	\$25m	Applications opened on 21 June 2008 and closed on 1 August 2008.
Working on Country	\$6m*	Applications opened on 16 June 2008 and closed on 11 August 2008.
National Reserve System	\$25m	Applications were invited on 17 May 2008, and closed on 27 June 2008
Environmental Stewardship	\$5.3m	The first round opened in August 2008 and will close on 12 December 2008. A second round opened in October 2008 and will close in April 2009.
Reef Rescue	\$23m	Applications opened on 1 August 2008 and closed on 12 September 2008.

* Multiple year funding

The assessment criteria for these elements are described in [Attachment A](#).

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 24 (continued)

ATTACHMENT A

**ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR CARING FOR OUR COUNTRY ELEMENTS
UNDERTAKEN IN 2008-09**

Landcare Sustainable Practices Grants

The degree to which project proposals were likely to achieve National Landcare Program outcomes was assessed against the following criteria:

- Encourages the uptake of sustainable production practices within the NRM region or across regions.
- Practical and technical competency
- Demonstration of good value for investment and a clear public benefit
- Outcomes are clearly defined and can be delivered within the specified timeframe
- Consistency with priorities in regional NRM plans (applicants should consult with your regional NRM organisation)
- Compliance with any relevant legislation and other relevant intergovernmental arrangements, and
- Identification of key risks and proposed risk management strategy.

Community Coastcare

All Community Coastcare applications are assessed against the following criteria:

- Anticipated environmental and sustainable land management outcomes in line with caring for our Country national priorities
- Knowledge sharing and potential to raise community awareness and enhance skills
- Value for money of the proposed activities
- Demonstrated high public benefit, and
- Level of partnership with other organisations (e.g. community, regional natural resource management organisations, non-government, industry).

Open Grants

Open Grants proposals were assessed against the extent to which they:

- deliver outcomes that are likely to significantly advance outcomes in the Caring for our Country national priority areas targeted for 2008-09
- demonstrate a strategic and integrated delivery approach
- demonstrate a high level of partnership and/or engagement with other organisations, and
- deliver value for money as evidenced by demonstrated public benefits and secured leveraged investments.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 24 (continued)

Environmental Stewardship

Environmental Stewardship takes a market-based approach to investment which is targeted at improving the quality and extent of targeted high public value environmental assets. These assets are chosen from matters of National Environmental Significance under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* 1999. Individual land managers opt to participate through an expression of interest process run within target areas by a Delivery Agent appointed through a tender process.

Individual land managers' sites are assessed and scored for their environmental significance and the management actions that are agreed to be undertaken. Individual land managers submit a price for which they would be prepared to undertake the agreed management actions on the site. The site score is divided by the price for each bid received, and these indices are then used to rank the individual bids in a value-for-money continuum.

An independent evaluation committee considers the ranking using a marginal cost curve, and other relevant information such as the unimproved capital value of the land and the available budget, in determining a list of successful bids which are then recommended to Ministers for approval.

The National Reserve System

The national reserve system element of Caring for our Country is the responsibility of the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 25

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Toorale Station – National Reserve System

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Williams asked:

How will the policy objectives of increasing the national reserve system by 25% be achieved?

Answer:

The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts is the decision maker on all activities relating to the National Reserve System. This question was also asked of the Department of the Environment, Heritage, Water and the Arts and will be answered through its Senate Estimates Questions on Notice process.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 26

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Toorale Station – National Reserve System

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Williams asked:

What funding is available for each of those components?

Answer:

\$180 million is available for the National Reserve System from 2008-09 to 2012-13. Although the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts Government and the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry share responsibility for the overall Caring for our Country decisions, the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts is the decision maker on all activities relating to the National Reserve System.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 27

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Toorale Station – National Reserve System

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Williams asked:

Will state governments be eligible for funding?

Answer:

The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts is the decision maker on all activities relating to the National Reserve System. This question was also asked of the Department of the Environment, Heritage, Water and the Arts and will be answered through its Senate Estimates Questions on Notice process.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 28

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Toorale Station – National Reserve System

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Williams asked:

Is it the Government's intention to continue to buy prime agriculture land and convert it into national parks?

Answer:

Toorale Station was purchased as part of the National Reserve System program (NRS). DAFF did not provide advice directly to the government on this issue. The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts is the decision maker on all activities relating to the NRS.

This question was also asked of the Department of the Environment, Heritage, Water and the Arts and will be answered through its Senate Estimates Questions on Notice process.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 29

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Recreational fishing grants programs

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Williams asked:

The previous Government had a community grants programme which funded different projects throughout NSW for around \$10 million. This has been discontinued by this Government. This Government has announced the Minister is to set up a team of 8 to 10 people to advise him on behalf of Australian recreational anglers.

Rec Fish is a national body representing many groups:

1. Will the Community grants be reinstated.
2. If not, why not.
3. What programme will replace the Community Grants programme to ensure the rights of recreational anglers are maintained, and the educational aspects are maintained.

Answer:

1. The Recreational Fishing Community Grants Program (RFCGP) will not be reinstated.
2. The RFCGP was a three-year program against which all allocated funds have been committed.
3. The Australian Government recognises recreational fishing as an important tourism and cultural activity in all Australian states and territories and has committed \$2 million over three-years to develop and implement a Recreational Fishing Industry Development Strategy. The Strategy, to be informed by a review of the 1994 National Recreational Fishing Policy, will investigate initiatives to promote sustainable fishing, education and awareness, and best practice environmental standards for recreational fishing. The government is also establishing a Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee to provide advice to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry on strategic recreational fisheries issues and initiatives to help the industry's development. The recreational fishing sector will be invited to provide input through the committee advising the Minister.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 30

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Recreational fishing sector representation and fishing access

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Williams asked:

1. Why has the Minister not met with the peak national representative organisation for recreational fishing despite repeated requests for the past 12 months?
2. What is the Minister doing to ensure that his gazetted representative organisation for recreational fishing does not collapse in the next 12 months?
3. What is the Minister doing to address the growing loss of access to recreational fishing opportunities for Australian families brought about by closures to fishing in both the marine and freshwater environment?

Answer:

1. The Department has attended two meetings between the Minister's office and representatives of Recfish Australia. One was on 6 March 2008 and the other on 9 September 2008. The department understands Minister Burke met Mr Schumacher, Chair of Recfish Australia on 24 March 2008.
2. Recfish Australia is a prescribed organisation under the *Primary Industries and Energy Research and Development Act 1989* along with the National Aquaculture Council and the Commonwealth Fisheries Association. The Government has not made any ongoing commitment to provide core funding to these organisations. The Government has invested \$198,680 in a \$314,730 Recfish Australia consultancy aimed at securing a reliable and independent-from-government revenue stream for Recfish Australia. A report by the consultancy on strategic revenue options for the sector is due in January 2009.
3. The Australian Government recognises recreational fishing as an important tourism and cultural activity in all Australian states and territories and has committed \$2 million over three-years to develop and implement a Recreational Fishing Industry Development Strategy.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 31

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: Natural Heritage

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Abetz asked:

1. Why was funding for SeaNet officers discontinued?
2. Was the SeaNet project identified as “critical” by the Government or the Department?
3. If it was determined as “critical”, why was funding stopped?

Answer:

1. SeaNet, through OceanWatch Australia, was previously funded under the Natural Heritage Trust which ended on 30 June 2008. SeaNet has been successful in receiving funding through the Caring for our Country Open Grants (\$398,345).
2. No.
3. See answer 1 above.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 32

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management

Topic: WA Joint Authority Northern Shark Fishery

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Abetz asked:

1. Is it correct that the joint authority northern shark fishery has had its export permit lapse or discontinued?
2. If so, why has this occurred?
3. Is it correct that the relevant West Australian Departments failed to submit the required documentation to the Federal Minister for Environment?
4. Does this mean that the fisheries can still operate but they can't export their product?
5. What happens with the product?

Answer:

1. The WA Joint Authority Northern Shark Fishery's (JANSF) Wildlife Trade Operation (WTO) accreditation was revoked on 16 April 2008, prohibiting exports from the fishery.
2. The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts revoked the WTO following the failure of the Department of Fisheries WA to meet a condition that required it to *implement proposed formal management arrangements that will improve the ecological sustainability of the JANSF*.
3. Yes.
4. Yes.
5. That product can only be sold on the domestic market.