

**Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport**  
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008  
**Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government**

**Question No.** IA 01

**Division/Agency:** Infrastructure Australia

**Topic:** National Transport Planning Framework - Committee Composition

**Hansard Pages:** 19-20 (21/10/08)

**Senator Adams asked:**

Will you take on notice and get back to me, please, as to whether any of these 12 on the Committee who are obviously making decisions to recommend to the Government about Infrastructure Australia actually live in a rural or regional area?

**Answer:**

The Infrastructure Australia Council Members have a range of rural and urban backgrounds.

**Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport**  
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008  
**Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government**

**Question No.** IA 02

**Division/Agency:** Major Cities Unit

**Topic:** Major Cities Unit – Government Objectives

**Hansard Page:** Written Question

**Senator Adams asked:**

Can you outline the goals and objectives that the Government has set of the Major Cities Unit, announced by the Minister, Mr Albanese in April 2008, and how progress is to be evaluated?

**Answer:**

The Major Cities unit will lead a Whole-of-Government response by the Commonwealth to contribute to outcomes that improve the liveability, productivity and sustainable development of the major cities in Australia.

Progress will be evaluated through standard departmental reporting arrangements.

**Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport**  
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008  
**Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government**

**Question No.** IA 03

**Division/Agency:** Major Cities Unit

**Topic:** Funding for the Establishment of the Major Cities Unit

**Hansard Page:** Written Question

**Senator Adams asked:**

How much funding has been made available from within the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government for the establishment of the Major Cities Unit?

**Answer:**

The 2008-2009 budget of Infrastructure Australia is \$7.5M, of which \$1M is notionally allocated to the Major Cities Unit.

**Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport**  
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008  
**Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government**

**Question No.** IA 04

**Division/Agency:** Major Cities Unit

**Topic:** Interaction between Infrastructure Australia and Major Cities Unit

**Hansard Page:** Written Question

**Senator Adams asked:**

Minister Albanese has emphasised that Infrastructure Australia and Major Cities Unit are co-located in Sydney but quite separate. Can you describe the interactions between IA and the Major Cities Unit and the departmental reporting arrangements?

**Answer:**

The tasks of Infrastructure Australia are set out in the relevant legislation. The Major Cities Unit has close interaction with IA on issues associated with infrastructure in our cities.

Both administration units report through the Infrastructure Coordinator.

**Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport**  
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008  
**Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government**

**Question No.** IA 05

**Division/Agency:** Major Cities Unit

**Topic:** Major Cities Unit – Staffing Level

**Hansard Page:** Written Question

**Senator Adams asked:**

How many staff from the Department are currently involved in the day-to-day running of the Unit and what is the approved staffing level? Have staff been seconded from other areas of the Department or have new appointments been pursued and if so, what kind of skills-set has the Department been seeking?

**Answer:**

The approved staffing level of the Major Cities Unit is four.

New appointments have been pursued. Applicants were sought from multi-disciplinary backgrounds related to urban planning and development who could demonstrate strong policy, strategic, negotiation and liaison skills.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008  
**Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government**

**Question No.** IA 06

**Division/Agency:** Major Cities Unit

**Topic:** Major Cities Unit – Funding Programs

**Hansard Page:** Written Question

**Senator Adams asked:**

With the establishment of the Major Cities Unit, what specific funding programs does it administer, how are these promoted and managed and what has been done to promote the existence, role and functions of the unit to stakeholders?

**Answer:**

There is an emphasis on a role of coordination within the work program of the Major Cities Unit. The Unit does not administer any specific funding programs at this stage.

The unit aims to comprehensively engage with relevant stakeholders.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008  
**Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government**

**Question No.** IA 07

**Division/Agency:** Major Cities Unit  
**Topic:** Major Cities Unit – Purpose  
**Hansard Page:** Written Question

**Senator Adams asked:**

The unit was created to *‘identify opportunities where Federal leadership can make a difference to the prosperity of our cities and the wellbeing of their residents’*. How has the Unit pursued this purpose and what has been delivered (to date) in making *‘a difference to the prosperity of our cities and the wellbeing of their residents?’* (Quote taken from Mr Albanese’s Press Release dated April 30, 2008.

**Answer:**

The work program and staffing of the Major Cities Unit is currently being established.

**Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport**  
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008  
**Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government**

**Question No.** IA 08

**Division/Agency:** Major Cities Unit

**Topic:** Major Cities Unit – Funding Programs Guidelines

**Hansard Page:** Written Question

**Senator Adams asked:**

What cities will be eligible for assistance from the Major Cities Unit and how were the guidelines developed as to which cities are included in the Unit's considerations, can apply for assistance or be included in its work?

**Answer:**

Questions of eligibility are currently being considered.



**Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport**  
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008  
**Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government**

**Question No.** IA 09

**Division/Agency:** Major Cities Unit  
**Topic:** Major Cities Unit – Representations  
**Hansard Page:** Written Question

**Senator Adams asked:**

How many representations from local and state governments has this unit received to date?

**Answer:**

No representations specific to the Major Cities Unit have been received to date. However, the Unit has reviewed submissions by local and state governments to the Infrastructure Australia submissions process of relevance to the development of the Unit's work program.

**Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport**  
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008  
**Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government**

**Question No. IA 10**

**Division/Agency:** Major Cities Unit

**Topic:** Major Cities Unit – Future Plans

**Hansard Page:** Written Question

**Senator Adams asked:**

Is the Major Cities Unit planning any significant research into the plans, performance and effectiveness of State/Territory and local government in promoting the *‘prosperity of our cities and wellbeing of their residents’*?

**Answer:**

Yes.

**Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport**  
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008  
**Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government**

**Question No.** IA 11

**Division/Agency:** Major Cities Unit

**Topic:** Major Cities Unit – Evaluation Process

**Hansard Page:** Written Question

**Senator Adams asked:**

Is the Major Cities Unit intending to evaluate the success, identify lessons and propose future actions of state governments in relation to the various urban containment and development consolidation strategies being implemented for our major cities?

**Answer:**

Yes.

**Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport**  
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008  
**Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government**

**Question No.** IA 12

**Division/Agency:** Major Cities Unit

**Topic:** Major Cities Unit – Development Strategies

**Hansard Page:** Written Question

**Senator Adams asked:**

Is the Major Cities Unit considering involving itself in land-use planning and development approval strategies as part of its '*federal leadership*' role?

**Answer:**

The Major Cities Unit will be providing recommendations to the Australian Government on actions to improve the productivity, liveability and sustainability of the major cities of Australia.

**Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport**  
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008  
**Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government**

**Question No.** IA 13

**Division/Agency:** Major Cities Unit

**Topic:** Major Cities Unit – Regulatory Frameworks

**Hansard Page:** Written Question

**Senator Adams asked:**

To what extent will the Major Cities Unit suggest regulatory reforms or template regulatory frameworks to state/territory and local governments in promoting the *‘prosperity of our cities and wellbeing of their residents’*?

**Answer:**

The Major Cities Unit will be providing recommendations to the Australian Government on actions to improve the productivity, liveability and sustainability of the major cities of Australia.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008  
**Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government**

**Question No.** IA 14

**Division/Agency:** Major Cities Unit  
**Topic:** Major Cities Unit – Reforms Strategies  
**Hansard Page:** Written Question

**Senator Adams asked:**

Will the Major Cities Unit be providing ‘*Federal leadership*’ by recommending reforms to pricing, markets, incentives, regulation, smart systems and behaviour/consumer modifications into promoting the efficient use of existing and new urban infrastructure?

**Answer:**

The Major Cities Unit will be providing recommendations to the Australian Government on actions to improve the productivity, liveability and sustainability of the major cities of Australia.

**Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport**  
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008  
**Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government**

**Question No.** IA 15

**Division/Agency:** Major Cities Unit

**Topic:** Major Cities Unit – Urban Infrastructure Projects

**Hansard Page:** Written Question

**Senator Adams asked:**

Will the Major Cities Unit have any role in evaluating any urban infrastructure project proposals being considered by Infrastructure Australia and if so, what kind of role?  
Will any input from the Major Cities Unit to IA be made public?

**Answer:**

The tasks of Infrastructure Australia are set out in the relevant legislation. The Major Cities Unit has close interaction with IA on issues associated with infrastructure in our cities.

**Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport**  
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008  
**Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government**

**Question No.** IA 16

**Division/Agency:** Major Cities Unit

**Topic:** Major Cities Unit – Local Government Infrastructure Projects

**Hansard Page:** Written Question

**Senator Adams asked:**

Will the Major Cities Unit have any role in recommending local government infrastructure projects that can be brought forward quickly to assist the Government's stimulus package as reported in the media?

**Answer:**

This is currently under consideration.



**Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport**  
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008  
**Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government**

**Question No. IA 17**

**Division/Agency:** Infrastructure Australia

**Topic:** Major Cities Unit – Environmental Assessment of Projects

**Hansard Page:** Written Question

**Senator Adams asked:**

Will Infrastructure Australia's assessment of the environmental benefits of proposed projects be limited to greenhouse considerations as reported following the Prime Minister's announcement of the project selection criteria or will a broader sustainability assessment be undertaken?

**Answer:**

Infrastructure Australia has adopted sustainability as one of its key objectives.

**Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport**  
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008  
**Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government**

**Question No.** IA 18

**Division/Agency:** Infrastructure Australia

**Topic:** Major Cities Unit – Assessment Methodologies – Sustainability Costs

**Hansard Page:** Written Question

**Senator Adams asked:**

What methodologies will IA employ to assess the broader sustainability costs and benefits of proposed infrastructure projects?

**Answer:**

The assessment phase of proposed infrastructure projects has three elements including a wider economic benefit test to better consider broader sustainability costs and benefits.

**Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport**  
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008  
**Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government**

**Question No. IA 19**

**Division/Agency:** Infrastructure Australia

**Topic:** Major Cities Unit – Assessment Methodologies – Broader Social Costs

**Hansard Page:** Written Question

**Senator Adams asked:**

What methodologies will IA employ to assess the broader social costs and benefits of proposed infrastructure projects?

**Answer:**

The wider economic benefit test approached in the assessment phase needs to consider broader social costs and benefits of infrastructure projects proposed.

**Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport**  
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008  
**Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government**

**Question No. IA 20**

**Division/Agency:** Infrastructure Australia  
**Topic:** Major Cities Unit – Building Australia Fund  
**Hansard Page:** Written Question

**Senator Adams asked:**

Will 'natural infrastructure' projects be considered by IA for funding from the Building Australia Fund as was proposed at the Australian Davos Connection workshop which included addresses by the Prime Minister and Minister Albanese?

**Answer:**

Yes.

**Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport**  
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008  
**Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government**

**Question No. IA 21**

**Division/Agency:** Infrastructure Australia  
**Topic:** Major Cities Unit – Infrastructure Australia Board  
**Hansard Page:** Written Question

**Senator Ludlam asked:**

What was the selection criteria used for the selection of the national board of Infrastructure Australia?

**Answer:**

Candidates for appointment to the Infrastructure Australia Council were selected on the basis of their skills and experience.

**Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport**  
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008  
**Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government**

**Question No.** IA 22

**Division/Agency:** Major Cities Unit

**Topic:** Major Cities Unit – Role and Functions

**Hansard Page:** Written Question

**Senator Ludlam asked:**

Can you outline the role, functions and expected outputs of the Major Cities Unit?

**Answer:**

The Major Cities unit will lead a whole of government response by the Commonwealth to contribute to outcomes that improve the liveability, productivity and sustainable development of the major cities in Australia.