

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee**  
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2012  
**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question: 8**

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** 16<sup>th</sup> Session of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission

**Proof Hansard page:** 13

**Senator COLBECK asked:**

**Senator COLBECK:** I have some other questions about other areas. I want to ask about \$21,000 spent on a dinner for the 16th session of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission. Do I have to wait for Fisheries to come on to get an answer that?

**Dr O'Connell:** In terms of the workshop, that is just part of the business expense, not hospitality.

**Mr Tucker:** We will just have to check but I think it was just a classification problem. We classified it a certain way and that classification was not the correct classification, so we have corrected it; but I will have to confirm that.

**Answer:**

In April 2012 Australia hosted the 16<sup>th</sup> session of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), which saw 200 officials from 32 member countries attend. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> April a dinner was held as a key part of proceedings and an expected role of the host country.

As alcohol was served at the event the dinner was classified as official hospitality, in line with the department's operating procedures. The dinner was identified as official hospitality and the appropriate forms were completed and signed on 29 March 2012.

The total official hospitality cost for hosting the IOTC Commission dinner was \$21 274.90.

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**Question:** 30

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management Division  
**Topic:** Selection process for the expert panel on fishing activity  
**Proof Hansard page:** 68-69

**Senator WHISH-WILSON asked:**

**Senator WHISH-WILSON:** I have just a couple of quick questions before afternoon tea, on the environment protection and biodiversity conservation amendment. It is similar to what I just asked previously: are there guidelines on the selection process for the expert panel chosen to examine the uncertainty on the declared fishing activity? Is there anything formal?

**Mr Tucker:** It is probably best to ask SEWPaC that question. I know that we are to be consulted, but I do not have the details in front of me.

**Senator WHISH-WILSON:** Okay.

**Senator Ludwig:** We have it, though. We will take it on notice and provide it.

**Answer:**

The Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Populations and Communities (SEWPaC) advise that draft guidelines on the selection process for the panel were prepared for indicative purposes only at the time of developing the EPBC Amendment (Declared Commercial Activities) Bill 2012. The final provision of the EPBC Act did not provide for guidelines on the selection process for the expert panel. Any further information on the nature or operation of the expert panel should be addressed to SEWPaC.

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**Question: 35**

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Recreational Fishing Industry Development Strategy

**Proof Hansard page:** 90

**Senator COLBECK asked:**

Could you provide us on notice with the status of the \$2 million that was initially put in, the projects under that and where we are at with each of those projects, including these ones?

**Answer:**

Projects under the Recreational Fishing Industry Development Strategy

<b>Project Title</b>	<b>Expected completion date</b>	<b>Status</b>
A coordinated national data collection for recreational fishing in Australia	30 June 2013	On track to complete on time.
National recreational fishing education program	25 August 2014	Project agreement exchanged in August 2012.
Identifying the health and wellbeing benefits of recreational fishing	Complete	Project completed. Final report received September 2012. An application to progress the survey developed as part of the project has been received by the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC).
Expanding the future leaders program in recreational fishing	30 December 2012	Framework for program agreed and is being finalised. An extension has been granted.
National recreational fishing conference	30 December 2012	Successful conference held from 17 to 19 August 2012. Draft final report received and currently under review by FRDC.
Implications of climate change for recreational fishers and the recreational fishing industry	30 December 2012	Draft final report received and currently under review by FRDC.
A national program for the roll-out of angel rings	30 November 2013	The project is on track.
Improved consultations between government and the recreational fishing sector	Complete	Since 2010 there have been six recreational fishing roundtable meetings between government and the recreational fishing sector.

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**Question: 35** (continued)

Developing a methodology for obtaining regular, statistically robust estimates of recreational and charter fishing catch of southern bluefin tuna in Australian waters	30 November 2012	Final report drafted.  Project has combined with a larger, FRDC-funded project expected to be completed in mid 2014.
Monitoring the recreational take of shark species in Australian waters	30 November 2012	Final report drafted.

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**Question: 36**

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management Division  
**Topic:** Environmental Stewardship Program advisory board  
**Proof Hansard page:** 92-93

**Senator HEFFERNAN asked:**

**Senator HEFFERNAN:** He coordinated this project on behalf of the three TMAs who were involved. This is his response. This particular woman, Kylie Ridge, who works for a government department, bought a property which she subsequently tried to get a mortgage on. She went to the bank for financing. They then went out and valued the place—otherwise this would not have come to light. Ten or 12 weeks after she bought the place for \$230,000, she got an \$896,000 grant. The valuer who valued the place said, 'Most of the property is valueless. It is steep. It would cost \$600,000 minimum for a period of three or four years to spray the blackberries on it.' She got a grant to lock up what I think was seven acres of some box grass out of 2,800 acres. She got a grant of \$896,000. She had already got the first grant when she went into receivership, and this letter was asking, 'What happened to the money? She has gone into receivership.' The answer came back saying, 'We don't know.' So do I ask all those questions tonight? This is obviously a rort.

**Dr O'Connell:** As I said, Senator, the Environmental Stewardship Program is administered by—

**Senator HEFFERNAN:** So you have no financial responsibility in that?

**Dr O'Connell:** No, it is appropriated—

Senator Heffernan: You have a person who is on the board approving this.

**Mr Thompson:** Not on the board; there is an advisory panel—

Senator Heffernan: Yes, but he is one of the advisers, so could we have him in here later tonight to answer?

**Mr Thompson:** I am not sure of the date when that was approved because I am not sure of the detail of it, but I suspect the person is long gone, in a sense.

**Senator HEFFERNAN:** That is a great way to get out of it! This is a deadset thieving of money from the taxpayers of Australia. It was approved on 13 May 2010.

**Dr O'Connell:** The issue is best raised with the environment department. It is a SEWPaC appropriation administered by that department. We do not administer that program.

Senator Heffernan: What I am trying to get to is how do you make a decision to approve—and I'll bet you the application was probably made before the property was bought.

**Dr O'Connell:** We did not make a decision, Senator.

**CHAIR:** I might just help out here. Senator Heffernan, I do not know how many times Dr O'Connell has to let you know it is nothing to do with DAFF, it is in the wrong area.

**Senator HEFFERNAN:** They have a person on the advisory board approving it, to give advice to approve it.

**CHAIR:** But it is administered through a completely different portfolio, a different department.

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**Question:** 36 (continued)

Senator Ludwig: I think Senator Heffernan has made his point; it seems to be that is the reason for it. There are a range of places if you think there is an activity going on which you disagree with where you can certainly make a complaint about it, but initially this seems to be clearly not in this portfolio. If there is information around what advisory board DAFF participated in, we can take that on notice and provide that on notice to Senator Heffernan, but that is unrelated to a decision by SEWPaC in relation to a grant and it should not be misconstrued.

**Answer:**

This project is funded under the Environmental Stewardship Program. The program is administered by the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities.

This project was assessed by an evaluation panel on 12 March 2010. The General Manager of the Business Systems and Grants Branch within the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry was a member of the evaluation panel.

Funding for the project was approved under the joint departmental arrangements for NRM program delivery by the Hon Peter Garret AM MP, then Minister for Environment Protection Heritage and the Arts and by the Hon Tony Burke MP, then Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry on 28 April 2010.

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**Question:** 37

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Camel culling

**Proof Hansard page:** 94

**Senator EDWARDS asked:**

**Senator EDWARDS:** I believe you have had a lot of luck lately with camel numbers because there was the concentration. I would be very pleased if you could come back with the latest evaluated figures of camels culled to the most recent time, what you believe your cost per head of camel culled is at this point and whether you think you are going to be able to meet the 350,000 camel cull, which was the original project target. I believe there has been an accelerated cull over the last three or four months. So there are a number of questions on notice. What do we believe the replenishment rate of camel numbers is in Central Australia now? There is another word for 'replenishment'—'recruitment' or something like that—which is the natural increase. Are we on top of the game or not?

**CHAIR:** Thank you. We will now take a break.

**Answer:**

The latest confirmed count for camels removed through the life of the Caring for our Country project by both non-commercial and commercial means is around 110 000, as of 31 October 2012.

The average cost per camel removed to date is between \$45 and \$50, with recent aerial culling operations costing around \$25 per camel removed.

The 350 000 camels projected for removal in the project proposal is not and never was a formal project target. The formal targets for the project are based on a reduction in the densities of camels at priority points in the landscape (agreed biological refugia and high conservation aquatic ecosystems) and pastoralists actively managing feral camels on their lands.

The annual increment to the population (or replenishment rate) is a function of the reproduction rate and the mortality rate, and may vary between 6 per cent and 10 per cent depending on seasonal conditions.

The project is on track to report end-of-project feral camel densities at or below target levels at approximately 50 per cent of the identified biological refugia and high conservation aquatic ecosystems, and significant density reductions for the remaining identified biological refugia and high conservation aquatic ecosystems, subject to continuation of favourable weather conditions.

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**Question:** 142

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Hospitality

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator COLBECK asked:**

How many people attended the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission dinner on 22 April 2012?

**Answer:**

200 people attended the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission Dinner on 22 April 2012.



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**Question:** 212

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management Division  
**Topic:** EPBC (Declared Commercial Fishing Activities) Bill - Expert panel  
**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator COLBECK asked:**

Will Minister Ludwig be consulted regarding the make up of the expert panel?

What are the selection criteria for the expert panel, particularly skills and experience needed and how many people should be on the panel.

What is the likelihood that the expert panel maybe only one person?

What are the Terms of Reference for the expert panel?

How will the expert panel is to carry out the assessment?

How can the uncertainty of environmental impact be addressed through a literature review?

What is the budget allocation for the expert panel and any additional research required?

Where will this be allocated in the budget?

**Answer:**

Under Part 13 (390SF) of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) if making a final declaration the Environment Minister and the Fisheries Minister must agree that it is appropriate that an expert panel be established under section 390SH to conduct an assessment of the commercial fishing activity and report on the matter.

If the Environment Minister makes a final declaration, the Fisheries Minister will be consulted regarding the makeup of the expert panel, as prescribed in Part 13 (390SH) of the EPBC Act. The Environment Minister and the Fisheries Minister must agree on the terms of reference and the date by which the panel must report to the Minister.

The Environment Minister must appoint the expert panel as soon as is practicable after making a final declaration, as instructed in Part 13 (390SH) of the EPBC Act. As a decision whether or not to make a final declaration has not been made as of 5 November 2012, the details of the composition of the expert panel, its mode of operation and its terms of reference are not applicable.

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**Question:** 214

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Caring for our Country

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator COLBECK asked:**

What are the criteria for undertaking independent financial analysis of programs?

What would be the triggers for undertaking an independent financial analysis of Caring for our Country?

**Answer:**

Grants funded within the Caring for our Country initiative are subject to regular monitoring and reporting, including their financial performance. Independent audited financial reports of grantees form a key part of the reporting and acquittal framework.

The Caring for our Country initiative is also subject to whole of government processes, including independent review of Departmental financial performance undertaken by the Australian National Audit Office.

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**Question: 255**

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Testing on the prevalence of antimicrobial resistance in aquaculture.

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator RICHARD DI NATALE asked:**

What testing if any has the Department done on the prevalence of antimicrobial resistance in aquaculture?

**Answer:**

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has not conducted testing on the prevalence of antimicrobial resistance in aquaculture.

States and Territories are responsible for the regulation and management of aquatic animal health for aquaculture within their borders. At present aquaculture is not undertaken in waters under Commonwealth jurisdiction.

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**Question:** 259

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Caring for our Country: core operating expenses

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator EDWARDS asked:**

In Written Question on Notice 285 (May Budget Estimates 2012), the Department was asked how often NRM Boards apply to use their surplus base-level funds on alternative activities. The response doesn't actually state how often this happens.

1. How often are surplus base-level funds used for on alternate activities?
2. How many applications were made to use surplus base-level funds on alternate activities in the past 18 months?
3. Please list all applications to use surplus funds on alternate activities that came from South Australia in the last 18 months.

**Answer:**

1. Regional bodies are contracted to expend funding on a variety of activities addressing national Caring for our Country priorities and targets. Instances where a regional body has achieved its Caring for our Country targets under budget and seeks to use surplus funds on alternative Caring for our Country activities are extremely rare.
2. Four applications to use surplus base-level funds on alternate activities were received in the last 18 months.
3. There were no applications made by South Australian regional bodies to use surplus funds on alternative activities over the last 18 months (May 2011 to October 2012).

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**Question: 260**

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Australian Landcare Council

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator EDWARDS asked:**

1. The Department was asked about advice the Australian Landcare Council provided to the Minister on 6 Landcare and NRM matters in May 2011 (Written Question on Notice 286, Part 3 (May Budget Estimates 2012)). The Department stated that it was not publicly available.
  - a. Why is this advice not publicly available?
  - b. Can the Australian Landcare Council provide a copy?
2. The Department stated that it was used to assist with the formulation of “policy and program design”
  - a. Can the Department cite a specific policy or program that the advice was used for?
  - b. What policies or programs was the Department/Minister working on at the time?
3. The ALC appointed a consultant to identify successes and barriers that have been identified in association with Indigenous land management in Australia. The consultant was due to report on 29 June 2012.
  - a. Has the report been delivered to the Department?
  - b. If it has not been delivered to the Department, why not and when does the Department expect to receive it? Why has there been a delay?
  - c. Is it publicly available? Why/why not? (provide a link to the report)
  - d. What is the Minister’s response to the report?
  - e. What has it been used for in the past 3.5 months? If it hasn’t been used, why not?
  - f. What does the Department anticipate using it for?
  - g. Did the report meet the stated deliverables (as outlined in the Terms of Reference)?
  - h. Which deliverables did the report not meet? What action has been taken as a result?

**Answer:**

1. a. Under the *Natural Resource Management (Financial Assistance) Act 1992*, the Australian Landcare Council provides advice and makes recommendations to the agriculture and environment ministers. A summary of the issues considered by the Council and work done by the Council is made public through Communiqués and its annual report.

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**Question:** 260 (continued)

Commissioned work and submissions into public processes are made public on the council website.

- b. The Australian Landcare Council annual report, communiqués and public submissions are available on the website at <http://www.daff.gov.au/natural-resources/landcare/council>
  
- 2. a. The next phase of Caring for our Country, National Food Plan, National Wildlife Corridors.  
b. The next phase of Caring for our Country, National Food Plan, National Wildlife Corridors.
  
- 3. a. A draft report has been provided through the department to the Council's Indigenous Working Group which is working with CSIRO to finalise the report.  
b. The draft report was provided to the department on 29 June 2012.  
c. The report has yet to be finalised and is not currently available publically.  
d. The report has yet to be provided to ministers.  
e. The initial findings of the report have contributed to advice from the Council relating to better engagement of Indigenous people in natural resource management in the next phase of Caring for our Country.  
f. The report was commissioned to assist the Council in providing advice to ministers and the Australian Government.  
g. The report is yet to be finalised, but it is expected to meet the stated deliverables.  
h. N/A

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**Question:** 261

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Caring for our Country – conflict of interest

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator EDWARDS asked:**

In response to Written Question on Notice 280 (May Budget Estimates 2012), the Department state that organisations receiving funding under Caring for Country do not have to report conflicts of interest to the Commonwealth.

1. Why don't organisations have to report conflicts of interest to the Commonwealth?
2. Is it a conflict of interest where a member of a group that receives CfoC funding is paid a wage to carry out work? For example if a particular group received funding and a part of that funding was for some photographs to be taken. One of the members of the group that helps run the group and applied for the funding received some of that money to take those photographs. Does the Department see this as a conflict of interest?

**Answer:**

1. All applicants for funding under Caring for our Country are required to declare that

“to the best of my knowledge, there are no real or likely to be perceived conflicts of interest contained in or associated with this project”.

Organisations receiving funding are expected to have governance arrangements in place to identify and manage potential conflicts of interest in the management of their grant(s).

If at any point during the management of a grant, information is received by the department that there is a problem with governance of a grant (including a conflict of interest situation), then there will be an assessment as to whether grant payments should continue and the actions available to the department under the contract with the proponent.

2. “A conflict of interest arises where a person makes a decision or exercises a power in a way that may be, or may be perceived to be, influenced by either material personal interests (financial or non-financial) or material personal associations. A conflict of interest could arise where decision makers or officials involved in grants administration have a direct or indirect interest in the selection of a particular project or activity for funding.” (p28 Commonwealth grants guidelines: policies and principles for grants administration 2009 [http://www.finance.gov.au/publications/fmg-series/docs/FMG23\\_web.pdf](http://www.finance.gov.au/publications/fmg-series/docs/FMG23_web.pdf)).

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**Question: 261 (continued)**

Whether perceived or actual conflicts of interest exist depends on the specific circumstances of the decision making process. In the hypothetical example given, considerations that would need to be taken into account in general terms, would include whether the decision to pay a member of a group for services rendered is agreed by other members of the group without influence by the beneficiary or the decision to pay an individual for services rendered is adopted by a majority of members of the group who do not directly receive any personal benefit from the grant and without influence by the beneficiary.



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**Question:** 262

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** National Partnership on Caring for our Country

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator EDWARDS asked:**

With regard to Written Question on Notice 281, part 2 (May Budget Estimates 2012):

1. Can the Department provide any examples of what activities will be funded under this Partnership?
2. With regard to part 3, the NRM Boards may be funded out of the original allocation but is the \$17.3m for this National Partnership additional funding or from the original allocation provided under CfoC?
3. If it is out of the original allocation – is this just a re-announcement of old money?

**Answer:**

1. Examples of activities funded include:
  - a. Promote the benefits of increased surface stubble and pasture cover in the region's Upper North by holding grazing workshops, grazing discussion group meetings, grazing infrastructure workshop, farm walks, grazing management field day and farm advisor workshop.
  - b. Hold site field days at demonstration sites to promote the benefits to crop growth and yield through the application of residual chaff to saline scald patches in the Northern and Yorke Agricultural Zone. Hold workshops to promote best practice farm management to young farmers within the Northern and Yorke Agricultural Zone. Hold field days to promote best practice grassy weed control in no-till farming operations in the Northern and Yorke Agricultural Zone.

These activities and other project categories are available on the Caring for our Country website <http://www.nrm.gov.au/funding/business-plan/index.html>

2. The National Partnership funding is the Regional Base-level Investment that is provided to the NRM Boards each year over 2009–10 to 2012–13. NRM bodies are required to submit expressions of interest detailing proposals of their activities. NRM bodies were able to apply for additional funding through the open call competitive processes.
3. There was a notional allocation of \$17.3m to South Australian NRM regions in 2009 for funding up until June 2013. NRM regions were required to submit expressions of interest detailing activities to be conducted. Not all regions provided expressions of interest covering this entire period requiring Ministers to make further approvals in following years. All funds have now been committed to June 2013.

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**Question:** 280

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Reef Rescue

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator MACDONALD asked:**

Question On Notice 87 (Budget Estimates May 2012)

Proof Hansard page 45 (22.05.2012):

In answer to questions regarding Reef Rescue program as part of the Caring for Country initiative, the department has provided information regarding the steps taken by farmers and graziers to date (to the date of the answer).

1. What funding is specifically being allocated to deliver on Reef Rescue and Caring for Country programs over the next two years (completing the 5-year grazier engagement target)?
2. What portion of the Caring for Country funding budget has been frozen?

Where is the funding being directed/what local and regional bodies are being engaged in determining funding allocations?

**Answer:**

1. The 2012–13 budget allocation for Caring for our Country is \$448.8 million. \$51.5 million has been committed under the Reef Rescue program in 2012–13. The Australian Government has committed more than \$2 billion to a second phase of Caring for our Country from 2013–14 to 2017–18. The detailed funding allocations within the next phase of Caring for our Country are yet to be settled.
2. Nil.

Details of the funding profile for the next phase of Caring for our Country are yet to be finalised. We are consulting key stakeholders, including natural resource management bodies and industry on the detailed design of the future program.

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**Question:** 292

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Borthwick review

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator WHISH-WILSON asked:**

Can a consultation schedule for the Borthwick review and a list of stakeholders consulted so far be provided?

**Answer:**

Please refer to the response to question 29 (Governance Division) from the Supplementary Estimates hearing in October 2012.