



Australian Government
**Department of Agriculture,
Water and the Environment**

Senator Susan McDonald
Chair
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator McDonald

Having reviewed the transcripts of Senate Estimates hearings conducted by the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee on 21 and 23 October 2020, the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment would like to identify 3 factual mistakes made in providing evidence to the Committee.

1. During the hearing on 21 October 2020, Senator Sheldon pursued a line of questioning about funding available for the Regional Investment Corporation as provided in the Budget Paper No.11 in budget 2020-21:

“So that’s your original funding.”

In response, Ms Kerren Crosthwaite, said:

“Sorry, it’s \$500,000.”

The Department wishes to correct this answer. The figure should be \$500 million.

2. During the hearing on 21 October 2020, Senator Sterle asked in relation to Farm Household Allowance program:

“Since 11 June 2020 how many applications have been made for Farm Household Allowance and how many were successful?”

The Department provided a written response later in the day that was emailed to the Committee that said:

“Of the over 1,100 applications received between 12 June and 30 September 2020 more than 70 per cent are likely to have been successful (based on historical rates of success)”.

The Department wishes to correct this answer.

“Of the over 1,700 applications received between 12 June and 30 September 2020 more than 70 per cent are likely to have been successful (based on historical rates of success)”.

3. During the hearing on 23 October 2020 the Chair, Senator Susan McDonald said in relation to Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards (WELS) Regulator:

“Ms Connell, do you wish to make an opening statement?”

In part of the response Ms Connell said:

“.....I can report that this year alone the scheme is estimated to have saved 141 gigalitres of water, and that's expected to increase until 2036.....”

The Department wishes to correct this part of the response, consistent with the WELS opening statement tabled to the Committee in relation to the estimated continuing increase in water savings.

“.....I can report that this year alone the scheme is estimated to have saved 141 gigalitres of water, and that's expected to increase until at least 2036.....”

The minor wording change implies that the estimated savings will only increase until 2036, rather than reflect that the report¹ on which the figures are based only estimated savings out to the year 2036. The report did not consider or preclude savings beyond 2036.

I apologise for the errors in the answers outlined above and trust this further information will be of assistance to the Committee. The remainder of the answers to questions given at the Hearings are correct.

Thank you for the opportunity to review the transcript of the Budget Estimates.

Yours sincerely

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¹ Institute for Sustainable Futures, 2019. Evaluation of the environmental and economic impacts of the WELS scheme.