

Senate Standing Committee on Economics

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Treasury Portfolio

Budget Estimates

4 – 6 June 2013

Question: BET 300

Topic: Greenhouse Gas Emissions from the Rural Sector

Written: 17 June 2013

Senator MILNE asked:

300.

- a. How challenging is it to measure greenhouse gas emissions from the rural sector?
- b. What about measuring soil carbon?
- c. In *Towards the Australian Environmental-Economics Accounts* you refer to a forthcoming information paper on carbon stock accounts. When do you expect this to be out?

Answer:

300.

- a. The ABS reconfigures certain greenhouse gas (GHG) inventories produced by the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency (DCCEE) to support fuller integration with economic statistics. However, primary responsibility for compiling official inventories of GHG emissions for Australia rests with the DCCEE who are best placed to comment on the measurement difficulties for the rural sector.

Further clarification would also be needed as to whether 'rural' relates to a spatial measure (including households and relevant producer activity) or specifically to the activities of certain industries.

- b. A comprehensive measure of soil carbon stocks within Australia would require a very large number of observations to be made across the continent, the challenge being to capture variations in soil carbon across the landscape. This would be a very significant measurement exercise. Alternatively, approximations of soil carbon can be made by dissecting the Australian landmass according to land cover / land use and applying estimates of average soil carbon per hectare of land cover / land use. This approach may deliver a working estimate of soil carbon for Australia but it is unlikely to reliably capture the important spatial and temporal variations in soil carbon.
- c. The information paper on carbon stocks accounts for Australia is a joint exercise between the Australian National University (ANU), DCCEE and the ABS. It remains on target for release in July / August 2013.