

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Environment portfolio

Question No: 30
Hearing: Additional Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 5
Programme: Wildlife Heritage and Marine Division
Topic: Cape York Peninsula World Heritage listing
Hansard Page: N/A
Question Date: 07 March 2014
Question Type: Written

Senator Waters asked:

The government has recently missed the deadline for applications for World Heritage listing to UNESCO in relation to Cape York. In a letter to the editor in the Australian on 25 January 2014, Minister Hunt claimed that the Abbott government hasn't abandoned the World Heritage assessment process for the Cape York. Minister Hunt says that the government is continuing the assessment process. Please advise:

1. The details of the assessment process that the Commonwealth is undertaking? How is it different from the process under the previous government?
2. Who from the Department is leading this process? Is it the same official as under the previous government?
3. Have there been any change in the FTE staffing or resources allocated to the assessment process?
4. Since September 2013, have any Traditional Owners received correspondence of any kind from the Department to indicate the government's commitment to the process or about the timelines for the process out to 1 February 2015? Please provide details of which Traditional Owners have received that correspondence, and when that correspondence was dispatched? Please provide examples of that correspondence.

Answer:

1. There has been no change to the assessment process from the previous government. Minister Hunt has informed the World Heritage Committee that a potential world heritage nomination for Cape York Peninsula can only occur with the support of relevant parties including the Queensland Government, Traditional Owners, industry, private landholders and the wider Cape York community. There are a number of Indigenous engagement processes on a potential world heritage nomination for Cape York still underway. All of the projects will continue to be managed by the Department until their completion at the end of 2013/2014. The Government will then be in a position to assess the level of Indigenous support for world heritage and the next steps in the world heritage nomination process.
2. The Assistant Secretary of the Heritage Branch took over leadership of the Cape York world heritage project in January 2014.
3. A restructure in the Division that provides oversight for the Department's involvement in world heritage nominations, including Cape York Peninsula, has resulted in a reduction of FTE on the project from 5.8 to 1.5. The previous government invested \$3 million to fund 20 Traditional Owner world heritage consultation projects (including funding for Country Based Planning). Some projects have concluded with the remainder due to be finalised by mid 2014.

4. The Department continues to correspond with the grant recipients who are facilitating consultation with Traditional Owners. This correspondence relates to the reporting and/or finalisation of the funding agreements to progress consultation on a potential world heritage nomination of appropriate parts of Cape York Peninsula. The Government is committed to completing the consultation projects in order to assess the next steps in the world heritage nomination process. Minister Hunt has also corresponded with Traditional Owners, thanking them for the work that they have undertaken and advising them that a potential world heritage nomination for Cape York will only occur with the support of all relevant parties. Examples of correspondence includes letters and e-mails to funding agreement recipients:

- Kuuku Ya'u Aboriginal Corporation, 15 October 2013.
- Laura Traditional Owner and Elder, 6 November 2013
- Mapoon Aboriginal Shire Council, 17 December 2013
- Wik Projects Ltd, 7 January 2014
- Olkola Aboriginal Corporation, 5 March 2014
- Chuulangun Aboriginal Corporation, 6 March 2014
- Pormpuraaw Aboriginal Shire Council, 14 March 2014
- Kuuku Ya'u Aboriginal Corporation, 14 March 2014
- South Cape York Catchments (working with Traditional Owners in the Laura region), 20 March 2014

Examples of correspondence are provided in the response to February 2014 Additional Estimates Question on Notice 31.