

Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications

Inquiry into the history, effectiveness, performance and future of the National Landcare Program

Question on Notice from public hearing, 13 October 2014

The Chair (Senator Urquhart) asked: Has the department quantified the impact that the reduction in funding for Landcare and NRM in the 2014 budget will have on on-the-ground activities? If you are able to provide us with some expected reduction in the activity of Landcare, by region, if you can, that would be great.

Department of the Environment and Department of Agriculture response: The Budget reduction occurred in parallel with the programme redesign from Caring for our Country to National Landcare Programme, and the allocation of funding to new environment and natural resource management programmes, including Green Army, Reef Trust and 20 Million Trees. The shift to the National Landcare Programme and the introduction of these new programmes will have different implications for on ground activity and at regional scale - therefore it is not possible to itemise the impact of the funding reduction in the National Landcare Programme announced in the 2014-15 Budget. The Budget also contained a \$2 billion commitment to environment and natural resource management over the forward estimates. Given this, and the Government's focus in the new National Landcare Programme on giving regional bodies the autonomy to set investment priorities, it will be a matter for these bodies to determine how they manage the adjustment to their business.

Senator Singh asked: How many directors working on the Landcare programme have taken redundancies?

Department of the Environment and Department of Agriculture response: In 2014-15, the Department of the Environment has granted voluntary redundancies to two Director level staff (Executive Level 2 employees) that worked on the National Landcare Programme and its other Natural Resource Management Programmes.

Business improvement in processes with the introduction of the MERIT system and streamlined grant application processes, together with an increased span of control for directors managing grants, has meant that the department is able to deliver the National Landcare Programme with fewer directors.

In the Department of Agriculture, two Directors working on the Programme took a redundancy.

Senator Singh asked: How many staff do each department have working in the National Landcare Programme space?

Department of the Environment and Department of Agriculture response: In 2014-15, the Department of the Environment has budget to support 176 ASL (Average Staffing Levels) to work on the National Landcare Programme and the other Natural Resource Management Programmes which it manages. To ensure efficient and effective delivery, and to ensure a seamless interface for our stakeholders, the Department takes a geographic approach, with staff working on multiple programmes.

There are 30 ASL in the Department of Agriculture for the National Landcare Programme in 2014-15.