

Senate Community Affairs Committee
ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
FAMILIES, HOUSING, COMMUNITY SERVICES AND
INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO
2012-13 Supplementary Estimates Hearings

Outcome Number:

Question No: 455

Topic: Barges and permits

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Scullion asked:

Is the NLC levying or administering a fee for using barge landings to bring in supplies to local communities?

How much is that fee?

Answer:

This question was also asked in a question on notice from the Committee after Estimates on 3 June 2011.

The NLC's written response dated 8 August 2011 was:

For some years the provision of goods by barge to communities in Arnhem Land has predominantly been provided by one operator. That service is presently provided pursuant s 19 licences granted under seven agreements between the operator and the Arnhem Land Aboriginal Land Trust, four of which commenced in 1997 and three in 2000.

The s 19 licences are non-exclusive, except in relation to certain areas of land which in some cases the operator requires for exclusive use. The financial benefit to relevant traditional owners under the agreements comprises a small fixed fee plus a freight levy. The quantum of the fee and the levy are common to all licences. Their purpose is to ensure an appropriate financial benefit to traditional owners for the use of their land. Finalisation of new agreements with that operator, on relatively similar terms, is advanced.

There are four other operators that provide barge services to communities in Arnhem Land. Agreements for those operators, on similar terms to the original operator, are also advanced.

The quantum of the financial benefit under existing agreements, or proposed future agreements, is commercial in confidence. It is thus inappropriate to provide a schedule of fees. That quantum has been identified through arms length negotiations, and has existed for over a decade under current agreements without any detrimental effect on the cost of living in those communities.

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There has been no change in circumstances since 8 August 2011. The NLC's response remains in the same terms as extracted above.