

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

Question No: 280
Hearing: Budget Estimates
Outcome: Minister
Programme: Minister
Topic: Election commitments - marginal seats
Hansard Page: 82
Question Date: 26 May 2014
Question Type: Spoken

Senator Ludlam asked:

Senator LUDLAM: How many of those seats are classified as marginal, and how were they chosen?

Senator Birmingham: The sites reflect commitments made by the government prior to its election, and I suspect, from the list we have just heard, you will find that they reflect a diversity of electorates.

Senator LUDLAM: That goes in no way at all towards answering my question. Perhaps if you do not have the information at the table you could provide us with a breakdown of those seats—and the margins that prevail in each of those.

Senator Birmingham: The officials have given a breakdown of the seats. I do not believe the Department of the Environment runs a register of electoral margins—that is more the business of the AEC.

Senator URQUHART: If you are going to take something on notice, can you also say why those places were selected and what exactly those projects will do.

Senator LUDLAM: That is the more important question. I guess I can go out and chase whether there are political motivations underlying selection. Maybe you have other criteria or reasons that you use?

Dr Kennedy: As Ms Hoytink said, those commitments were outlined by the government in the election campaign. We provided the information around the areas in which electorates fell simply because committees often ask us about what moneys are for. We are in no way involved in selecting them by electorate or providing any information or having any engagement around the margins or anything of that order.

Senator LUDLAM: I certainly was not trying to insinuate that the department was—I have a strong suspicion that the government, the then opposition, might have, but you would not have had visibility of that. To be clear for Senator Urquhart and me, Senator Birmingham has undertaken, rather than the department, to provide the criteria on which those announcements were made prior to the election.

Senator Birmingham: I will endeavour to answer those questions on notice.

Answer:

The electorates and areas targeted in the 2014-15 Budget measure, Solar Towns – establishment, deliver on 2013 election commitments. Candidates and the local community strongly supported the establishment of solar towns in their areas.