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

Question No: 29

Hearing: Budget Estimates

Outcome: Outcome 1

Programme: Sustainability Policy and Analysis Division

Topic: CLIMATE CHANGE SCIENCE PROGRAMME AMALGAMATION WITH THE NESP

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Question Date: 26 May 2014

Question Type: Spoken

Senator Urquhart asked:

Senator URQUHART: I am looking at program 2.2, expenses. The expenses are reduced quite significantly. Does that mean that there are cuts? It is on page 70.
Dr Kennedy: From memory, the broad order of the magnitude of the savings was around $4.6 million across the combined programs for the first two years and in the order of $6.1 million or $6.2 million—I will just ask Jo to confirm in a moment—for the next two years. So the overall saving across the combined program is the sum of those four years.
Senator URQUHART: Maybe Ms Mummery, you could provide detail on notice about what is in and what is out.
Ms Mummery: We will do the best we can, but I would note there are still some decisions for the minister in the priorities which will be set for the program.
Senator URQUHART: I understand that. On notice, please provide details of what you are aware of what is in and what is out.
Dr Kennedy: We can perhaps assist. As Ms Mummery was saying, there are some existing contracts which will continue to be paid out over the next two years, including with the Bureau of Meteorology and with CSIRO. We can detail those. As Ms Mummery was saying, the minister will make decisions about the whole program as moneys free up from various contracts.

Answer:

Current research activities under the Australian Climate Change Science Programme and National Environmental Research Program will continue in line with existing contracts.

<u>Australian Climate Change Science Programme (ACCSP)</u>

- Total commitments for the ACCSP between 2013/14 to 2015/16 are $19,568,000.
- ACCSP funding commitments for 2014/15 and 2015/16 are $5,734,000 per year.
- Funding over 2014/15 and 2015/16 under the ACCSP is provided to:
  - CSIRO - ($4,259,330 per year) Fundamental climate change science research, including further development of Australia's climate modelling capability; research into the oceans surrounding Australia and the interface between the oceans, atmosphere and land system; and development of climate change projections. This research will be delivered in conjunction with the Bureau of Meteorology.

- Bureau of Meteorology - ($1,374,670 per year) Fundamental climate change science research, including seasonal and decadal variability and forecasting; research into modes of variability and risks of extreme weather events; and further development of Australia's national climate modelling capability. This research will be delivered in conjunction with CSIRO.

- ARC Centre of Excellence for Climate System Science - ($100,000 per year) Modelling of the interaction between the land surface and the atmosphere to better understand how this interaction may affect extreme events in the future.

- Uncommitted funds under the Australian Climate Change Science Programme totalling $4,132,000 over 2014/15 and 2015/16 ($2.066 million per year) were taken as savings.

<u>The National Environmental Research Program</u>

- Total commitments for the NERP between 2010/11 to 2014/15 are $82,209,855.

- Funding is provided to 137 projects under five research hubs, including:

  - Northern Australian Hub (Charles Darwin University) ($14.7 million) - Research focused on the terrestrial, freshwater and estuarine ecosystems of the northern savanna landscapes, to address gaps in our understanding of biodiversity patterns; support adaptive planning; develop effective methods for monitoring and reporting on biodiversity and ecosystem health and identify opportunities to support Indigenous livelihoods.

  - Tropical Ecosystems Hub (Australian Institute of Marine Science) ($28.5 million) - Improve regional environmental decision making and inform national, state and regional stakeholders through better understanding of the status and future trends of key species and ecosystems in Queensland; the social and economic interactions between Queensland communities and their regional environmental assets; the performance of existing management arrangements; and options for adaptation and new management approaches to enhance ecological and social resilience in a changing environment.

  - Environmental Decisions Hub (University of Queensland) ($11 million) - Research on terrestrial biodiversity in a wide range of environments to assist government agencies to protect and restore Australia' biodiversity. The research will include new tools, data, models and authoritative syntheses that enable Australian governments to make evidence-based decisions that halt, then reverse, the decline in biodiversity.

  - Landscapes and Policy Hub (University of Tasmania) ($6 million) - Develop tools, techniques and policy pathways to support regional biodiversity planning by taking an integrated social, economic and ecological perspective of large scale biodiversity conservation.

  - Marine Biodiversity Hub (University of Tasmania) ($11 million) - Provide scientific information and advice that will support decision making in the marine environment, specifically in implementing and monitoring marine bioregional plans, developing the National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas, and supporting the information needs of the department in providing key baseline information.

- NERP funds are also allocated each year to address rapidly emerging environmental research priorities during the life of the program. The projects must produce applied biodiversity research that better informs environmental management, policy and decision making.
- NERP funding commitments for 2014/15 is $9,312,000, and no funds are committed for the 2015/16 financial year.
- The NESP will be established through the amalgamation of NERP and ACCSP. The Government has committed $102 million over four years from 2014/15 to the new programme. The NESP will streamline and consolidate delivery of environmental and climate research.