

Senate Economics Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Treasury Portfolio

Budget Estimates

2014 - 2015

Department/Agency: Treasury

Question: BET 23-24

Topic: Northern Australia Infrastructure

Reference: Hansard page no. 81 - 01 June 2015

Senator: Waters, Larissa

Question:

Senator WATERS: I go to the northern Australia infrastructure facility that I understand, from various inquiries that I have made during the course of the week, your department has the carriage of. Can you tell me whether the department of infrastructure had any input into the facility before it was announced? Did you brief them or involve them in the process of policy development?

Mr White: Yes, Senator.

Senator WATERS: Okay. My colleague established that Infrastructure Australia had not been so involved. So I just want to double-check whether you made any forays to Infrastructure Australia to brief them or involve them.

Mr White: I would have to check. I do not quite remember. We may have, but I would be inclined to say no. We will take that on notice.

Senator WATERS: Thank you. If you could take that on notice, that would be lovely. Can you tell me where the idea originated? Did it start with your department or did it start with Infrastructure? Where was the genesis of it?

Mr Ray: It was part of the policy development.

Senator WATERS: I beg your pardon?

Mr Ray: It was part of the policy development, and it is a government decision. I do not know that we can really add too much more to that.

Senator WATERS: Was it your department that was working on that or the PM or—

Mr Ray: It came through the Northern Australia white paper process.

Senator WATERS: When did you start working on the facility? Proximate to budget night, what was the work that you were doing, Mr White?

Mr White: The Northern Australia white paper process has been going for a long time. The green paper came out last year. A number of infrastructure issues and proposals have come along through that process, and this is where that came from.

Senator WATERS: Sure, but the actual creation of the facility is a new announcement from budget night.

Mr White: Yes.

Senator WATERS: When did you start working on that new aspect of what has been a long process?

Mr White: I would not know exactly when, but earlier this year.

Senator WATERS: If you would not mind, could you take on notice a bit more specificity around those dates? Do you know whether the facility will require new legislation?

Mr White: We do not think so, but we will have to check.

Answer:

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BET 23-24 - Treasury did not have any formal contact with Infrastructure Australia regarding the NAIF prior to its announcement.

The development of the NAIF commenced in March 2015. Any requirement for legislation is subject to final policy design.