

Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry, Innovation and Science Portfolio
2017 - 2018 Budget Estimates
31 May – 1 June 2017

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND SCIENCE

TOPIC: Northern Australia White Paper

REFERENCE: Written Question – Senator Ketter

QUESTION No.: BI-181

1. How much did it cost the Office of Northern Australia to develop the Northern Australia White Paper, from beginning to end?
2. What was the detailed process undertaken by the Office of Northern Australia to develop the White Paper?
3. Is the Office of Northern Australia planning to update or review the White Paper?
4. When is the Office of Northern Australia planning to release that update/review?
5. What funds has the Government, department or office of Northern Australia outlaid to fund the update/review?
6. What new Budget measures were taken in the 2017-18 Budget as part of the Developing the North Agenda?
7. What is the operating budget of the Office of Northern Australia?
8. How many people work in the Office of Northern Australia?
9. Can you provide a flow chart or organisational chart outlining the Office of Northern Australia's structure?

ANSWER

1. *The White Paper on Developing Northern Australia* (the White Paper) was developed by a cross agency taskforce in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C), including staff seconded from the Office of Northern Australia (ONA). The Taskforce disbanded on 30 June 2015.
2. The White Paper was developed by a cross-agency Taskforce within PM&C. Agencies seconded included Treasury, Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Department of Agriculture, and the Department of the Environment. The Northern Territory Government also provided a secondees.

In June 2014, the Australian Government released a Green Paper which outlined possible policy directions for the White Paper. Around 180 submissions were received, plus feedback from around 170 stakeholder meetings in locations including Cairns, Brisbane, Darwin, Perth,

Karratha, Port Hedland, Townsville, Rockhampton, Yeppoon, Kununurra, Mackay, Broome, Mount Isa, Alice Springs and Cooktown.

The White Paper was also informed by a Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia, chaired by the Hon Warren Entsch and a Northern Australia Advisory Group, chaired by the Hon Shane Stone AC QC. A Strategic Partnership led by the then Prime Minister and including the Deputy Prime Minister, the Premiers of Queensland and Western Australia and the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory also provided high level leadership and oversight to the development of the White Paper.

3. ONA is not updating or reviewing the White Paper. ONA reports on implementation of the 51 measures in the White Paper.
4. The Minister's Annual Statement to Parliament on progress of the White Paper and the northern Australia agenda more broadly is scheduled for October 2017.
5. Not applicable.
6. There were five 2017-18 Budget measures specific to the developing the north agenda
 - *Monitoring of insurance premiums in northern Australia* - \$7.9 million over four years from 2017-18 to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) to report on prices and costs and profits in the insurance market for home, contents and strata insurance in northern Australia.
 - *Queensland Tourism Cyclone Debbie Recovery Package* - \$5 million to assist the Queensland tourism industry to recover through the funding of tourism projects and media advertising and marketing of north Queensland destinations.
 - *Townsville City Deal* – additional funding (\$23.5 million over four years from 2017-18) to continue to deliver the cities agenda with commitments to expand industry, trade and investment, including a jointly funded \$250 million North Queensland Stadium.
 - *Northern Australia Rice Industry* – \$4 million to build on successful initial research trials to grow rice crops in Queensland.
 - *Indigenous Employment* - \$5 million over four years for a trial of community-based delivery of employment services in Yarrabah in far north Queensland.

Additionally, the following national initiatives will benefit northern Australia across a range of portfolios

- *National Partnership on Regulatory Reform* - \$300 million over two years to States and Territories to remove unnecessary regulatory restrictions on competition and small businesses.
- *Regional Growth Fund* - grants of \$10 million or more for major transformational projects which support long-term economic growth and create jobs in regions including the *Building Better Regions Fund* commitments.
- *National Rail Program* - \$10 billion program to fund rail projects across the nation that improve urban and regional rail services to better connect communities. This includes the Townsville Eastern Access Rail Corridor: \$147 million with \$38.7 million to be provided in 2017-18, as part of the Townsville City Deal.
- *Water fund* – \$4 billion in farm business and water infrastructure loans, including the establishment of a Regional Investment Corporation to administer \$2 billion of farm business concessional loans, and the \$2 billion National Water Infrastructure Loan Facility from 2018-19 which will provide loans to State and Territory governments to construct nationally significant water infrastructure.

- *Business Support for Indigenous Entrepreneurs* - \$146.9 million for workshops, business planning, training and tailored loan products including capital assistance for Indigenous entrepreneurs to establish or grow their business.
 - o \$52.9 million is allocated to a whole-of-government research and evaluation strategy for policies and programs affecting Indigenous Australians, including \$40 million to strengthen evaluation of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy;
 - o \$10 million to establish an Indigenous Research Fund;
 - o \$2.9 million for the Productivity Commission to enhance Indigenous policy evaluation and an additional Commissioner;
 - o \$263 million to expand *ParentsNext* will include \$113 million for intensive services in 30 locations where a high number of Parenting Payment recipients are Indigenous.

7. The 2016-17 financial year operating budget for the Office of Northern Australia was \$2,503,000.
8. As at 30 June 2017 15 people were located in the Office of Northern Australia. Two vacant positions are in the process of being filled.
9. The organisational structure for the Office of Northern Australia is provided below.

The Office of Northern Australia organisational structure as at 30 June 2017

