

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates February 2015

Agriculture

Question: 73

Division/Agency: Governance Branch

Topic: Agencies that did not appear but were called

Proof Hansard page: 19-20 (23.02.2015)

Senator EDWARDS asked:

Senator EDWARDS: Are all the agencies that did not appear but were called listed in there?

Mr Glyde: They are. I can read them out if that would help.

Senator EDWARDS: Yes, that would be helpful.

Mr Glyde: There was the Australian Fisheries Management Authority; Animal Health Australia; Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation; Cotton Research and Development Corporation; Fisheries Research and Development Corporation; Grains Research & Development Corporation; Horticulture Australia Ltd; Landcare Australia Ltd; Australian Livestock Export Corporation Ltd, otherwise known as LiveCorp; Plant Health Australia; and Forest and Wood Products Australia Limited. The cost varied depending on travel and time that they were here.

Senator EDWARDS: I note that on page 75 of the previous estimates transcript you have predicted that it would have cost the relevant agencies around \$80,000 in unproductive time. That was back then. But are you now saying that that figure is different?

Mr Glyde: No. That estimate was really based on the costs of having departmental witnesses here all day coming up at a particular time and then either not getting on or getting on much later than had been predicted. In that question on notice answer we estimated that after having a detailed calculation the estimated salary costs of having the departmental witnesses available all day was of the order of \$70,000. So our first estimate was in the ballpark.

Senator EDWARDS: It was not far from the mark. Have all those agencies been called again for this session of estimates?

Mr Glyde: Not all of them. I would have to go back and check against today's agenda.

Question: 73 (continued)

Answer:

Of those agencies that were called to attend but did not have the opportunity to appear at the Supplementary Budget Estimates hearing in November 2014, the following agencies were called again to attend the Additional Estimates hearing in February 2015:

- Australian Fisheries Management Authority
- Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (again called and did not appear at the February hearing)
- Cotton Research and Development Corporation (again called and did not appear at the February hearing)
- Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (again called and did not appear at the February hearing)
- Grains Research and Development Corporation (again called and did not appear at the February hearing)
- Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited (formerly Horticulture Australia Limited) (again called and did not appear at the February hearing)
- Landcare Australia Limited (again called and did not appear at the February hearing)
- Australian Livestock Export Corporation Limited (LiveCorp Australia)
- Plant Health Australia (again called and did not appear at the February hearing)

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates February 2015

Agriculture

Question: 74

Division/Agency: Governance

Topic: Serana Issue

Proof Hansard page: 98-99 (23.02.2015)

Senator STERLE asked: Can I ask who is conducting the internal probe? It is an internal probe, isn't it?

Dr Grimes: I would not describe it as an internal probe. We have completed, indeed, an internal investigation in relation to allegations that there was inappropriate and unlawful disclosure of commercial information.

Senator STERLE: So you have completed that.

Dr Grimes: That has been completed.

Senator STERLE: So can I ask—

Dr Grimes: You can ask the question, yes.

Senator STERLE: Tremendous. I want to know what came out of the internal investigation.

Dr Grimes: That did not find any unlawful actions or inappropriate actions on behalf of the department in the disclosure of the commercial information.

Senator STERLE: Will it be a public document?

Dr Grimes: I would have to take it on notice and see whether the document could be released. I will have to take that on notice and give that proper consideration.

Senator STERLE: Okay. I will leave it at that. If you could do that for me—and who did the investigation, as well, if you could.

Dr Grimes: I can take those questions on notice and see what we can provide.

Answer:

Will the investigation report be a public document? No.

Who did the investigation? The investigation was undertaken by the department's Fraud and Security section.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates March 2015

Agriculture

Question: 75

Division/Agency: Governance Branch

Topic: Monitoring of question time

Proof Hansard page: 8 (5.03.2015)

Senator CAMERON asked:

Senator CAMERON: When your minister is on his feet in the House of Representatives answering a question from the shadow minister, or anyone in the House of Representatives, do you monitor the minister's response?

Dr Grimes: As a general rule the department would seek to monitor responses that are being provided in the House.

Senator CAMERON: Did you monitor the response from Minister Joyce on Monday. Minister Joyce answered a question from Mr Fitzgibbon on Monday the 20th. Are you are aware of that?

Dr Grimes: Yes, I am aware of that.

Senator CAMERON: Was that monitored?

Dr Grimes: I am not aware of whether it was monitored or not at the time.

Senator CAMERON: When did you first become aware then of this? Can you take on notice as to whether it was monitored?

Dr Grimes: Yes, I am happy to take that on notice.

Answer:

Departmental staff have access to proceedings in the House of Representatives and Senate broadcast on parliamentary channels and through Parliamentary Audio Visual Services. ABC 24 also televises Question Time in the House of Representatives.

All relevant areas of the department are encouraged to keep abreast of questions asked of the Minister so timely advice can be provided to the Minister's office as required.

A number of staff did view the proceedings on 20 October 2014.

Dr Grimes first became aware of the Minister's response to a question from Mr Fitzgibbon on 22 October 2014.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates March 2015

Agriculture

Question: 76

Division/Agency: Governance Branch

Topic: Viewing of question time – what minister said

Proof Hansard page: 8-9 (5.03.2015)

Senator CAMERON asked:

Senator CAMERON: Has anyone in the department viewed the video of what the minister said?

Dr Grimes: I am not aware of if anyone has—

Senator CAMERON: Can you take that on notice?

Dr Grimes: Yes. I am happy to take that on notice.

Answer:

Refer to the response to Question on Notice75.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates February 2015

Agriculture

Question: 77

Division/Agency: Governance Branch

Topic: Boards – Gender Balance

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator MOORE asked:

The Gender Balance on Australian Government Boards Report 2013-14 shows that for the 21 boards within the agriculture portfolio that 36.8% of members are women down from 40% in 2013 and that women comprised only 30% of appointments in the 12 months to June 2014.

1. Why did the proportion of women board members decline in the 12 months to June 2014?
2. Why did women comprise only 30% of appointees in the 12 months to June 2013?
3. What actions has the Department taken since June 2014 to increase the number of women appointees?
4. On the Department's web site there is a list of vacant board positions that appears to be out of date.

<http://www.agriculture.gov.au/about/portfolio-agencies/balance-database/vacancies>

Is the list correct? If it is not, what steps are being taken to correct it and when will it be updated?

5. How many women have to boards based on their information placed in the Department's Balance database in each of the last four financial years?
6. How many women have recorded their details on the Balance database for each of the last four financial years?
7. In what public conferences or forums does the Department promote the Balance database?
8. What steps does the Department take to encourage women to put their details on the Balance database?

Question: 77 (continued)

Answer:

- 1 & 2. When making appointments, the minister either identifies candidates directly or receives nominations from a selection committee that has conducted a selection process. The minister considers the suitability of candidates based on skills and experience in required fields of expertise, as well as the government's gender balance target. The selection committee provides information to assist the minister to assess the suitability of candidates for appointment.

Women comprised 40.6 per cent of appointees in the 12 months to June 2013.

3. The department promotes the government's gender target for Australian Government boards, which is 40 per cent female and 40 per cent male with the remainder being of either gender. Since 2013 the department has continued to reinforce the need for selection committees to consider gender diversity and the government's target during selection processes. The minister is also informed about the progress against the target when considering advice about appointment proposals. To support a process, the approach of the department is to email advertisements for portfolio board vacancies to Balance database registrants. Vacancies are also promoted on the Women on Boards and the AusGovBoards websites. The department has used Boardlinks to search for possible candidates for advisory committees or expert panels.
4. Since the creation of the AusGovBoards website, agriculture portfolio vacancies are listed on that website. Details of advertised vacancies are also emailed to Balance registrants. The department is currently refreshing its website. As such, the list of vacancies on the department's website is currently out-of-date and the page is being reviewed as part of the refresh process, which is expected to be finalised in May 2015.
5. This answer has been prepared on the understanding that the question is asking "How many women have [been appointed]...". It is not possible to draw a direct correlation between registration on Balance and appointment to a position as there are several factors that are taken into consideration for appointments.
6. The number of women who have recorded their details on the Balance database in the last four financial years, including the current year 2014–15, are:

Financial year	# of women who registered
1 July 2011–30 June 2012	– 14
1 July 2012–30 June 2013	– 4
1 July 2013–30 June 2014	– 6
1 July 2014–11 Mar 2015	– 15

7. The Balance database is promoted on the department's website and other state government websites.
8. Unsuccessful applicants for portfolio board and other positions are also encouraged to register with the Balance database.

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Additional Estimates February 2015

Agriculture

Question: 78

Division/Agency: Governance Branch

Topic: Costs of agencies attendance – Additional Estimates

Proof Hansard page: Written

SENATOR EDWARDS asked:

Provide an estimate of the costs of bringing witnesses to Additional Estimates and not appearing due to time over runs. Include costs such as wages, travel and accommodation.

Answer:

The combined estimated costs of portfolio agencies' witnesses that were called but did not appear at the February Additional Estimates hearing was \$21 026.72. For a breakdown of costs by agency see Attachment A.

The estimated salary costs of departmental witnesses from the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences who were called but did not appear at the February Additional Estimates hearing was \$5 301.09.

Question: 78 (continued)

Plant Health Australia

Number of witnesses	Two
Wages for the day	\$900.00
Accommodation	n/a
Travel (flights/taxi/incidentals)	n/a
TOTAL	\$900.00

Australian Egg Corporation Limited

Number of witnesses	One
Wages for the day	\$1 392.09
Accommodation	\$241.57
Travel (flights/taxi /incidentals)	\$613.46
TOTAL	\$2 247.12

Landcare Australia Limited

Number of witnesses	One
Wages for the day	\$1 050.00
Accommodation	\$169.20
Travel (flights/taxi/incidentals)	\$623.91
TOTAL	\$1 843.11

Australian Landcare Council

Number of witnesses	Two
Wages for the day	\$2 282.19
Accommodation	n/a
Travel (flights/taxi/incidentals)	n/a
TOTAL	\$2 282.19

Question: 78 (continued)

Cotton Research and Development Corporation

Number of witnesses	Three
Wages for the day	\$2 964.00
Accommodation	\$562.00
Travel (flights/taxi/incidentals)	\$3 617.00
TOTAL	\$7 143.00

Fisheries Research and Development Corporation

Number of witnesses	Two
Wages for the day	\$2 487.00
Accommodation	n/a
Travel (flights/taxi/incidentals)	n/a
TOTAL	\$2 487.00

Grains Research and Development Corporation

Number of witnesses	Two
Wages for the day	\$2 124.30
Accommodation	n/a
Travel (flights/taxi/incidentals)	n/a
TOTAL	\$2 124.30

Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation

Number of witnesses	Two
Wages for the day	\$2 000.00
Accommodation	n/a
Travel (flights/taxi/incidentals)	n/a
TOTAL	\$2 000.00