

Rural & Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates

Infrastructure and Regional Development

Question no.: 196

Program: n/a

Division/Agency: Policy and Research

Topic: CIRCLE Program

Proof Hansard Pages: 115-116 (20 October 2014)

Senator Sterle asked:

Senator STERLE: Do you know the CIRCLE program: Creating Inspiring Rural Community Leadership and Engagement?

Mr Mrdak: Yes, I know of it.

Senator STERLE: Has the CIRCLE program been run in the past or is this the first year?

Mr Mrdak: It is my understanding that this is the first program that has been run with the FRRR.

Senator STERLE: With who?

Mr Mrdak: The Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal.

Senator STERLE: Has it been run before with some other mob?

Mr Mrdak: No. That is my understanding.

Senator STERLE: So, to the best of your knowledge, this is the only time it has been run?

Mr Mrdak: That is my understanding; I will check that. This was a program established before the machinery of government changes. I will take that on notice, if you do not mind, to see if there are any predecessor programs.

Senator STERLE: If you can, because we have other questions but if we do not know if it has been run before then I cannot ask them. Will you be able to come back to us tonight?

Mr Mrdak: I will check if we have officers. Senator, we may be able to help you more immediately.

Ms Fleming: The FRRR organisation in Victoria has previously provided small grants to regional organisations.

Senator STERLE: To run this CIRCLE program?

Ms Fleming: They have just run small regional grant programs but not the CIRCLE program. They have provided funding to regional organisations but not specifically the CIRCLE program.

Senator STERLE: Okay, so FRRR have now stepped up to the big league and they have got the funding grants for the CIRCLE program.

Ms Fleming: That is my understanding, but previously they did provide small grants to regional bodies.

Senator STERLE: To do what?

Ms Fleming: Small development projects.

Senator STERLE: Not this leadership and engagement stuff.

Mr Mrdak: No, this is a new area. The FRRR is a very strong organisation, headed by the honourable Ian Sinclair, which provides small funding grants to communities. It does disaster relief and recovery. It did a terrific job after the Victorian bushfires and also does a range of small community projects—Back to School and the like—for small rural and remote communities. It is a very highly regarded organisation.

Senator STERLE: That is tremendous. As I said, I cannot pursue my questioning unless you can come back and you can let me know if they have done any of this or if someone else has done this CIRCLE program work.

Answer:

The Creating Inspiring Rural Community Leadership and Engagement (CIRCLE) programme is a new programme launched by the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR) and the Australian Government on 13 October 2014.

The CIRCLE programme is a specific initiative of FRRR. Many other organisations in Australia provide varying types of leadership programs.

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Question no.: 197

Program:n/a

Division/Agency: Policy and Research

Topic: Projects Winding Down

Proof Hansard Page: 123 (20 October 2014)

Senator McLucas asked:

Senator McLUCAS: Are there any other new initiatives outside the white paper process or the food and fibre supply program work that the office is doing?

Mr Collett: We have done a couple of other pieces of supporting activity, including providing some input working with the CSIRO into the consideration that a number of government ministers have had on water infrastructure. That is another piece of work I will point to. Otherwise, we are largely supporting the white paper process. Obviously, out of that there may be significant work for the office or for a range of other people responsible for delivery of things in Northern Australia. But our suite of activities is largely winding down pending the finalisation of the white paper and a clear direction from government about where they wish to go with that.

Senator McLUCAS: When you say activities are 'winding down', what does that mean?

Mr Collett: It means activities such as what was referred to as the Pentland study and a range of other pieces of activity that have been underway. As they have concluded we have not necessarily had other projects coming in to take their place. We would probably have had more than half-a-dozen discrete areas of project work and activity underway previously. As some of those are winding down, at this point we are not necessarily facilitating or commissioning other projects. It is in that context.

Senator McLUCAS: On notice, you talked about the Pentland study. That is one example that I am aware of. What are the other projects that are 'winding down'?

Mr Collett: I can provide you with a detailed list on notice. ...

Answer:

The Office of Northern Australia (ONA) has completed a number of pieces of foundational research focusing on key opportunities and challenges to the development of northern Australia, including:

North Queensland Irrigated Agriculture Strategy (CSIRO Flinders & Gilbert Rivers Report)

Led by CSIRO and the Queensland Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF-Q) this project assessed the scale and sustainability of opportunities for water resource development and new irrigated agriculture in the Flinders and Gilbert river catchments in north Queensland. The project findings were released in February 2014.

Mosaic irrigation

This project provides a comprehensive assessment of opportunities for establishing and operating mosaic irrigation to support the intensification and diversification of beef production, analysing prospects at the enterprise, industry and regional levels in northern Australia. CSIRO worked with industry to produce a practical guide to establishing mosaic irrigation to enhance the northern beef industry's productivity, by mitigating dry season feed shortages and intensifying production by improving the quality of feed.

This work was released on 6 March 2014.

Livestock Industry Transport Logistics

Led by CSIRO, in collaboration with the QLD, WA and NT governments and industry, this project provides comprehensive logistical analysis of the livestock industry value chain (production; transport and handling; live cattle trade; processing; retail and exports) and how productivity could be optimised in both the short and medium term. The project developed modelling tools to identify logistical and productivity improvements in

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the northern pastoral industry, assessing a wide range of options, from small changes in the system through to major investments in new transport and processing infrastructure. This work was released on 7 March 2014.

North and Northwest Queensland Sustainable Resource Feasibility Studies (Pentland study)

The studies investigated the feasibility of electricity generation and transmission in northern Queensland, and establishing an irrigated agriculture precinct in the Pentland/Hughenden region to support new primary industry ventures as well as processing facilities. This work was released on 10 June 2014.

Food and Fibre Supply Chains

The Northern Australia Food and Fibre Supply Chains Study examined opportunities to improve existing food and fibre value chains and/or establish new industries across northern Australia, to capitalise on market opportunities. The study assessed the location and scale of medium and long term opportunities for agriculture across northern Australia, and the critical supply chain and infrastructure investments that would foster these opportunities. This work was released on 3 November 2014.

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Question no.: 198

Program: n/a

Division/Agency: Policy and Research

Topic: APS Staff Commonwealth Payroll in Northern Australia

Proof Hansard Page: 123 (20 October 2014)

Senator McLucas asked:

Senator McLUCAS: You will have to take this one on notice. Can you find out for us how many Australian Public Service staff were on the Commonwealth payroll in Northern Australia—that is north of the Tropic of Capricorn—on 1 October 2013 and on the 1 October 2014?

Mr Collett: I will take that on notice, Senator.

Answer:

Data from 1 October 2013 to 1 October 2014 is unavailable. The most recent data available of this nature is as at June 2014. The only practical source of APS employment data that is available is the APS Employment Database (APSED), a database of all people who are officially employed under the Public Service Act 1999. However, for a number of reasons regional employment statistics sourced from the APSED data should only be viewed as indicative:

- the only geographical marker available in the database is the postcode recorded for each employee in agencies' HR systems. In some agencies, regional employees are given a generic postcode in the HR system (such as the postcode of head office) or a location other than the actual one where the employee works;
- postcodes can cover large areas that may cross the Tropic of Capricorn. On this basis some employees may be excluded or included in error;
- the APSED data does not include Australian Defence Force personnel, although it does include people employed under the Public Service Act that work in the Department of Defence; and
- the APSED data does not include contract staff.

According to the Australian Public Service Commission, as at June 2013 there were approximately 6,060 employees in the Australian Public Service located above the Tropic of Capricorn. In June 2014 this figure had declined to approximately 5,398 employees.

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Question no.: 199

Program: n/a

Division/Agency: Policy and Research

Topic: Northern Australia Advisory Group

Proof Hansard Page: 124 (20 October 2014)

Senator McLucas asked:

Senator McLUCAS: Were you asked for any supplementary advice around the composition of the advisory group post it being established?

Mr Collett: I do not recall being asked, Senator.

Senator McLUCAS: Are you aware that there has been an extra member added to the group?

Mr Collett: I am aware of that, yes.

Senator McLUCAS: When did that happen?

Mr Collett: It was relatively recently, but I would need to check the exact timing.

CHAIR: Who was it?

Mr Collett: It was Professor Scott Bowman from Central Queensland University.

CHAIR: And what was his skill set?

Mr Collett: I can come back to you on notice with a bio for Professor Bowman, if you like, Senator.

Senator McLUCAS: I think the chair's question is a valid one. What was the gap that had to be filled?

Mr Collett: I would not want to speak on behalf of either the Prime Minister, who was involved in the appointment, or for the Prime Minister's department, who are involved in considerations for that advisory group. We provided some advice to that taskforce within the Prime Minister's department when it was requested of us, but we do not manage that group or provide the secretariat to it.

Senator McLUCAS: No, I understand.

Mr Collett: I would not want to speak on their behalf, but I am happy on notice to have a discussion with them and come back with some information for the committee.

...

Senator McLUCAS: Did you say a moment ago that the Prime Minister sought that advice or was it the Prime Minister's department?

Mr Collett: I would think it was the Prime Minister's department. Since the advisory group are advising the Prime Minister directly, I would image that the Prime Minister and his office may have been involved; but I will have to seek that advice from the Prime Minister's department and come back to you.

Answer:

The Prime Minister appointed Professor Scott Bowman to the Northern Australia Advisory Group on 13 October 2014. This followed a recommendation by the Deputy Prime Minister. Professor Bowman's expertise and commitment make him well placed to provide valuable input to the Group, particularly around economic development in central and northern Queensland. He also has an extensive and valuable network, having held senior positions in four of Australia's leading universities.

Biography of Professor Scott Bowman

Professor Bowman began his professional life as a radiographer. As well as professional qualifications, he holds Masters Degrees in Politics and Business Administration. He undertook a PhD in the field of clinical decision making. Before moving to Australia he worked at South Bank University and St Martins College Lancaster. In Australia he has held senior positions at Charles Sturt University, the University of South Australia and James Cook University. In August 2009 he was appointed the Vice Chancellor and President of CQUniversity Australia.

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Question no.: 200

Program: n/a

Division/Agency: Policy and Research

Topic: Advisory Group Meetings

Proof Hansard Page: 124 (20 October 2014)

Senator McLucas asked:

Senator McLUCAS: ... You play an observer status role in the advisory group meetings, is that correct?

Mr Collett: Yes, we do. That facilitates us being able to assist the taskforce, which is providing the secretariat. Where that group has particular information they are after or research we may be able to assist them with, advice on the government's policy position on particular issues, it allows us to facilitate that.

Senator McLUCAS: Is it appropriate for me to ask you what the advisory group has in fact requested of this office in terms of research work?

Mr Collett: I can take that on notice and come back to you. Having not been at the most recent meeting, I would not want to give you an incomplete picture, but I am happy on notice to come back to you with that.

Answer:

The Northern Australia Advisory Group has been briefed on a range of matters to help inform its deliberations, including the Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia's report '*Pivot North: Inquiry into the Development of Northern Australia*', submissions to the Green Paper and to the Joint Select Committee, and provided with various public reports, papers and speech transcripts. The Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development has provided Northern Australia Advisory Group with detailed advice on air and maritime cabotage arrangements in northern Australia. The Group has not commissioned formal research work and does not expect to do so.

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Question no.: 201

Program: n/a

Division/Agency: Policy and Research

Topic: Coastal Shipping

Proof Hansard Page: 118 (20 October 2014)

Senator Sterle asked:

Senator STERLE: You outline the reasons for the coastal shipping change in domestic share, on your figures, from 27 per cent to 17 per cent as being due 'principally to lower volumes of domestic petroleum and iron ore'.

Dr Dolman: That is correct.

Senator STERLE: Can you just elaborate on that? Can you go through it and tell us what that actually means, please?

Dr Dolman: I think I might need to take that on notice.

Answer:

Total freight volumes have quadrupled over the past four decades, predominantly due to significant growth in road freight and, more recently, strong growth in mining-related rail freight volumes. Between 2000–01 and 2011–12, total rail freight volumes more than doubled, from 137 billion tonnes kilometres in 2000–01 to 290 billion tonne kilometres in 2011–12, and road freight volumes increased almost 50 per cent. Over the same period coastal shipping freight volumes initially increased, from 104 billion tonne kilometres in 2000–01 to 126 billion tonne kilometres in 2006–07, but thereafter declined to 101 billion tonne kilometres in 2011–12—an overall net fall in total coastal freight volumes of 3 billion tonne kilometres between 2000–01 and 2011–12. Declining reported domestic coastal petroleum movements appears to account for the majority of the drop in total coastal volumes between 2006–07 and 2011–12, falling by around 18 billion tonne kilometres over that period, and coastal iron ore movements have declined with BlueScope Steel's closure of its second blast furnace at Port Kembla in October 2011.

However, the reduction in coastal shipping's share of total freight, from 27 per cent in 2000–01 to 17 per cent in 2011–12 is not wholly due to the reduced coastal shipping of domestic petroleum and iron ore. Rather it is a combination of both the strong growth in rail and, to a lesser extent, road freight over that period, and the decline in total reported coastal shipping volumes since 2006–07. The growth in mining-related rail freight over that period has been such that even had coastal shipping volumes had not declined since 2006–07, coastal shipping's share of domestic freight would have fallen to around 20 per cent in 2011–12.

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Question no.: 202

Program: n/a

Division/Agency: Policy and Research

Topic: CIRCLE Program

Proof Hansard Page: Written

Senator Sterle asked:

I note that the Government recently launched the Creating Inspiring Rural Community Leadership and Engagement (CIRCLE) Program.

1. Has the CIRCLE program been run in the past?
2. If yes, has there been any tracking of the participants in the program?
3. Has there been any analysis of the outcomes of the CIRCLE program?
4. Do you know if any of the previous participants have stood for Parliament?

Answer:

1. No. The Creating Inspiring Rural Community Leadership and Engagement (CIRCLE) programme is a new programme, developed by the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR).

The FRRR and the Australian Government launched the CIRCLE programme on 13 October 2014.

2. n/a.

3. As the programme only opened last month, no analysis has yet been undertaken.

4. n/a.

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Question no.: 203

Program: n/a

Division/Agency: Policy and Research

Topic: State of Australian Cities

Proof Hansard Page: Written

Senator Sterle asked:

1. Has work on the state of Australian Cities 2014 been completed?
2. When will it be released?
3. Will it be as comprehensive as the 2013 report? If not, how will its scope be changed – what is dropped?
4. Will there be all the same datasets made available?
5. If not, which will not be continued?
6. Will there be additional datasets?
7. If yes, which areas?
8. How many pages is it?
9. Does it still look at Australia's 18 biggest cities? Has the list of 18 changed – ie have any cities dropped in or out of the 18?
10. Is the 2014 State of the Cities Report linked to the National Urban Policy?
11. What is the status of the National Urban Policy? Is that still Government policy?

Answer:

1. The work on the State of Australian Cities is near completion.
2. The report will be released in December 2014.
3. This year's report has a slightly different focus and aligns to a greater extent to the Government's portfolio priorities. Specific consideration of Governance and Sustainability are not addressed in this year's report, but a focus on transport infrastructure has been added. A large amount of statistical information will be covered in a companion publication.
4. This year the Department has prepared a new suite of publications that provide statistical information and analysis. A *Progress in Australian Regions –Yearbook 2014* has been prepared as a companion to the State of Australian Cities report and collates information about Australia's regions, including urban areas, within a single document.
5. The *Progress in Australian Regions –Yearbook 2014* includes national progress indicators that can be tracked over time and that will provide stakeholders with information to track progress in urban and regional areas. It provides information at a sub-state as well as a national level.
6. The *Progress in Australian Regions –Yearbook 2014* uses 73 different indicators grouped in Progress and Contextual indicators.
7. The data sets in the *Progress in Australian Regions –Yearbook 2014* cover Progress indicators such as Society, Economy, Environment and Governance and Contextual indicators such as Population, Transport and Industry.
8. The *Progress in Australian Regions –Yearbook 2014* is expected to be approximately 320 pages and the State of Australian Cities 2014 will be approximately 145 pages.
9. This year's report looks at Australia's 20 largest cities, with the addition of Bendigo and Ballarat.
10. The State of Australian Cities 2014 is not linked to the National Urban Policy.
11. The Government has not made any statements regarding the National Urban Policy.

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Question no.: 204

Program: n/a

Division/Agency: Policy and Research

Topic: Australian Sea Freight 2012-13 Data

Proof Hansard Page: Written

Senator Sterle asked:

1. Have you reviewed the data that forms the basis of the claim that there were 1000 fewer coastal voyages in 2012-3 as against 2011-2?
2. Are any changes proposed to the data as published?
3. How does BITRE respond to the following?
 - a. that in the latter year, voyages without cargo were not counted, but in the former year, they were?
 - b. licences within the transition period were not counted correctly?
4. Can BITRE explain the discrepancy between the total tonnage of coastal trade reported in Sea Freight 2012-13, compared to the amounts that Fremantle reported in their annual report.
5. Do you consider that a decline in tonnages loaded across the period is proof that coastal shipping regulation is responsible for the reduced tonnages?
6. What role does the level of the Australian dollar play in impacting coastal shipping volumes?
7. What role do port changes play in impacting coastal shipping costs?
8. Are you aware of concerns expressed by Shipping Australia, Asciano and Qube re significantly escalating port charges arising from – among other things – the structure of recent port privatisations?
9. How do port charges impact on the cost of coastal shipping?

Answer:

1. Yes
2. The data relating to coastal voyages under General Licence in 2012-13 is not being changed. Changes to its presentation and explanation are being considered.
3.
 - a. We are aware of these concerns. Changes to the presentation and explanation of the data are being considered.
 - b. The definition of a voyage changed between the two systems. Under the permit system in 2011-12 a voyage included voyages where no cargo was carried. Under the new system in 2012-13 a voyage only included voyages where cargo was carried. Changes to the presentation and explanation of the data are being considered.
4. The weight of coastal freight presented in Australian Sea Freight 2012-13 is derived from data supplied by port authorities in response to BITRE's annual coastal freight survey. It appears that there are inconsistencies between the data provided to BITRE by Fremantle Ports and data in their annual report. BITRE have contacted Fremantle ports regarding this inconsistency and will update Australian Sea Freight 2012-13 with the revised data, if necessary.
5. Fluctuations in coastal shipping freight volumes are likely due to multiple factors, including changes to coastal shipping regulation.
6. Fluctuations in coastal shipping freight volumes are likely due to multiple factors, including the level of the Australian dollar.
7. Fluctuations in coastal shipping costs are likely due to several factors, including port changes.
8. Yes.
9. BITRE is not able to quantify the relationship between port charges and the cost of coastal shipping.

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Question no.: 205

Program: 1.1

Division/Agency: Policy and Research

Topic: High Speed Rail

Proof Hansard Page: Written

Senator Sterle asked:

On 20 October 2014, the Department indicated that there was a Commonwealth/State group of officials looking at corridor preservation for HSR.

1. When has that group met in the financial year 2014-5? How many occasions and on what dates?
2. Is the group formalised – what is its name and membership?
3. Were the following jurisdictions represented at all of these meetings?
 - a. Queensland;
 - b. NSW;
 - c. ACT; and
 - d. Victoria.
4. Is local government represented? How and by who?
5. Who was the most senior Commonwealth official to participate in each of these meetings?
6. Is the subject corridor identical to that identified by the Phase 2 study from 2013, led by AECOM?
7. If not, why not?

Answer:

1. The High Speed Rail Senior Officials Group has met once in 2014-15, on 17 July 2014. Eight meetings between officials of the Commonwealth and individual jurisdictions have been conducted bi-laterally, on a needs basis.
2. The group consists of senior officials from the Commonwealth Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, and counterpart officials from the Transport and/or Planning Departments in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory.
3. See answer to Question 1.
4. No.
5. Ms Lyn O'Connell, Deputy Secretary, Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development.
6. Yes, however impacts any changed station locations may have on the corridor have also been discussed.
7. N/A.