



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture
and Water Resources

Senator Barry O'Sullivan
Chair
Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Chair

At the February 2016 Additional Estimates hearing, Senator Joe Bullock requested the department provide a detailed breakdown of expenditure relating to meetings of the Agricultural Industry Advisory Council (AIAC) prior to each Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee hearing.

A summary of costs for AIAC meetings held between January 2014 and April 2016 were previously provided to the committee. Since then the AIAC met in October 2016 in Glenelg, South Australia. The total cost for this meeting was \$17, 969.62 and details are provided at Attachment A. The next meeting is scheduled for 5 April 2017.

At the October 2016 Supplementary Budget Estimates hearing, there was some interest in the progress with the implementation of the Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper. To date, 22 of 31 measures (and five sub-measures) have been implemented. A number of these are now ongoing activities for the department and are considered to be business as usual. The current status of individual measures is provided at Attachment B.

For those measures where implementation is in progress, this attachment provides an update from the department's response to a written Question on Notice (87) from the October hearing relating to the implementation of the White Paper.

I trust this information is of assistance in supporting the Committee's preparations for its next hearing.

Yours sincerely

MEISSA BROWN
Assistant Secretary
Parliamentary and Portfolio Business Branch
Corporate Strategy and Governance Division

20 February 2017

GLENELG, SOUTH AUSTRALIA

6-7 OCTOBER 2016

MEETING COSTS

Number of meeting attendees = 17

Break down travel expenses	
Accommodation	\$ 4,654.00
Flights & QBT fees	\$ 6,298.54
Staff incidentals*	\$ 436.30
Members' incidentals*	\$ 418.40
Sub-total	\$ 11,807.24
Other costs associated with meeting	
Venue and catering	\$ 1,044.60
Meals (including networking function catering)	\$ 2,277.50
Alcoholic beverages - set package (including non-alcoholic beverages and one-hour networking function – there were 51 attendees)	\$ 1,535.00
Equipment	\$ 725.53
Transport	\$ 550.00
Parking and taxis	\$ 29.75
Sub-total	\$ 6,162.38
Total	\$ 17,969.62

Total attendance at events:

Meeting – 17 persons

Dinner – 14 persons

Networking function – 51 persons

*Incidentals include meal costs when a meal is not provided as part of a member's attendance at a meeting and transport expenses such as taxis, parking and mileage.

Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper

Measure	Implementation status
Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) engagement with the agricultural sector.	Implemented.
Appoint a new Agriculture Commissioner.	Implemented.
A two-year co-operatives and innovative business models pilot programme.	In progress. It is anticipated, subject to government approval and legislative timeframes, implementation of the package to be complete by mid-2018.
Streamline the approval of agricultural and veterinary chemicals.	Implemented.
Productivity Commission inquiries into agricultural and fisheries regulations.	Implemented.
Reforms to country of origin labelling regulations.	Implemented.
Allowing farmers to opt back into income tax averaging.	In progress. The Bill was reintroduced into parliament on 14 September 2016. It is expected to be considered by both houses in the Autumn sitting of parliament.
Increase the deposit limit for Farm Management Deposits to \$800,000.	Implemented.
Allowing FMD accounts to be used as a farm business loan offset.	Implemented.
A more simplified accelerated depreciation regime for fencing (at a cost of \$56 million).	Implemented.
National Water Infrastructure Development Fund.	In progress. The government is funding 39 water infrastructure feasibility studies worth around \$45 million, including 15 studies worth up to \$25.5 million in Northern Australia. As of 8 February 2017, bilateral schedules to the <i>Project Agreement for National Water Infrastructure Development Fund - Feasibility Study Component</i> have been agreed with state and territory governments enabling payment of funding for feasibility studies to the states. Applications are also now open for Expressions of Interest (EOIs) from state and territory governments for water infrastructure construction. EOIs will be accepted continuously until all funds are committed.
\$1 million for improvements to the CSIRO's Transport Network Strategic Investment Tool (TRANSIT).	Implemented.
\$3.3 million for improved seasonal forecasting.	Implemented.
Immediate tax deduction for new water facilities and depreciation of capital expenditure on fodder storage assets over three years.	Implemented.

Measure	Implementation status
Farm insurance advice and risk assessment grants.	Implemented.
\$250 million per year drought concessional loans.	In progress. Transitional programme implemented for 2015–16 and the long-term is well progressed. The new Farm Business Concessional Loans Scheme commenced on 1 November 2016.
Increased Farm Household Allowance case management.	Implemented.
\$1.8 million for additional resources for Rural Financial Counselling Service providers in drought-affected areas.	Implemented.
\$20 million for additional mental health and community support services for rural communities in drought-affected areas.	Implemented.
Early access provisions for the Farm Management Deposits Scheme in times of drought.	Implemented.
Advice and assistance from the Australian Taxation Office to taxpayers in drought-affected communities.	Implemented.
\$35 million for local projects to provide short-term help to communities that are suffering economic downturn due to drought.	Implemented.
\$25.8 million for pest animals and weeds in drought-affected areas.	Implemented.
Development of clear, farmer-oriented priorities to target rural research, development and extension (RD&E) funding.	Implemented.
\$100 million to extend the Rural R&D for Profit programme to 2021–22.	Implemented.
Improving the efficiency of RDCs by improving governance.	Implemented.
New agricultural levies.	In progress.
\$1.2 million additional funding for RD&E in small agricultural industries.	Tea Tree Oil: On-track to be implemented by 1 July 2017. Export Fodder: Implemented. RIRDC funding for Small Agricultural Industries: Implemented.
\$50 million to boost our emergency pest and disease eradication and national response capability.	Implemented.
\$50 million to manage established pest animals and weeds.	In progress. Projects are being delivered by all jurisdictions under the project agreement for managing established pest animals and weeds.
Improve access by reducing technical trade barriers.	Implemented.
Strengthening Australia's biosecurity surveillance.	In progress.
Enhanced traceability systems.	In progress. On track for delivery by timeline by 2019.