



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Official Committee Hansard

SENATE

ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNICATIONS, INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY AND THE ARTS LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

ESTIMATES

(Budget Estimates)

THURSDAY, 25 MAY 2006

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SENATE

**ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNICATIONS, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
AND THE ARTS LEGISLATION COMMITTEE**

Thursday, 25 May 2006

Members: Senator Eggleston (*Chair*), Senator Lundy (*Deputy Chair*), Senators Patterson, Ronaldson, Siewert and Wortley

Senators in attendance: Senators Allison, Bartlett, Bob Brown, Carr, Eggleston, Chris Evans, Ferris, Heffernan, Joyce, Ian Macdonald, McLucas, Patterson, Ronaldson, Siewert, Stephens, Webber and Wortley

Committee met at 9.04 am

ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE PORTFOLIO

In Attendance

Senator Ian Campbell, Minister for the Environment and Heritage

Department of the Environment and Heritage

Executive

Mr David Borthwick, Secretary
Ms Anthea Tinney, Deputy Secretary
Dr Conall O'Connell, Deputy Secretary
Mr Howard Bamsey, Deputy Secretary

Approvals and Wildlife Division

Mr Gerard Early, First Assistant Secretary

Australian Antarctic Division

Dr Tony Press, Director, Australian Antarctic Division
Mr Rod Allen, General Manager, Corporate
Ms Virginia Mudie, Deputy Director, Policy Coordination

Bureau of Meteorology

Dr Geoff Love, Director

Corporate Strategies Division

Mr David Anderson, First Assistant Secretary, Corporate Strategies Division
Mr Darren Schaeffer, Assistant Secretary, Financial Management Branch and Chief Finance Officer

Environment Quality Division

Ms Mary Harwood, First Assistant Secretary
Mr Graeme Marshall, Acting Assistant Secretary, Environment Standards Branch
Dr Barry Reville, Assistant Secretary, Environment Protection Branch

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

Ms Virginia Chadwick, Chairman
Mr Andrew Skeat, Executive Director
Mr John Tanzer, Executive Director

Mr John Barrett, Director, Corporate Services

Mr James Innes, Acting Director, Parliamentary and Ministerial Liaison

Heritage Division

Mr Peter Burnett, First Assistant Secretary

Mr Terry Bailey, Assistant Secretary, Heritage Assessment Branch

Industry, Communities and Energy Division

Mr Barry Sterland, First Assistant Secretary

International Land and Analysis Division

Mr Ian Carruthers, First Assistant Secretary

Land Water and Coasts Division, Coasts and Water

Mr Tony Slatyer, First Assistant Secretary, Land, Water and Coasts Division

Marine Division

Ms Donna Petrachenko, First Assistant Secretary

Mr Andrew McNee, Assistant Secretary, Marine Environment

Mr Stephen Oxley, Assistant Secretary, Marine Conservation

Mr Ian Cresswell, Assistant Secretary, National Oceans Office

Natural Resource Management Programs Division

Mr Malcolm Forbes, First Assistant Secretary

Ms Kelly Pearce, Assistant Secretary, Australian Government Natural Resource Management Team

Ms Mary Colreavy, Acting Assistant Secretary, Australian Government Natural Resource Management Team

Office of the Renewable Energy Regulator

Mr David Rossiter, Regulator

Parks Australia Division

Mr Peter Cochrane, Director

Policy Coordination Protection Division

Mr Mark Tucker, First Assistant Secretary

Mr Kevin Keeffe, Assistant Secretary, Communications and International Branch

Mr Sean Sullivan, Assistant Secretary, Environment Research and Information Branch

Mr Luka Grey, Budget Manager, Policy Development Branch

Ms Jaime Smith, Budgets Officer

Supervising Scientist Division

Mr Alan Hughes

Sydney Harbour Federation Trust

Mr Geoff Bailey, Executive Director

CHAIR (Senator Eggleston)—I declare open this meeting of the Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts Legislation Committee. The Senate has referred to the committee the particulars of proposed expenditure for the 2006-07 budget for the portfolios of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, and Environment and Heritage, and certain other documents. The committee may also examine the annual reports of departments and agencies appearing before it. The committee is due to report to the Senate on 20 June 2006, and has fixed Friday, 28 July, as the date for the return of answers to questions taken on notice. The committee also reminds senators that written questions on

notice should be provided by the close of business next Friday, which is what we have agreed on informally.

Today the committee will begin its examination of the Environment and Heritage portfolio. Agencies will be called in accordance with the agenda. Under standing order 26, the committee must take all evidence in public session, and this includes answers to questions on notice. I remind all witnesses that in giving evidence to the committee they are protected by parliamentary privilege. It is unlawful for anyone to threaten or disadvantage a witness on account of the evidence given to a committee, and such action may be treated by the Senate as a contempt. It is also a contempt to give false or misleading evidence to a committee. The Senate, by resolution in 1999, endorsed the following test of relevance of questions at estimates hearings. It reads:

Any questions going to the operations or financial positions of the departments and agencies which are seeking funds in the estimates are relevant questions for the purpose of estimates hearings.

I remind officers that the Senate has resolved that there are no areas in connection with the expenditure of public funds where any person has discretion to withhold details or explanations from the parliament or its committees, unless the parliament has expressly provided otherwise.

The Senate has also resolved that an officer of a department of the Commonwealth or of the state shall not be asked to give opinions on matters of policy, and shall be given reasonable opportunity to refer questions asked of the officer to superior officers or to a minister. This resolution prohibits only questions asking for opinions on matters of policy, and does not preclude questions asking for explanations of policies or factual questions about when and how policies were adopted.

If a witness objects to answering a question, the witness should state the ground upon which the objection is taken, and the committee will determine whether it will insist on the answer, having regard to the ground on which it is claimed. Any claim that it would be contrary to the public interest to answer a question must be made by a minister and should be accompanied by a statement setting out the basis for this claim. That also applies to commercial-in-confidence issues. I welcome Senator the Hon. Ian Campbell, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, and his portfolio officers. Senator Campbell, do you wish to make an opening statement?

Senator Ian Campbell—No, thanks.

[9.08 am]

Australian Antarctic Division

CHAIR—I now call the Antarctic Division, and I welcome those officers to the table. We will be dealing with outcome 2.

Senator McLUCAS—I understand that, there has been a change in the numbers for the pro-whaling nations at the next International Whaling Commission meeting. What is the plan of the department—or your plan, Minister—to deal with the changed environment?

Senator Ian Campbell—It has not really changed. It is a very similar position to where we were last year leading into the meeting in Korea. It is a bit like any potential ballot that you

and I go through internally in our own parties. You have column with those on your side, a column with those against you and usually a column in the middle with the ones you are not sure of. Although some of the names have changed very slightly, the position is very similar to that with which we were faced last year going into the meeting in Korea.

What have we been doing? We have been trying to build up an international coalition to try and get, for example, Great Britain to work in one region of the world and America to work across various regions in the world. Commissioner Howard Bamsey had a meeting in Brazil last year to organise some of the whale conservation nations in South America. New Zealand is doing some work in the Pacific. So we really have more of a coalition of countries sharing the work to strengthen our base, strengthen the pro-conservation nations and make sure that they stay involved.

Some of them, for example, are very frustrated with the IWC—if you ever go to one, you could understand why; it is a very frustrating process—and some countries would naturally ask themselves the question: ‘Why do we even bother? This is really not worth our while.’ So we have to firm up those countries who might have had enough of it all and try to get wavering countries to see our way of thinking.

There has also been a process of looking at other countries who might have strong environmental credentials, who might care as deeply as we do about whale conservation and who might also consider joining the IWC. So you have seen already, for example, Israel indicating that they will join the convention. We think that it is likely that they will be credentialled for the meeting in a couple of weeks time.

So that is the sort of range of activities. To do that, we disseminate information, we disseminate scientific papers and we try to convince the world about the quality of Australia’s science and how we conduct scientific research on whales. We try to counter the arguments of the whaling nations that you need to do research by killing, for example, 850-plus whales. That is a nutshell of how we are doing it.

We obviously have to plan to try and win the votes when we get there. We have to carefully look at how things are on the ground when we get there—who is actually there. Last year we won through a combination of a number of things, like the facts that we were able to firm up some votes, we were able to change some votes, we were able to get some abstentions, and a couple of the people did not show up. So we will keep working right up until we get there. There is work going on literally around the clock around the world to try to win those votes.

Senator McLUCAS—I suppose I am taking out of what you said that you do not necessarily agree that the lie of the land has changed. Most commentary seems to say that there has been a shift in the numbers from Korea to now.

Senator Ian Campbell—Only that we won in Korea. But we won because some people did not turn up, we got some abstentions and we firmed up some support. But—

Senator McLUCAS—I take your point that you are out there trying to make sure that the antiwhaling nations are represented and do vote. Do you think you won in Korea because the pro-whalers did not show?

Senator Ian Campbell—It is a bit like everything—I think it was a combination of factors.

Senator McLUCAS—I am sure you have a numbers sheet.

Senator Ian Campbell—If I sat down with you with a list of the countries—and I think they have been published in the papers—and if we talked about where we were exactly this time last year and where we are now, you would see the numbers have not really changed. They are very similar.

Senator McLUCAS—So it is a matter of getting the right people there.

Senator Ian Campbell—You would hear on the radio—if you ran back what I said last year, I was saying very similar things: ‘Two or three votes out; it’s going to be very close.’ And that is my accurate and honest assessment of where we are at. But part of why we have to tell it as it is is that we do not really want people to be deeply upset if we lose. There is a big risk that we may lose. The risk was there last year. I think Conall O’Connell, who was our commissioner last year, is in the room. The sense in that room when we actually won was one of absolute elation from the antiwhaling nations because we honestly did not expect to win. I said to some of the journalists who were there with us that the real action was not on the floor of the meeting; it was at the arrivals lounge at the airport at Ulsan because we were waiting for those other delegations to turn up.

I want the Australian people to know, because so many are very passionate about this, that there is a very big risk of losing. But I also say that if we lose we will not see a return to commercial whaling occur literally after the commission meeting, because they have to get a two-thirds majority to change the rules and the risk of that is very low. The real risk at the next meeting—in a fortnight’s time, I think—is that they can start changing the rules, for example, moving into secret ballots and secret discussions and going into camera. They did last year when they said, ‘Right, we are going to stop the meeting and go into a commissioners meeting,’ which officially even the ministers are not allowed into. With Chris Carter, the Minister for Conservation from the New Zealand government, I thought we would have a bit of fun and storm into the room and see if we could get ourselves kicked out, but—

Senator McLUCAS—Sounds like student politics.

Senator Ian Campbell—Bob Brown would have been very proud of me. But that is what it is like. It is a risk, but Howard Bamsey, our commissioner, has been working extensively. Perhaps Mr Bamsey would like to add some comments about what we are doing.

Mr Bamsey—I think you have made the key point, Minister, that the numbers will be very uncertain—until we are in the room we will not really know how they come out.

Senator McLUCAS—I dare say Japan is doing the same sort of lobbying that you are undertaking.

Mr Bamsey—That is the case. We know there has been a meeting recently. I do not know what the agenda was, but I assume that it was pretty similar to the sorts of—

Senator McLUCAS—I dare say you were not invited, Mr Bamsey.

Senator Ian Campbell—Also, it is fair to say that the whaling nations keep an incredibly close watch on what we do. I have absolutely no doubt that as soon as the *Hansard* of this meeting is published they will be reading it very carefully. Although I am as open as I can be with the committee and with the Australian media and tell them in very broad terms what we

are doing, I try to keep as much powder dry as possible as well. We do not really want them to know exactly what we are doing—keep them guessing a little bit.

Senator McLUCAS—Has the department or you, Minister, contemplated what actions you might take if we do lose?

Senator Ian Campbell—We have; we have to work on that and again I think it is generally better to work on the basis that we are going to work really hard to win. But we have, of course, looked at what would occur. The main point I make, which I think is pertinent at the moment, is that there is no risk—I think it is fair to say in the medium term—of us returning to commercial whaling as a result of losing some of the ballots that should occur when I get to St Kitts. They will need a two-thirds majority to do that; there is no prospect of that.

A loss could in fact have perverse consequences for the whalers. A loss would massively heighten political attention. One of the things we are doing which I did not mention earlier is that I am actually trying very hard to get more ministers to go to these meetings. Only very few ministers go, with the exception of the pro-whaling nations, who send, for example, the former fisheries minister from the Solomon Islands. Great Britain sent, and will send again, Ben Bradshaw, who has just been reappointed to his position in the latest UK cabinet reshuffle. Chris Carter, the New Zealand Minister for Conservation, will be joining me. Last year the Germans sent a very impressive parliamentary secretary called Matthias Berninger. I think that is it.

I have written to all colleagues around the world in the Whaling Commission nations and encouraged them to send ministers, and I have had an overwhelmingly positive response to that. In fact, the Irish minister, who I met in the United Nations in New York two weeks ago, said that he was planning to come but there was something at home that he could not get out of—but he was very keen to do it. A number of other countries are saying that although it will be very hard to get ministers to go to St Kitts they are certainly going to be looking at it for the next meeting, which I think is in Anchorage, Alaska. It is important to get this matter out of the fisheries bureaucracies and into the cabinet level because the political dimensions are probably a little broader.

Senator McLUCAS—Turning to the strategies that you might pursue following a loss: what are you contemplating in that arena?

Senator IAN CAMPBELL—I do not think it is useful to go there at this stage. There would be a whole series of things we would need to do.

Senator McLUCAS—I understand that yesterday you were quoted as saying that Japan and other nations have the numbers.

Senator IAN CAMPBELL—I just said that. I do not think I have contradicted myself. They had the numbers last year, on paper.

Senator McLUCAS—That sounds different from what you said before.

Senator IAN CAMPBELL—I do not try to nuance these things, but sometimes the way that it comes out sounds nuanced. It is not. We could, if we wanted, table the latest numbers.

It is a movable feast. We are in exactly the same position, give or take a country, as we were at this time last year.

Senator ALLISON—Minister, this morning you said that you again ruled out taking action in an international court over Japan's whaling.

Senator IAN CAMPBELL—I did not, actually. I ruled it in. I said that the government would never rule it out.

Senator ALLISON—Then can you explain what the government is doing now with respect to that? I thought you said that you had looked at previously.

Senator IAN CAMPBELL—We have, and we have looked at it very recently and got more legal advice, just as Sir Geoffrey Palmer from New Zealand has done, who is—I think it is right to say, Howard—their whaling commissioner.

Mr Bamsey—Yes.

Senator IAN CAMPBELL—He is a former Prime Minister of New Zealand, and also an international jurist—a member of the international court himself—on occasions, and he has looked at it independently, as have a number of the other like-minded nations. They have all had independent legal advice, and they have all reached the same conclusion as Australia: that it is not likely to be successful. In fact, we went through the entire advice that IFAW put together, with, I think, a legal expert from Sydney—I think they came up with 14 points of things that we could do to try to further our whale conservation ends—and found that many of them were simply wrong. For example, I think one of the bits of advice was to use the CCAMLR treaty to pursue the issue. I think Dr Press could make a comment on that. I think at the time I said that CCAMLR has no jurisdiction over whaling. It is written into the treaty; it is written into the convention. A range of suggestions was made that were simply wrong, constitutionally or at law. But the bottom line is that if we thought it would be successful we would do it. We do not think it would be successful, and we are supported in that conclusion by independent advice that has been received by a range of governments around the world.

Senator ALLISON—Does that suggest that treaties should be beefed up?

Senator IAN CAMPBELL—If you could beef up the treaty—if you could beef up the whaling convention itself—that would be one of the things we would try to do. That is something that we discussed with our like-minded nations. But, to pursue that, you would need to ask—to go back to Senator McLucas's question—what other things we are looking at.

One of the things we talk about, with what we call the 'like-minded nations' or the 'pro-conservation nations', is whether you could go back to the start and write a new convention, or perhaps take the issues out of the convention and put them into some other environmental body under the United Nations. They are the sorts of things I have been pursuing. The problem with a lot of those things is that the same group of countries within the commission that are blocking our efforts to bring an end to whaling for all time will be there wherever we go. So that same stress—with Japan, Norway and Iceland leading, fundamentally, a large block of developing nations, small island states and others—will be a significant force wherever you move this in the international political and legal arena.

Senator ALLISON—But you have just told us we have had some success—won a vote, got the numbers, as it were. Doesn't that suggest that this is the time to act to strengthen those treaties?

Senator Ian Campbell—We have, say, 33 or 34 votes out of 60-odd. At Ulsan we had a slim majority of two, three or four votes on some of the ballots. That is not enough to rewrite a convention. That is not enough to rewrite a treaty. I am not an expert in how these things are done; Mr Bamsey is.

Mr Bamsey—Not really, Minister, but—

Senator Ian Campbell—Well, he knows more than I do.

Mr Bamsey—The problem is that within the whaling treaty there is no provision for amendment. It does not make any provision for amendment. So that means that, to change it, you really have to rewrite it. You have to go back to the general law of treaties. There are various arguments about it, but the simplest way of putting it is that every country would have to support a change, or it would not be bound by it. So, if you want to do something, you propose it. If somebody else does not come along then it does not bind them, so that is a real difficulty in seeking to make a treaty better.

Senator ALLISON—Minister, can you explain why you did not send ships down to the Antarctic to our waters at the time that Japan was whaling there?

Senator Ian Campbell—I could not really see a reason for doing that. We know what the Japanese are doing down there. They are very open about it. They tell us exactly how many whales they kill and what they do to them. In fact, when they go to the Whaling Commission, they give everyone a big video presentation and a PowerPoint projection on exactly what they do. They show you pictures of whales being sliced open and showing the fish that are inside their guts, saying, 'This is why we're doing the research.' It would cost literally millions of dollars to deploy—we do not have ships in the Commonwealth fleet that we would use for that. But I ask the question: why would we do it, and why would you spend enormous amounts of money doing it?

Senator ALLISON—But don't we anyway? Don't we have ships that go down there regularly to protect against other fishing activities that we do not approve of?

Dr Press—The Commonwealth does do fisheries patrols in the exclusive economic zone of Heard Island, and it does collaborative patrols with France in their exclusive economic zone. Because we have undisputed jurisdiction in the Heard Island EEZ, we are able to take direct law enforcement action against illegal fishing in that exclusive economic zone. But, for instance, if we come across a vessel outside the exclusive economic zone—say in the CCAMLR area adjacent to the Heard Island EEZ—the only legal jurisdiction we have is with the permission of the flag state. So, for instance, Australia has been able to board vessels with the permission of the flag state, but we do not have any law enforcement capacity other than inspection, and that would apply—

Senator ALLISON—So did the Japanese not enter our EEZ?

Dr Press—No.

Senator ALLISON—The Japanese whaling fleet did not enter our economic zone?

Dr Press—The Japanese whaling fleet did not enter the economic zone of Heard and McDonald Islands, which is an undisputed exclusive economic zone, but it did enter waters within the 200-mile limit of the Australian Antarctic Territory. But Japan does not recognise our jurisdiction.

Senator Ian Campbell—Just for the record, could we say how many countries do recognise that?

Dr Press—Our jurisdiction over the Australian Antarctic Territory is recognised by Great Britain, New Zealand, Norway and France.

Senator Ian Campbell—So four countries out of the roughly 190 countries in the world recognise that as Australian territory.

Senator ALLISON—What are the opportunities for having more countries recognise that zone?

Senator IAN CAMPBELL—It is the reason we have a thing called the Antarctic Treaty, really. We claim 42 per cent of a very large continent, and the reason that the Antarctic Treaty was put in place was to manage those issues. It has been, arguably, one of the most successful treaties ever entered into by the countries of the world. It is an incredible achievement.

Senator ALLISON—Have sanctions been considered by those countries disturbed about Japan's whaling?

Senator IAN CAMPBELL—I think most countries in our like-minded group would regard that sort of proposition as being counterproductive.

Senator ALLISON—Why is that?

Senator IAN CAMPBELL—To get Japan to finish whaling you would have to get a change of decision and a change in the way of thinking in Japan. It is likely that, if you used that sort of tactic, a proud and sovereign nation would go in the opposite direction—'How dare these people tell us what to do or threaten us in relation to this activity!' That would be the reaction; I have no doubt about it. I think it would be entirely counterproductive.

Senator ALLISON—What should be the tactic, then, if that is not the right one?

Senator IAN CAMPBELL—Just what we are doing at the moment. We have achieved phenomenal results in whale conservation over the past 20 years. We should not diminish that achievement. Back in the 1970s, if you had gone around the Australian coast you would have been very lucky ever to see a whale; there were virtually no whales left on the Australian coast. Now—and I think Dr Press or someone else would be able to give us the numbers—you are now seeing thousands of whales annually migrating around the southern parts of the coast and along the Queensland and Western Australian coasts. That has been a great achievement of the moratorium, which all countries have recognised except for Norway. Of course, we have the issue of Iceland. Is Iceland doing so-called scientific whaling?

Mr Bamsey—Yes.

Senator IAN CAMPBELL—Iceland and Japan, of course, are doing what we would call an abuse of the scientific provision, or abusing what I would call a loophole. But, with those exceptions—and one other, that of aboriginal subsistence whaling, which is one of the

exceptions that Australia has always made to our rule of bringing all commercial whaling to an end—the world has agreed not to kill whales. That has been an achievement. What we are now fighting against is a reversal of that great achievement. We are trying to bring an end to the abuse of the scientific provisions, and we would, of course, also like to see Norway agree to the moratorium. They have never agreed to it; they have just continued commercial hunting of whales, regardless of what the rest of the world has done, which is incredibly out of character with Norway's otherwise very good record in international cooperation on environmental issues.

Senator McLUCAS—How many whales were killed in Australian waters in 2005-06?

Senator IAN CAMPBELL—None were killed. I think a lot of whales would have died in Australian waters, but that would be through strandings and so forth.

Senator McLUCAS—No, killed.

Senator IAN CAMPBELL—Do you mean hunted by the Japanese?

Senator McLUCAS—I mean hunted.

Senator IAN CAMPBELL—It would come down to a definition of 'Australian waters'. As we have said, we claim an economic right over those waters, but only four other countries recognise that. If you want to know the number of animals that the Japanese killed in Antarctic waters under the provisions of the scientific clause—and we do not necessarily know the exact latitude and longitude of each one of those, although Greenpeace have provided a lot of very useful video footage of and information about the slaughter of whales during the last hunt—the actual numbers were 853 minke whales and 10 finwhales.

Senator McLUCAS—Are we quite sure of those figures, given the points you made to Senator Allison about surveillance difficulties and the fact that we do not have a vessel?

Senator Ian Campbell—The IWC, as I understand it, have observers. Mr Bamsey, are you able to say how we are sure about these numbers?

Mr Bamsey—The Japanese make announcements each year of the number of whales killed.

Senator McLUCAS—You believe you can trust those announcements?

Mr Bamsey—I see no reason not to. There would be no purpose in changing the numbers.

Senator McLUCAS—Potentially from their perspective to try to diminish public outcry.

Mr Bamsey—It is not the way they see it.

Senator Ian Campbell—They see it through an almost opposite glass to us. They are actually very proud of this; they display it. It is not like there is an economic incentive to kill more either. They have enormous trouble trying to market the by-product of their 'scientific program'.

Senator JOYCE—I was just reading with interest the Pentagon report by James Mulvenon, which talks about larger ambitions in resources and territory which China holds. Acknowledging full well the admirable work you are trying to do in protecting our exclusive economic zone in fishing, what is Australia's plan to protect its mineral resources on the portion of the Antarctic Territory it claims to be its own?

Dr Press—Mining in Antarctica is prohibited under the provisions of the Madrid protocol. That prohibition is indefinite. The protocol itself can be reviewed at the end of 50 years, which I think is 2048—

Senator JOYCE—The Madrid protocol runs out in 2041—that is the extent of the period, isn't it?

Dr Press—It came into effect in 1998, so it would be 2048.

Senator JOYCE—Bearing in mind China's reluctance to abide by other international protocols—and I can call to mind their current movements with the Mugabe government in Zimbabwe—what real hope do we have of getting them to abide by other protocols in other parts of the world?

Senator Ian Campbell—I think that is a question for Foreign Affairs, Senator Joyce, but I do not think there is any risk evident to the Madrid protocol.

Dr Press—I would not like to make any comment on other treaties, but we have had a long and very close relationship with China in Antarctica. We have very good bilateral relations in Antarctic Treaty matters, so I have seen no evidence that they would want to do anything other than abide by the provisions of the treaty and the protocol.

Senator Ian Campbell—And I can say in relation to a whole range of other areas of environmental cooperation that the depth and breadth of our relationship with China is quite phenomenal. In the area, for example, of greenhouse, climate change and clean energy issues, they have joined up as a very active and forward-looking member of the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate. With the work we do on migratory birds and a range of other issues they are really fantastic partners. I will be going there in October to lead a renewable energy delegation. They are not just partners who join up to things for the sake of doing so. We have a whole range of programs.

I was saying to someone from the Prime Minister's office last night that we have had Australians on the ground up there working on building a global standard for the production of low-energy light bulbs—very important work if you are going to improve energy efficiency in households and businesses around the world. Australians from the Greenhouse Office have been on the ground in China for months—and members of the Australian industry—working with the Chinese manufacturers. So any aspersion on the very cooperative nature of the bilateral relationship between our two countries on a whole range of environmental initiatives—I cannot talk outside of the portfolio; that would be a question for the foreign affairs estimates—

Senator RONALDSON—Is this engagement new, or has it been going on for some time?

Senator Ian Campbell—It has been building for a number of years. The Prime Minister and the foreign minister, through their leadership in building this relationship and encouraging us to have more engagement in the environment portfolio, have helped us to do that.

Senator RONALDSON—That is very encouraging. Was it Great Britain, New Zealand, France and Norway that agreed with our territorial claim in the Antarctic? As the minister pointed out, they are four countries out of 190. What countries dispute our claim of the 42 per

cent of the Antarctic that we currently hold? Are there any specific countries, or is it just that everybody else disagrees with it?

Dr Press—To be precise, you would have to say that, when the Antarctic Treaty was being negotiated after the International Geophysical Year in 1957, there were three groups of participants in those negotiations: the claimants, those that claimed part of the Antarctica; those countries that did not recognise those claims, and that was everybody else; and, within the everybody else, two countries that asserted the right to claim any or all of Antarctica. Those two countries were the United States of America and the Soviet Union, as it was in those days. That is still the general lay of the land. Those relative positions are held, as at that time, within the Antarctic Treaty, and the Antarctic Treaty protects the claimants as well as the views of nonclaimants.

Senator JOYCE—With regard to the Patagonian toothfish and the Heard and McDonald Islands area—is that the Kerguelen Plateau?

Dr Press—Yes.

Senator JOYCE—What arrangements do we have with the French with regard to joint patrols in the Kerguelen Plateau area?

Dr Press—There is a treaty between Australia and France. Within that, there are provisions for joint patrols and exchanges of personnel, and they occur from time to time.

Senator JOYCE—Do we have any plans for the further clean-up of Wilkes base? I know it is not really our problem—it was left there by the United States; thanks for that, fellas—but have we got any plans for any further clean-up of that area?

Dr Press—Specifically, we do not have a plan for Wilkes. At the moment we are undertaking a clean-up at Thala Valley and at Casey Station. From here on in, on the basis of what we have learnt from that—and we have learnt a lot; it has been a very successful operation, and we will do a review of it over the next 12 months—we will have to look at clean-ups in other parts of Antarctica and prioritise them. The problem we have as a department is we do not have provision for clean-ups in our budget. We have an unfunded liability, which we think is around \$50 million—it may be more—but we do not have a specific funding line to do that clean-up, and it is a very expensive operation. But with regard to Wilkes itself, I have had bilateral discussions with my counterparts in the United States, particularly in the Department of State. The United States appears to be very reluctant to commit to any clean up at Wilkes.

Senator JOYCE—They left behind a rubbish tip of sorts for us, didn't they?

Dr Press—In some people's eyes it is rubbish; in some other people's eyes it is heritage. But, yes, there is a major issue there at Wilkes.

Senator JOYCE—On the capture of data: what is the correlation between scientific projects that go down to the Antarctic Territory, since the public purse is paying for those people to do that research, and delivering verifiable data back to the Australian people about their projects? Are there any cases of people going down there, doing their study and our never actually seeing a report from it?

Dr Press—There are two aspects to that. In my time, since I have been the Director of the Australian Antarctic Division, I and the chief scientist, Professor Michael Stoddart have implemented provisions such that anybody who participates in any research under the Australian Antarctic Program is required to lodge their data with the Australian Antarctic Data Centre within two years of those data being collected. Anyone who fails to comply with that does not travel with us anymore. They receive no support from us anymore. Also, we contact their institutions and require their institutions to provide those data. If those data are not provided then we start applying sanctions to those institutions. Since that has happened, the level of compliance is about 100 per cent. It is very high. So we now have the problem of data storage. It is an economic problem rather than a practical one. But we do have a very high rate of compliance with that. Most scientists who work with us lodge their data either directly with us or with other national or international databases which we have access to such as those of the Bureau of Meteorology or Geoscience Australia.

Senator JOYCE—On the accessing of data: are we developing any software packages so that when people design a project it can be quickly assessed whether that project has already been done or whether there is comparable pool data which will probably circumvent the requirement for them go down there? It is not that we should not be sending people down there, but we should not be sending people down there to do what has already been done.

Dr Press—The evaluation process that is carried out on applications to do science under the Australian Antarctic Program should—and does—weed out duplication and unnecessary replication of previous work. Applications like that would be given a low priority and would not be supported.

Senator JOYCE—Have we had any discussions about what is currently happening at Casey Station with the subsidence of materials at the wharf and also whether the wharf is actually on an island? We would not have known, because we have not had a thaw down there like the one we are having lately. If it is on an island, obviously the road to the island is going to keep on disappearing. How are we going with dealing with that issue? That is one question. I will deal with that, and then I have another one.

Dr Press—Access from the wharf to Casey Station has always been a difficulty. It does subside. We suspect that there could be an island or, at least, a rather deep floe underneath there. We are caught betwixt and between at the moment. We have had our engineers look at that issue over the last few years. We have the best solution we can get at the moment, but if we do get unseasonably warm weather over the next few years we might have to look at a different way of transporting our materials up to Casey Station.

Senator JOYCE—Talking of materials, is there anything in the capital expenditure budget to get a greater housing of the plant that is down there at the moment? I refer especially to earthmoving plant such as graders, front-end loaders and other material that, by reason of there not being the facilities there, are parked in the weather at the moment?

Dr Press—Yes, in our forward budget we have provision for a machinery shelter to be built. I think that is a couple of years away. There are higher priority projects required before then. But it is in our forward planning.

Senator JOYCE—What operating time is left for the *Aurora Australis*? Where is it in its lifespan?

Dr Press—The *Aurora Australis* is now 15 years old. It has an operating life of, I would say, 25 years. It is normal for a ship of that type to have an operating life of 25 years. The *Aurora* is in fact in very good condition, so we expect that, as a vessel, it will continue to operate for another 10 years.

Senator JOYCE—Finally—and I do not know whether this is in the right; knock it over if it is not—with Macquarie Island, seeing the Commonwealth government—or, I suppose, by default, the Australian Antarctic Division—pays for everything but the rangers there, who are paid by the Tasmanian government, is there any view to the Commonwealth acquiring Macquarie Island as an external territory, especially in light of trying to control such things as the rabbit problem, of which the environmental impact on the island has been pretty well devastating? And do we have any plans for getting rid of the rabbits on Macquarie Island, similar to what the New Zealanders did on, I think, Chatham Island?

Dr Press—Let me just deal with the rabbits first, because that is in the department's purview. We are funding a study on how to eradicate the rabbits on Macquarie Island; \$60,000 from the department has been put towards that project. Rabbit eradication is the responsibility of the state of Tasmania rather than of the Commonwealth, but the Commonwealth, through its programs and its interest in the World Heritage values of Macquarie Island, has funded that rabbit eradication study.

As to acquiring Macquarie Island from the state, that is a little bit out of my area of responsibility. But I would think that Tasmania, as a sovereign state—and Macquarie Island is a part of the state of Tasmania—may have something to say about that.

Senator JOYCE—It got it from Britain. The vast majority of the budget for Macquarie Island would be covered by the Commonwealth; the Commonwealth would be paying for the vast majority of the expenditure on Macquarie Island at the moment, wouldn't it?

Dr Press—Macquarie Island direct costs are \$3.7 million, which is the direct cost to the Australian Antarctic Division. There are swings and roundabouts, but we probably underwrite the operations of the state to the tune of \$700,000 to \$1 million, depending on what is happening there.

Senator McLUCAS—I just want to finish the whaling issue. Mr Bamsey, how many antiwhaling nations have joined the IWC since Korea? If you want to, you can take that on notice.

Mr Bamsey—Yes, I will take it on notice.

Senator Ian Campbell—Ultimately, we will know when we see their hands go up in the resolutions.

Mr Bamsey—It is a very useful broad characterisation—antiwhaling-pro conservation—but the views of countries sometimes change according to the proposition before them. It is not a very precise characterisation in some cases. I would have to take it on notice anyway, because I am not sure just what countries have joined since Korea.

Senator McLUCAS—Could you list all nations that have joined since Korea? That might be useful.

Mr Bamsey—Yes, we can certainly do that very easily.

Senator WORTLEY—You would be familiar with Senator Joyce's comments—and just to refresh your memory, I will read them—when he said:

There's minerals there, there's gold, there's iron ore, there's coal, there's huge fish resources and what you have to ask is: 'Do I turn my head and allow another country to exploit my resource ... or do I position myself in such a way as I'm going to exploit it myself before they get there'.

Perhaps Senator Joyce was not aware of the Madrid protocol at the time he said that.

Senator JOYCE—I was fully aware of the Madrid protocol.

Senator WORTLEY—Would you be able to explain to the committee the quality of the minerals of commercial value in the Antarctic?

Dr Press—I would have to take that on notice. That is a bit of a movable feast. As a matter of fact, I was reading the 1978 Central Intelligence Agency atlas of Antarctica just last week, and it goes into—

Senator Ian Campbell—As you do.

Dr Press—As one does.

Senator WORTLEY—Bed-time reading?

Dr Press—Look, it is absolutely fascinating. It has a whole chapter on the mineral resources of Antarctica. I would have to refer specifically to the information that Geoscience Australia has. I could get that for you, but, to make a point that I made before, exploitation of minerals in Antarctica is prohibited under the Madrid protocol. I can certainly take that on notice and give you a summary of what the mineral resources may be. Most of Antarctica is, of course, under metres of ice—an average of three kilometres of ice—across the entire continent, and only one per cent of Antarctica is ice-free. It is an extrapolation to try to define the minerals that may occur under the ice sheet.

Senator Ian Campbell—To be quite frank, I would be deeply troubled if we had to take a question like that on notice. The Australian government supports the Madrid protocol, and there will not be any mining in Antarctica. The division has a lot of responsibilities to protect the environment and to help me in the lead up to the International Whaling Commission meeting at St Kitts. I really do not want my departmental people and senior officers of Dr Press's calibre to be hunting around on this. I do not think we really need it, do we? We could give you a reference to the book, or something. It is probably a bit of fun, but it is a waste of time for my staff and we just do not need it.

Senator WORTLEY—It was one of your government senators who suggested that mining in the Antarctic was the way to go.

Senator JOYCE—No, I do not think that is correct. Whaling is also prohibited in the Antarctic and our territories, but they are doing it nonetheless. I was suggesting we deal with the realities of where the world is going, and I refer you again to the James Mulvenon report

on territorial and resource ambitions of countries such as China. If you have a read of that, you might want to change your opinion.

CHAIR—I suppose the internet would have some reference, which might give you some indication.

Senator WORTLEY—There is an Australian Antarctic Division web site, but I was interested in the department's position on that.

Senator Ian Campbell—I inform the committee that the question will not be taken on notice.

Senator WORTLEY—So you do not authorise the department to—

Senator Ian Campbell—No, I am saying that we will not take that on notice.

Senator WORTLEY—Okay, then. Let us move on. What would be the impact of mining in the Antarctic?

Senator BOB BROWN—Chair, just a point of clarification: is it up to the minister to not take a question on notice?

CHAIR—The senator can seek to put the question on notice. Whether or not the minister feels that it is—

Senator Ian Campbell—I will direct my division, through the secretary, not to waste its time on this sort of—

CHAIR—a proper matter for his department to engage in research into that is a matter for the minister and the department.

Senator BOB BROWN—Indeed, that is right.

Senator WORTLEY—Thank you, Minister, but can I just say that one of your government senators who has been on a trip to the Antarctic has come back. He has made comments, and I will go back to those:

“There's minerals there, there's gold, there's iron ore, there's coal, there's huge fish ...

“... do I turn my head and allow another country exploit my resource or do I position myself in such a way as I'm going to exploit it myself before they get there?”

That was a government senator. So I am just concerned that I have not heard the government come up and say anything in response to Senator Joyce's comments.

Senator Ian Campbell—Well, you must be—

Senator JOYCE—I have them. I have the response!

Senator WORTLEY—No, I am talking about—

Senator Ian Campbell—There was a tremendous movie back in the 1970s—when the Labor Party wrote the policies that it has today on a whole range of issues—called *Tommy*, with a ‘deaf, dumb and blind kid’. We did respond. I have responded again today, and I have said that—

Senator WORTLEY—Excuse me, Chair, if I could finish—

CHAIR—Through the Chair, everybody.

Senator WORTLEY—I was saying that I have not heard the minister here today respond to Senator Joyce's comments.

CHAIR—But what you have heard from the minister and the department saying there will not be mining.

Senator Ian Campbell—The minister has made statements today and on other occasions to say that we were leaders in putting together the Madrid protocol. In fact, it was one John Winston Howard as Leader of the Opposition who stood up in the parliament and moved a motion, with the support of one young Christopher Puplick, opposing the Hawke government's proposal to enter into discussions about an Antarctic mining treaty. The Hawke government was negotiating a mining treaty—

Senator JOYCE—Oh!

Senator Ian Campbell—and one younger John Winston Howard got up and said, 'No, we shouldn't do this; we should ban mining in Antarctica.'

Senator Ian Campbell—And as a result the Labor Party then changed its policy, came to its senses—

Senator McLUCAS—I think we might be rewriting history, Minister.

Senator WORTLEY—Yes. Labor supports Antarctica as a World Heritage area.

Senator Ian Campbell—I am glad they support it now; they did not then.

Senator WORTLEY—I am just wondering what the department's position is on that.

Senator Ian Campbell—If you read the paper, you would have known that you cannot make Antarctica a World Heritage area, because it is legally impossible, but the department will answer. Mr Chairman, I will table press clips of all of the comments I made about that issue.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Senator RONALDSON—Mr Chairman, given the embarrassing revelation about the Labor Party's position, the minister has made it quite clear that he is not going to answer this, and on my understanding it is open for senators, if they object to that, to do something about it elsewhere. Can I suggest that we move on?

Senator WORTLEY—We will leave that option up—

Senator Ian Campbell—And stop wasting the time of officials who have a whole range of things that they could give the committee information on rather than this rather pathetic political game.

Senator WORTLEY—Thank you! I would like to move on to the next question. Has any staff time been dedicated to investigating—

Senator Ian Campbell—Being asked by a senator whose name Mr Beazley could not even remember.

Senator WORTLEY—the feasibility of the exploration of Antarctica for the retrieval of minerals?

Dr Press—Could you ask that question again, Senator?

Senator WORTLEY—Has any staff time been dedicated to investigating the feasibility of the exploration of Antarctica for the mining of minerals?

Dr Press—From my department, in the history of my involvement in the Australian Antarctic Division, zero.

Senator WORTLEY—And how long has that been?

Dr Press—Seven years. But I would say that that would apply all the way back to our time—

Senator Ian Campbell—As a division.

Dr Press—negotiating the Madrid protocol.

Senator WORTLEY—Is the department aware of any other countries investigating the possibilities of mining in the Antarctic?

Dr Press—I am also the chairman of the Committee for Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty. As far as I know, there are no countries investigating Antarctica for mining. The reason is that all of the countries that are signatories to the Antarctic Treaty and the Madrid protocol accept the provisions of the Madrid protocol.

Senator McLUCAS—It has been put to me that the quality of the mineralisation and the potentiality of mining in Antarctica are very low. I think Senator Wortley's request is quite reasonable in that context. If Senator Joyce is suggesting that we should stand in line to make sure we mine something, surely it is useful for this committee to understand whether or not there is in fact anything there that can legitimately be mined and what the barriers are to it. Is it because the stuff is not of any quality or because it is so far away? I think that is reasonable for this committee to understand.

Senator Ian Campbell—I think you are totally wrong. I think it would be quite stupid for a committee of the parliament to get some officials from the Australian Antarctic Division—whose central remit is to protect Antarctica for the benefit of science and peace—when the head of the Antarctic Division has told the committee that we have not spent any resource minutes on this issue over the last seven years, except the time that we are now wasting before the committee, who have other duties to protect the Antarctica environment, to go off on what is a quite stupid and inane political hunt to humour a couple of Labor Party politicians, who should probably go and spend their own time trying to develop some policies, to get out of the 1970s, to get into the new millennium and to get on with business.

Senator McLUCAS—Mr Press, does the CIA document—beautifully named—you referred to earlier talk about the extent of prospectivity in Antarctica?

Dr Press—It just has a chapter on mineralisation.

Senator McLUCAS—Is that a public document?

Dr Press—Yes.

Senator McLUCAS—Could you provide us with the name of that document and how we can locate it?

Senator Ian Campbell—Senator Wortley has a taxpayer funded computer sitting in front of her. I suggest she go to Google, AltaVista or somewhere else and just look it up. Do some

work. Do not waste this department's time with this stupid political game. Mr Chairman, could we try to move to some serious questions now?

Senator WORTLEY—Chair, I would like to respond to that.

Senator Ian Campbell—I am not going to allow my division's time to be wasted by this political game.

CHAIR—Senator Wortley, from the chair, I do think the minister and his officials have covered the government's position on this very clearly.

Senator Ian Campbell—They have got a serious job of protecting the environment and saving whales, and this senator wants to divert resources to this political idiocy.

Senator WORTLEY—No, I was trying to make a point.

CHAIR—You may do so, but just let me finish.

Senator Ian Campbell—You have made your point. You have had your fun. Let us get some serious questions on the environment. Maybe Senator Brown could ask a question.

CHAIR—The position of the government on mining Antarctica and mineralisation has been made quite clear. I do not think there is much in productive activity in pursuing this avenue any further. So I would suggest we move on.

Senator WORTLEY—I would like to respond to the minister's comment. We have got a government senator who went to the Antarctic, spent time there, came out—

CHAIR—This is the game, isn't it, but it is not really to do with estimates.

Senator WORTLEY—No, it is not about that.

Senator Ian Campbell—You are like a broken record. You are sawing sawdust.

Senator WORTLEY—Minister, my understanding is—

Senator Ian Campbell—Mr Chairman, I take a point of order. This is tedious repetition.

Senator WORTLEY—It is not.

Senator Ian Campbell—It is against Senate standing orders. This is the third time you have said the same thing. It is sawing sawdust. It is like a broken record. Could you rule on my point of order, Mr Chairman? Tedious repetition is against Senate standing orders. Could you please make a ruling.

CHAIR—I have to say that I agree with that point. This issue has been covered very clearly by the minister and his officials, and I think we should move on.

Senator McLUCAS—Mr Chair, on the point of order, the reason Senator Wortley has had to repeat the question is that she has not—

Senator IAN CAMPBELL—Mr Chairman, you have ruled on a point of order. The only thing that a senator can now do is move a motion to basically take a—

Senator McLUCAS—Chair, I have the point of order.

Senator Ian Campbell—It is not a classroom; you do not have to stand up.

CHAIR—Please, you do not have to stand up.

Senator Ian Campbell—The chairman has made a ruling.

Senator McLUCAS—To get some attention, I am sorry, I had to stand up.

CHAIR—I saw you.

Senator McLUCAS—But you did not stop the interjector.

Senator Ian Campbell—Mr Chairman, the senator will now have to move a motion of—

CHAIR—Senator Campbell is making the point that a point of order was accepted.

Senator WORTLEY—I have a question for the department. Can we move on?

Senator McLUCAS—I was speaking on the point of order which you had not ruled on.

CHAIR—I did. I said I accepted the minister's point. That was quite clear, I thought.

Senator Ian Campbell—The senator will need to move dissent if she does not agree with your ruling.

Senator BOB BROWN—What a shemozzle.

Senator McLUCAS—This is not a good way to start the Senate estimates in environment, I am afraid.

CHAIR—It is not. I agree with that. But let us move on to something more productive.

Senator McLUCAS—It is a simple question.

CHAIR—We have covered it, though—

Senator RONALDSON—Chair, you have ruled on the point of order; let us just move on.

CHAIR—and you are digging around looking for extra little points, basically to try to embarrass the government because of the comments that Senator Joyce made after his visits to the Antarctic. The government's position has been made crystal clear. There is no point in pursuing this any more, so let us move on. We only have a limited amount of time, I remind you, and a very long agenda.

Senator WORTLEY—I would like to comment on the minister's accusations on taxpayers' money in research. My question was on minerals of commercial value in Antarctica.

CHAIR—We have covered this, Senator Wortley.

Senator WORTLEY—And the reason I put the question was that I have done some research—and I am sure that Senator Joyce could have done the same research, prior to or during his trip to the Antarctic—and found that the position, for mining purposes, is that it would not be viable. So I was trying to place where a government senator was going in relation to this, and I wanted to hear from Dr Press what research or information the department had in relation to that comment.

Senator IAN CAMPBELL—You have heard three times now that the department has no interest in mining.

Senator WORTLEY—Minister, it was to the department; it was to Dr Press.

Senator IAN CAMPBELL—We have no interest in this area. We have signed the Madrid protocol. We are leaders in the Madrid protocol. We head the conservation committee. You are digging yourself deeper—to draw a mining analogy—into this hole you have dug yourself. I suggest we move on to other questions. You have a roomful of some of the best environmental experts anywhere in the world; I am sure there are questions you could ask them that would add to the sum total of human knowledge of environmental and heritage issues. You have highly-paid officers here from one of the most effective departments of the environment anywhere in the world and you are asking idiotic questions that are irrelevant because we support the Madrid protocol.

CHAIR—Thank you, Minister. I think everything the minister said is very relevant. I do think we should move on. This issue has been covered. It is purely a political game in respect of Senator Joyce's comments on mining. Let us move on. The government's position is quite clear.

Senator McLUCAS—Defensive.

Senator BOB BROWN—Dr Press, on the matter of Senator Joyce's visit and his comments about the prospect of mining in Antarctica, my information is that that sent a ripple of very deep concern indeed through the Antarctic Division. Did you pick up any of that concern?

Dr Press—I would not have said that there was a deep ripple of concern.

Senator BOB BROWN—There wasn't?

Dr Press—No. I think the staff understood the comment that was made. But our mandate is entirely clear.

Senator BOB BROWN—Yes, I know that. But a senator made comments about Australia proceeding to look at mining in Antarctica—

CHAIR—We have actually ruled on this, Senator Brown, and the government's position is pretty clear.

Senator BOB BROWN—and the feedback to me has been that there was very deep concern within the division. Are you telling me that there was not?

Senator PATTERSON—With all due respect, Chair, that is not an estimates question, you have ruled on it, and the minister has made very clear the government's position on this issue. I think we should move on to the next question.

Senator BOB BROWN—I am asking about concern in the department. That is a new question—

Senator PATTERSON—It is not an estimates question.

Senator BOB BROWN—and I want to hear the answer.

Senator RONALDSON—Chair, I think the minister needs to be aware of Senator Brown's line of—

Senator BOB BROWN—He should be at the table, if that is the case.

CHAIR—I do not see that this relates to a policy issue, Senator Brown. It is not a matter of development of policy. We have covered this matter. Again, it is simply looking for a political issue. So let us move on to more productive things.

Senator Ian Campbell—We have given the government's position. Sending senators from any political party down to Antarctica on the *Aurora Australis*, when we have berths available, has been a longstanding offer. Although I vehemently disagree with a couple of the ideas that Senator Joyce has come up with on the trip, the great thing it has done is that most people now know that Australia has the Antarctic program. I would encourage any senator, particularly on this committee, to do what Senator Joyce has done.

Senator PATTERSON—It was fantastic.

Senator Ian Campbell—Senator Patterson has done it, and a number of people have done it. Senator Joyce came up with some ideas that are a bit silly, quite frankly, but he has also raised a number of other issues. If you read Senator Joyce's letter and detailed report that he gave to me—which is more than I get from a lot of other members and senators who go flying off around the world; at least he put in some effort—he wrote down a whole load of things. He raised concerns about waste treatment, how we protect our assets and a whole range of other things. Quite frankly, the media, as you would know, Senator Brown, are always going to be interested in the controversial aspects; they will never look at all of the other issues.

Senator PATTERSON—You should give him a copy.

Senator Ian Campbell—I would say that generally it has been a constructive thing. At least the people of Australia now know there is a Madrid protocol. So I think Senator Joyce in his own interesting and colourful way has actually raised the profile of these issues.

Senator BOB BROWN—I agree with you: he was a bit silly.

Senator Ian Campbell—I think his ideas were silly, although well intentioned.

Senator BOB BROWN—I will move on to the proposal of the world park. It is a very important potential for Antarctica to be the very top World Heritage listed site on the planet, but there has for long time been a confused idea that Australia could not lead the way to having a nomination for Antarctica and its seas as a world park because no single country was in control. I asked the minister: would the government look at the idea of promoting with other Antarctic Treaty organisation members a nomination of Antarctica as a world park, as a World Heritage site, to help not only emphasise its value but protect its safety into the future, particularly at a time when of course there are enormous pressures on Antarctica from whole host of sources?

Senator Ian Campbell—I get my advice on these issues from Dr Press. I would be happy for him to go through the details of it.

Senator BOB BROWN—I am just wondering if the government would consider a world park nomination?

Senator Ian Campbell—We have effectively created that. It is not called a World Heritage park, but it is protected under the Madrid protocol, which I think any objective or legal analysis of would show that it has a higher level of protection than that which would be granted under the World Heritage conventions and protections.

Senator BOB BROWN—Then is there a problem with it gaining World Heritage status?

Senator Ian Campbell—There would be all sorts of objections from a range of other treaty nations.

Senator BOB BROWN—Do we know that?

Senator Ian Campbell—We do not, but it is pretty obvious to me. Why would you even ask them when you know that it has got the protections of the Madrid protocol, which are a much higher level of protection than you would get with World Heritage listing? It is like saying something is already wrapped in cotton wool and yet you need to—

Senator BOB BROWN—That is exactly what has happened with a series of World Heritage areas in Australia.

Senator Ian Campbell—It is a nice political line to take, but it actually does not do anything to help Antarctica. It is not something that is at all useful. It is useful from a political point of view, but not from the view of outcomes in terms of protecting the Antarctic environment. It has the highest level of protection, arguably, of any part of the planet now.

Senator BOB BROWN—But Kakadu, Daintree and the Tasmanian wilderness were national parks before they became World Heritage. It is the status that comes with it and the pride in it. I just ask again: what are the problems with nominating, besides the political process, which is understood? I am asking Australia to take the lead here in nominating Antarctica for World Heritage status.

Senator Ian Campbell—We cannot legally nominate it.

Senator BOB BROWN—I put that to you a while ago. I am saying: what is the problem with approaching the other Antarctic Treaty organisation countries for a joint nomination?

Senator Ian Campbell—One of the problems I would have is that, generally speaking, it is a good idea for Australia to be held in high regard and that we are respected internationally because we understand the law and we behave in a sensible manner and respect the laws, conventions and protocols. If I wrote to my environmental colleagues or the foreign minister wrote his colleagues and said: 'Australia is proposing to do this.' Most of them would scratch their heads and say, 'Why is Australia doing this? This is a bit silly.'

Senator BOB BROWN—You would put the reasons forward when you wrote to them, Minister.

Senator Ian Campbell—What are the reasons, though, when it already has the highest level of protection available on the planet?

Senator BOB BROWN—Same as with Kakadu and the Tasmanian wilderness.

Senator Ian Campbell—Those places have all got higher levels of protection because of the fact that they are World Heritage listed.

Senator BOB BROWN—No, they were national parks and had high levels of protection.

Senator Ian Campbell—They had 'high' levels; they now have much higher levels of protection and much better management as a result.

Senator BOB BROWN—Well, the same with Antarctica if you project forward. The argument is logical.

Senator Ian Campbell—For example, World Heritage areas in Australia ensure that if you are going to take an action that affect those heritage values they have to comply with the EPBC Act.

Senator BOB BROWN—That has come consequently.

Senator Ian Campbell—That is a new level of protection.

Senator BOB BROWN—That has come since the listing of those places that I have just spoken about—in 2000. I ask again: what is the argument, besides political inertia, for not proceeding to nominate Antarctica for World Heritage status?

Dr Press—I am not going into the politics of this. On the practical legal side of it, there is no legal basis for nominating Antarctica. The World Heritage convention could not accept the nomination and there are practical legal reasons why—

Senator BOB BROWN—Why couldn't it?

Dr Press—Because the convention requires a nation state to nominate a part of its property.

Senator BOB BROWN—There is no problem with that.

Dr Press—In that sense the World Heritage convention could not cope with a nomination of Antarctica.

Senator BOB BROWN—There is no problem with that. I am asking Australia to do that.

Dr Press—Australia could propose to nominate the Australian Antarctic Territory—

Senator BOB BROWN—Exactly.

Dr Press—but, the reaction to that, I would imagine, knowing the positions of those that do not recognise Australia's claim to Antarctica, would be reasonably hostile.

Senator BOB BROWN—You are imagining here. But I am talking about Realpolitik. I am saying: why doesn't Australia make the move to put to the other Antarctic Treaty organisation members the nomination?

Senator Ian Campbell—Because it would be a waste of time, to be frank. We have the Madrid protocol in place, which gives it the highest level of protection available anywhere on the planet. Why wouldn't you do something constructive for the environment rather than just playing a political game?

Senator BOB BROWN—I am sorry, Minister, you do not understand. I will move on—

Senator Ian Campbell—I do. I like to do practical things that help the environment, not just political posturing.

Senator BOB BROWN—Like putting collars on World Heritage cows?

Senator Ian Campbell—I think putting collars on cattle to stop them going into areas that require biodiversity protection is sound. In some parts of Australia—in pastoral country, potentially in the high country and in outback Queensland—we are spending millions of

dollars with the CSIRO to find a way of keeping animals out of areas that need biodiversity protection. If you can do that by putting a collar on an animal rather than building hundreds of miles of fencing, I think you and I might agree that that is worth spending a bit of money on.

Senator BOB BROWN—Well done, Minister!

Senator Ian Campbell—Thanks!

Senator BOB BROWN—I would ask about the potential whaling of humpbacks by the Japanese in the coming season. There were quite a few calls for Australia to send a surveillance ship to Antarctic waters last season, but the decision was made not to. Why not?

Senator Ian Campbell—You have to ask that again. I was just checking on whether the JARPA II plan was to hunt humpbacks in 2006-07 or in 2007-08. My memory was that it was actually in 2007-08.

Mr Bamsey—I am not certain about it.

Senator Ian Campbell—But, regardless—

Senator BOB BROWN—It is.

Senator Ian Campbell—Yes.

Senator BOB BROWN—Will the proposal to send a surveillance ship to Antarctica to film this bloody business of whaling by the Japanese so that the world can bring proper and informed pressure from that filming be considered by the Australian government in future whaling seasons?

Senator Ian Campbell—We had an identical question from Senator Allison. I have given the answer; it is on the record.

Senator BOB BROWN—What would be the expense of such a venture?

Senator Ian Campbell—You would have to get a vessel capable of achieving that. I would be happy for Dr Press to take that on notice. It would depend on the length of the voyage, of course. I was asked about that at a conference that I held with heads of mission of various IWC nations yesterday. They asked why the Greenpeace ship stopped its monitoring and videoing of it, and the answer was they ran out of fuel. It is very expensive, as the people who ran the Greenpeace operation would tell you. To stay down there for long periods, you do need a refuelling capability. It would depend on how long you stayed down there for, but I think Dr Press, without going to extraordinary effort, could give you the costs. Extrapolating the costs of running the *Aurora Australis*, for example, would give you an indication. Would you like to give us a daily running cost of that?

Dr Press—I am not actually allowed to provide daily running cost for the *Aurora Australis* under our charter, but the general range of costs—

Senator BOB BROWN—That is under the charter with P&O, is it?

Dr Press—Yes. The general range of costs—

Senator BOB BROWN—Why is that, Dr Press?

Dr Press—It is a commercial-in-confidence arrangement.

Senator BOB BROWN—Why?

Dr Press—It has been that way for many years.

Senator BOB BROWN—Yes, but why is it? It is public money that is being expended there, isn't it?

Dr Press—It is commercial in confidence.

Senator BOB BROWN—Why is it commercial in confidence? It is a straight arrangement with a shipping company.

Senator Ian Campbell—We put it up for tender on a regular basis, so there is commercial stress on them. They would want to keep that—but you know what the total running costs of the program are, so it is in terms of parliamentary accountability.

Senator BOB BROWN—Extraordinary.

Dr Press—We report on how much we spend on shipping and things like that, but let me say that the general range of costs of those vessels capable of operating in Antarctic waters—particularly close to the ice edge, you require a certain ice category to operate close to the ice edge—means you will be paying anything between \$A50,000 and is \$A120,000 a day.

Senator BOB BROWN—Is there any evidence that blue whales have been killed by the Japanese in the last decade?

Mr Bamsey—I do not know of any, no.

Senator BOB BROWN—I have seen reports of blue whale meat turning up in Japanese markets.

Mr Bamsey—I recall, distantly, some of those reports. I do not recall that any was ever verified. Had there been some verification of that, it would have been something I would remember.

Senator BOB BROWN—Can you please check that for me?

Mr Bamsey—I will check that.

Dr Press—My understanding is that it was a mislabelling, and it was in fact verified not to be blue whale.

Senator BOB BROWN—Thank you.

Senator McLUCAS—That is the end for this division.

[10.30 am]

Supervising Scientist Division

CHAIR—We now move to outcome 1.

Senator ALLISON—Mr Hughes, could you give the committee an update of the investigation of Ranger spills and problems that beset the mine some 12 or 18 months ago.

Mr Hughes—The main incidents that you are talking about, I assume, are the potable water incident of 2004 and the radiation clearance incident. Those two incidents were prosecuted by the Northern Territory government under the Northern Territory's Mining Management Act. ERA, Energy Resources of Australia, which are the operators of the Ranger

mine, pleaded guilty to both of those charges. Last year, I think in July, they were fined on both counts.

Senator ALLISON—What measures were put in place to ensure that does not happen again?

Mr Hughes—The Commonwealth Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources made a number of stipulations and conditions under the Atomic Energy Act that were applied to ERA in terms of lifting their game in performance on those issues. I understand the minister's conditions were based on the recommendations of my predecessor's reports into those incidents. I can report that all the conditions applied by the minister for resources were met by the company. In addition, the company have consequently met all the recommendations of the Supervising Scientist's reports.

Senator ALLISON—In the last year, how many incidents were reported of leaks and problems associated with Ranger?

Mr Hughes—There are a number of different reporting levels for incidents at mine sites. In most mine sites around the country, minor leaks and spills would not be reported. However, at Ranger, because of the level of public interest in it, the company has agreed to provide reports of all incidents that are reported internally within the company. So on a monthly basis we receive and the Northern Territory regulator receives copies of environmental incident reports. These are down to a very small level. They are typically small spills, sometimes a litre of oil in the pit, and issues like that. Typically we would receive reports of three or four incidents of that nature per month. We follow up incidents that are worthy of follow-up on our monthly inspections in the subsequent month.

Senator ALLISON—How many incidents involve radioactive material?

Mr Hughes—There are occasionally spills of ammonium diuranate, which is the yellow version of yellowcake, within the product-packing area. In the past year there have been two or three incidents of that nature, and there have been small spills measured in grams, not kilograms.

Senator ALLISON—How many incidents were there of that nature?

Mr Hughes—To my knowledge there were two in the past year.

Senator ALLISON—I am not sure I asked this question in the previous estimates: what about the previous year?

Mr Hughes—From memory, there was one ammonium diuranate incident, and there was a spray of U308 on the roof of the product-packing area. So that would be two.

Senator ALLISON—So is there a report that the committee might be able to receive on those incidents in the last two years?

Mr Hughes—The company submitted detailed reports on incidents of that nature to the regulator, which is the Northern Territory government. We received copies of those reports. Some of the incidents which were not judged to be of any consequence were not investigated or reported in detail. We are talking in some cases about a small splash of yellow material on a worker's boot, and it had absolutely no health impact or implications.

Senator ALLISON—I am sorry; you did not quite answer the question. Is it possible to get a report rather than just a verbal account? Can we have a full list of the incidents over the last two years?

Mr Hughes—Yes, I believe we could probably provide you with a report of the incidents that have been reported to us over the last two years, but you would need to be mindful that some of them are very, very incidental.

Senator ALLISON—When the references committee inquired into uranium mining, including Jabiluka and Ranger, it made recommendations about improving the monitoring of Ranger. Have any steps been taken to do that, or is the monitoring that we have now as it was some four or five years ago?

Mr Hughes—No, the monitoring has increased substantially over the past few years. Since the year 2000, the Supervising Scientist Division has undertaken a separate monitoring program, which is in addition to the monitoring that was previously undertaken by the mining company under its authorisation. So we are virtually duplicating the chemical monitoring program at potential exit points from the mining lease. In addition to that, we conduct biological monitoring at the same sites, upstream and downstream of the mine in Magela Creek, which is the main creek that drains from the mine.

In the past 12 months, we have started some parallel monitoring systems, whereby we are currently trialling in situ biological monitoring within the stream itself. If that proves to be a good technique, it will be a vast improvement over what we are currently doing. In this last, past wet season, we are also trialling in situ monitoring of water conditions and water levels in the stream, which, if it proves to be a particularly useful technique, will greatly enhance the coverage of monitoring. So we are currently involved in research which expands the monitoring considerably.

Senator ALLISON—Again, is there a description of the extra monitoring and where it has been established—some sort of summary of what you are talking about?

Mr Hughes—I can tell you where it is now, but we will be covering that in our annual report for this year because this is a new initiative which we have commenced during the past season.

Senator ALLISON—Have there been any changes to—I forget the name of it—the ore which is left behind when the uranium is removed?

Mr Hughes—The tailings?

Senator ALLISON—Not the tailings, no; the rock ore body which is still partially radioactive. There were some issues raised about radioactive water coming from the stockpile. ‘Stockpile’ is what I was trying to remember.

Mr Hughes—The mine has put in place seepage collection sumps which collect seepage water from the stockpile seepage. They sheet run-off waters, which are relatively clean water off the tops of the stockpiles. If there is any potential for contamination from the tops of those stockpiles then there are contingencies in place to intercept that water and pump it back into the system.

Senator ALLISON—Is it a new system that has been put in place?

Mr Hughes—No, that system has been running for three or four years. It had been on annual review as to exactly how it works. How the system has operated is a subject of the company's *Water Management Systems Operations Manual*, which is reviewed on an annual basis.

Senator ALLISON—Is the office monitoring the Jabiluka site at the present time?

Mr Hughes—Yes. The Jabiluka site has now been in long-term care and maintenance mode since 2003. The streams are still monitored downstream of the site and above the site by Energy Resources of Australia, by us and by the Northern Territory government. Each of those bodies collects water samples on a monthly basis, but the monthly basis sampling programs are offset from one another so that there is a broader coverage.

Senator ALLISON—Does the retention pond still exist there?

Mr Hughes—The retention pond exists there but it receives only incidental rainfall.

Senator ALLISON—What about rehabilitation of the site? Has there been an effort to put topsoil back and to replant the site? And are you doing that with the Mirarr traditional owners?

Mr Hughes—My understanding is that Energy Resources of Australia, in cooperation with the traditional owners, have undertaken some revegetation activities, both at the Jabiluka mine site and at the previous Djardjar camp—which was the exploration camp and which is situated some distance away—during the past season.

Senator ALLISON—What does it now look like? What have those activities achieved?

Mr Hughes—At Djardjar, the site has been totally decommissioned. All infrastructure, other than fences, has been removed from the site. Replanting has been undertaken there, so there are small shrubs—some growing, some failing, presumably. That is constantly monitored on a three-monthly turnaround basis with routine periodic inspections. Likewise, at the mine site itself, replanting had been undertaken on the clean waste rock dumpsite previously, and my understanding is that, during the past season, replanting had taken place over the disturbed areas at the mine site. As I say, that is inspected on a three-monthly basis. The wet season has only just finished. I am not sure when the next inspection is due.

Senator ALLISON—Going back to the retention pond, what are the plans for rehabilitating that? Or are we stuck with the retention pond?

Mr Hughes—When the use of the site is concluded, the retention pond needs to be rehabilitated. ERA is aware of that. There is a rehabilitation bond which will cover the total decommissioning of the site, ultimately. At this stage, the mining company has a mining lease over the site, and it contends that the pond is a valuable piece of infrastructure and maintains it accordingly.

Senator ALLISON—What is the department's view about that? How long is it acceptable to allow the retention pond to remain?

Mr Hughes—As far as we are concerned, if it is not posing any environmental hazards and the company chooses to maintain it in an appropriate fashion, we would not see any reason to do anything about it.

CHAIR—There being no further questions for the Supervising Scientist, we thank you, Mr Hughes.

Mr Hughes—Thank you.

Proceedings suspended from 10.43 am to 11.00 am

CHAIR—We will resume the hearing. I just mention that rather than people talking at cross-purposes, all comments should come through the chair. If we observe that, that will bring more order to these proceedings. Please proceed, Senator Webber.

Bureau of Meteorology

Senator WEBBER—I might do something unusual here and start with a budget allocation rather than some of the other arguments we have had. Dr Love, I note no new measures are announced in the financial year 2006-07, but there is an increase of \$3.2 million from the 2005-06 estimates. Am I right in understanding that, by my calculations, the PBS takes the estimates of revenues for 2006-07 to \$231.1 million?

Dr Love—Without having the exact numbers in front of me at this moment, while there are no new measures there are a number of changes to our allocations. There is a CPI adjustment and there are a number of injections of funds that relate to measures from previous budgets, so there would be a different bottom line this year to previous years.

Senator WEBBER—The PBS, on page 116, states that there is increased funding for ongoing expenses associated with the replacement and upgrade measure for radars. Can you outline what those ongoing expenses are?

Dr Love—For replacement of radars?

Senator WEBBER—Yes, replacement and upgrade of radars.

Dr Love—In 2003-04 the government committed \$62.2 million for the upgrade of radars over five years, and we are partially through that program this year. There is an equity injection in the coming financial year of \$10.8 million and revenue of \$5.6 million, and that will see the installation of six replacement radars and one new Doppler radar. My understanding is that that will be a Doppler radar in Melbourne at the Laverton airport.

Senator WEBBER—Are the planned replacement and upgrade measures on track?

Dr Love—Yes, they are. We may even be marginally ahead of the schedule we have set ourselves; we are going very well. This year is the biggest year in the program, and I believe we expect our radar group to install 12 radars this year. Some of them are non-bureau. We are assisting with one radar in Fiji as well under an aid program. There will be a very heavy program this year of replacements, some of which are funded under this measure and some within our own resources.

Senator WEBBER—How is the Doppler radar in Adelaide operating?

Dr Love—The Doppler radar in Adelaide is working fine. We are still working with Gematronic, the supplier of that radar, on stabilising some of the software. It is certainly producing images and working within specifications, except for some questions we have about the software itself. We are working with Gematronic to make sure that it meets our operational requirements. Because our radars are seen by the Australian public all day every

day on the web, we probably demand a higher uptime than most. We look for 99.9 per cent, and so we are working to make sure that the software can deliver that.

Senator WEBBER—Have there been any discussions about increasing the number of Doppler radar stations as part of the replacement and upgrade measures?

Dr Love—As I said, the current upgrade program is a 2003-04 budget measure, and that was a five-year program. As we get towards the end of that program, I guess there will be, firstly, a review of how well we have done on the implementation. Following on from your question, we have met the targets that were set the bureau. Then the government of the day will have a look to see what the future requirements are. The understanding is that we consume the fish in front of us before we ask for another fish, if you like, and that is where we are at at the moment. It is fully engaging my technical people.

Senator WEBBER—I turn now to some of my more parochial obsessions in this area. I want to have a chat about the recent weather event in the southern suburbs of Perth that occurred on Tuesday of this week. The reports in the local media suggested the possibility that it was a mini tornado taking place in those areas; would that be the bureau's view?

Dr Love—I have not seen any reports of that particular event, so I would be out of order to speak on it and I would have to get back to you. Very often the media does report on mini tornados. Usually, if there is a tornado, there are clear reports of a tornadic structure and fairly extensive damage. When we find the media is reporting a mini tornado, that is often a severe thunderstorm with a very strong downdraft, which causes a lesser scale of damage. About 99.9 times out of 100, when I say to my officers, 'What was that mini tornado?', it turns out to be a severe downdraft associated with a major thunderstorm rather than a real tornadic event. I cannot confirm that that is the case in this instance, but I will get back to you on that.

Senator WEBBER—We now go to my interest, which I am sure Senator Campbell shares.

Senator Ian Campbell—The only reason it occurred on Tuesday was that I swept my garden on Sunday.

Senator WEBBER—I was going to say that I am sure Senator Campbell shares this view—

Senator Ian Campbell—Or was it you washing your car?

Senator WEBBER—Would it not be easier to actually predict these things and classify them if we had a Doppler radar in Perth—something you and I have discussed often, Dr Love.

Dr Love—The answer to that is yes.

Senator WEBBER—As part of the review of the program, Minister, we could lobby to get increased funding to have a Doppler radar in Perth, which I am sure you would support. Apart from the regular conversations that you and I have about this, Dr Love, has the bureau made any recommendations to the minister about deploying a Doppler radar in Perth?

Dr Love—No, we have not. As I said, we are in the midst of a program that really is fully extending the bureau. We do have an understanding that, with this mostly achieved, we can then go back to government, and the government of the day will look at resources and requirements and make decisions, as they do. As the director of meteorology, it is my hope

that we would see the network progressively Dopplerised. There are different ways of doing that. We will keep advancing the program, because that is where the technologies are going.

Senator WEBBER—I turn now to the Australian tsunami warning system for the Indian and Pacific oceans. Can you outline for us what measures are being undertaken there?

Dr Love—Following the Boxing Day tsunami, in the 2005-06 budget the government committed \$68.9 million over four years to put in place a tsunami early warning system. That will protect all the Australian coasts, not just the Western Australian one affected by the tsunami. This year, for example, we will install 18 new sea level gauges this year and we will improve the telemetry to 25 gauges through both the south-west Pacific, the Australian coastline, Christmas Island and Cocos. We will get more high-quality sea level data. At the same time, Geoscience Australia has some of those resources and they are upgrading the seismic network. The bureau and GA are working together. We will exchange all data in real time between computers in Melbourne and Canberra. Geoscience Australia has a 24-hour, 7-day-a-week staff watching the seismic data and providing us with interpretations. The Bureau of Meteorology, of course, issues any warnings that are required. Our network will go out through the south-west Pacific as well as the Indian Ocean, and we will be endeavouring to give early warning for all Australian coastlines. The program is well under way. Once again, I think the technical implementation is meeting the timelines. The third partner in the Australian government is Emergency Management Australia, or EMA, and they will handle the public relations end of it. They have resources to do that as well.

Senator WEBBER—So how did Exercise Pacific Wave go?

Dr Love—In terms of raising the consciousness of all of those involved, it was spectacularly successful, if for no other reason than that there was an earthquake around Tonga at the same time as the exercise was going on. You cannot of course manage these events, but everybody then was concerned as to whether there was a real tsunami being generated around Tonga or not. As it turned out, there was not. The exercise is the sort of thing you have to do. Tsunamis are relatively infrequent. For particularly the South Pacific more so than Australia, it is important to develop in the small island states capability to respond to these events as well. For Australia, we have the challenge of a vast coastline. A tsunami in daylight on the east coast in summer is everybody's nightmare, and that will fully extend the bureau and the state government emergency services. Everybody now understands the challenge, and these exercises help us build up our capability to do something about it.

Senator WEBBER—Would you regard the exercise as a success?

Dr Love—Yes, I think it was a success. It was the first exercise we have run. We will learn lessons. There has not been a thorough review of all the lessons learnt yet, but that is ongoing. My preliminary discussions with the managers involved indicate that, sure, there are things we still have to do, but things went pretty well. We build on the back of things such as the cyclone warning system and our bushfire warning systems. We have a set of relationships already with the state agencies. The timelines for a tsunami are much shorter than anything else we deal with, so it is getting that understanding into communities that is the key.

Senator WEBBER—I presume that as part of the review, which has not been completed yet, you will be looking at what changes need to be made?

Dr Love—Yes.

Senator WEBBER—How many countries in the south-west Pacific are still to join the Pacific tsunami warning system?

Dr Love—I cannot answer that. I will have to take that on notice.

Senator WEBBER—Can you also take on notice whether there are any costs to those countries to join?

Dr Love—No, there is no cost to join. The way it works now is essentially that in Honolulu there is the IOC, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, which is a subsidiary body of UNESCO. IOC coordinates, if you like, the Pacific tsunami warning system. It will send the warnings to any authorised government agencies in the south-west Pacific. But it is no point sending warnings to organisations that do not know what to do with them, how to respond and how to interpret them. Really it is about building capacity in the south-west Pacific to know how to respond and to build the networks in the small island states. That is happening. The Australian government, through AusAID, is putting resources in; the US government, through USAID, is putting resources in; Japan is in there as well; the IOC is also there. Rather than costing the small island states anything, the contributions are there and what it really takes is engagement of their officials to follow through. We are working on that. There are two threads in the south-west Pacific. One is the meteorological services, which do a lot of this work. The other thread is the geoscience agencies. We are working with both of those on a country-by-country basis. We just ran a major meeting in Melbourne, about three weeks ago, to which about 50 or 60 countries turned up, including just about all the south-west Pacific countries. I do not think we are missing many.

Senator WEBBER—That is excellent. With regard to the Indian Ocean tsunami warning system, can you give us an update of what equipment has already been deployed and what is planned to be deployed in the coming year?

Dr Love—I am not sure whether you want an update from an Australian perspective or an Indian Ocean basin perspective, which has other countries contributing?

Senator WEBBER—Mainly Australia.

Dr Love—Australia's effort, as I said, so far is upgrading the seismic network on our soil, if you like, which is Cocos Island, Christmas Island and the Western Australian coastline. I am not a geoscience expert, but I do know that what you need is broadband seismometers and you do need to get essentially real-time telemetry to them. Geoscience Australia is handling that aspect. But there are also seismometers deployed under other network arrangements, including one called IRIS, which is a university network that you can see on the web. If you are web connected now and you Google 'IRIS seismic' you will see the network. Getting that data into computer systems and finding epicentres and how deep they are can be done and is done. GA is working on that end of the problem. As I said, we are upgrading tide gauges, sea level gauges, through the Pacific and Indian oceans. We will upgrade 18 this year. We will put in 18 new ones and improve the telemetry to them. That data all comes back to Melbourne and Canberra and is being monitored in real time. The next step is to deploy what are called deep ocean buoys, or DART buoys. I expect to personally be in Jakarta in mid-July to negotiate with the Indonesians about where we might put DART buoys between Australia and

Indonesia. A DART buoy gives you a whole bunch of different data. It monitors the ocean floor for seismic disturbances and it monitors the sea level for tsunamis. It gives you the joint capability of actually seeing if something is coming your way. Because the seismic waves travel much more quickly in the earth's crust than in the ocean waves, which move at about the speed of a jet liner, you get some warning time. I am particularly worried about the security of these DART buoys, because they are big structures, and there is a bit of history of resources deployed off the Australian coast being taken by fishermen. I would like to work with the Indonesian authorities to ensure their security. They cost \$300,000 or \$400,000 each, and I want to put them out there and know that they are going to stay there. I am in the process now of trying to guarantee their security. In addition to that, the American government has asked, through me, that the bureau help them deploy similar resources in the Indian Ocean, and we will work with the Americans to do that and maintain them on a cost recovery basis.

Senator WEBBER—How is the upgrade and replacement of equipment for the National Tidal Centre going?

Dr Love—The National Tidal Centre has moved into the bureau. This year we will start the replacement of the national tide gauge network. It is essentially a fairly old network now—I think it was put in place in the seventies. Progressively, over the next two to three years, we will replace all the tide gauges with modern new tide gauges. I think we have it on our books to do five this year, so in this coming financial year we will replace the five oldest. There are about 15 around the land, or maybe 12, that we have to do. We will go around and do the national baseline network and replace it all.

Senator WEBBER—In terms of replacements for both the tidal centre and the tsunami warning centre, is it the case that increased funding would speed up the implementation of those replacements or is it a capacity and logistics issues that means we have to phase it?

Dr Love—Sorry, could you just repeat that question?

Senator WEBBER—We have talked about a program for replacement and upgrade of both the tsunami warning centre and the tidal centre. If we had increased funding, could we do it more quickly, or is it the case that capacity and logistics mean that we have to phase it?

Dr Love—Yes, it is a bit like that. These are pretty esoteric fields we are working in and there is not a great pool of expertise to do the stuff. With respect to the baseline tide gauge network, we will be particularly concerned not to have any gaps in the data record. We will have to basically leave one in place, put the upgrade in situ, and have a parallel running period so that we can calibrate between the old and the new instrument and do things like that to be very careful that we do not have breaks in the historical record. This data helps us not only with tidal prediction and tsunami detection but also with sea level change in a climate change sense. That is a very important reference data set that we do not want to break.

Senator WEBBER—I have some brief questions on cyclones. For the categorisation of cyclones, how are wind speeds calculated to determine a cyclone's severity?

Dr Love—How are the wind speeds calculated?

CHAIR—Do you mean what wind speeds are and the threshold for each category?

Senator WEBBER—Because there seems to be a difference between what we forecast as a category-whatever cyclone and when it crosses the coast we get completely different data on what the wind speed is.

Dr Love—As to wind speed around a tropical cyclone, I have published research papers on it.

Senator WEBBER—I have hit the jackpot, then.

Dr Love—It was the area of my study a long time ago. The detection of a tropical cyclone off the Australian coast is usually done by looking at a satellite picture. There is a set of algorithms whereby you can look at a satellite picture—and they are empirical measures—and infer the intensity of a tropical cyclone, the wind speed, the minimum central pressure. Those are only empirical relationships and they are not perfect. Then we get the odd piece of data from a ship that gets too close—didn't duck. But that is about the only information we have really got until it landfalls. Then it crosses some instrumentation and we can see what the wind speeds are. The Americans fly reconnaissance aircraft through, drop SOMs in the middle of them; they will know quite accurately the wind speeds, whereas we are just essentially eyeballing satellite pictures and using rules of thumb that have been developed over the last 30 years, usually in the American ocean bases, where they have got some ground troops. We take those wind speeds and then—following the chair's comment—for public consumption, we might say it is a category 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 on the Saffir-Simpson scale. But usually, in the warnings that we issue, we will say 'maximum wind gusts to 70 kilometres an hour', '100 kilometres an hour' or whatever. That is from our satellite interpretation, by and large. Then when it landfalls it will cross instrumentation, which is once again fairly sparsely located, and we will get the maximum wind speed for that event on our instrumentation. Very often that is somewhat less than the warnings sent. There are two reasons: as it landfalls it loses intensity, and we might not have an instrument in the strongest wind quarter of the tropical cyclone. So it is inevitable that there will be a difference between what our warnings say and what we subsequently find on whatever instrumentation is around. The other issue is that with the strong tropical cyclones, if you have got an automatic weather station on the coast very often it will be destroyed by the landfalling tropical cyclone. The anemometer will blow off, the power supply will fail, a piece of debris hits it and wipes it out. So it might have reached 180 kilometres an hour and it is destroyed, but you do not really know what the maximum wind speed was. There are all those vagaries in it.

Senator WEBBER—Is there new or additional equipment that we could purchase for the bureau to allow us to be more accurate?

Dr Love—It is interesting. Look at the American experience with Katrina. Katrina was a category 5 as it approached New Orleans. Now the post-analysis of all the data available is suggesting that it was at the top end of category 2 when it actually crossed New Orleans, because they weaken quite quickly.

Senator WEBBER—Yes.

Dr Love—The water that was piled up offshore was piled up by a category 5, but the wind speeds by the time it got to New Orleans were at the upper end of category 2 or the bottom end of category 3. So what does it mean? You can be as accurate as you like. It is changing in

intensity all the time and it is the integrated effect over time of the winds and the seas that does the damage. That is probably not terribly helpful. Even with all the American resources—their Doppler radars, their aircraft reconnaissance and high-resolution-high-frequency satellite imagery—there is still a lot of uncertainty as to what the wind speeds are.

Senator WEBBER—Is there any additional research we can carry out to work out to how to improve this, apart from the excellent work you have done?

Dr Love—I think aircraft reconnaissance makes a difference, but that still does not solve all the problems. There still are uncertainties and you are in the hands of the best guess of experienced forecasters at the end of the day.

Senator WEBBER—Lastly, I have seen recently that the Americans are now moving towards introducing a new category 6 level for hurricanes. Does the bureau suspect that that would also be a good basis for cyclones?

Dr Love—That debate was actually provoked by an Australian who is an ex-bureau employee. Dr Greg Holland did an interview that seems to have fired that up. I probably would have received 100 emails on that topic yesterday. My own personal view is that it does not really serve any purpose to try to have a category 6. Category 5 on the Saffir-Simpson scale is defined as a catastrophic impact cyclone. Once you have reached catastrophic, what else is there to say? That is how the scale was set up. There is the other issue that, once the public becomes accustomed to reporting a certain scale, should you really start changing things? I have at least 50 emails suggesting how we could do it better from researchers all around the world. My belief is that the public around the world have become comfortable with category 1 to 5. It is the easiest way, or shorthand, to give a measure of the impact. It works; why add a six? That is my personal view. If the World Meteorological Organisation defined it and there was broad acceptance around the world, then we too would move to it, but I think that is a long way away.

Senator McLUCAS—I have some questions regarding the VHF radio marine weather forecasts in Far North Queensland. Is it correct that on 31 May the weather forecast for Cooktown, Lockhart, Torres Strait and Weipa will cease to be provided by the bureau?

Dr Love—No.

Senator McLUCAS—Can you explain why I have had many emails—not 100 but many emails—suggesting that that is going to happen?

Dr Love—Yes. About seven years ago there was an agreement between the federal and state governments as to what the responsibilities were for transmitting information to people, recreational sailors, if you like, close in to the coast. Basically, at that time the state governments undertook to put VHF facilities in place to convey such information. That has happened for much of the coastline, but there are still some gaps in the coastline where there are no facilities other than the ones essentially funded by the bureau. Lockhart River is in fact one of those gaps in the network and across to Gove there is another gap. It is very expensive for the bureau to be providing a facility that we would rather not provide. We would like to provide the service, but we believe that, under a Commonwealth-state arrangement, somebody else should be putting in the communication facility. At the moment we pay Telstra, which maintain Seaphone, which is a very outmoded service, to carry that

information. We will continue to support that until alternative systems are put in place—VHF systems, basically. It is expensive, but from a safety perspective we will keep filling the gap. That is about all I can say. I have undertaken to do that with my officers. We have had discussions with Telstra about maintaining the service. It will be costly, and we will maintain it.

Senator McLUCAS—When you say you contract Telstra to provide the service through Seaphone, I understood it was VHF? I just do not know the technology.

Dr Love—There is a gap in the VHF network and we are putting things through Seaphone. Anybody with a Seaphone facility can get the forecast in the mornings.

Senator McLUCAS—Will the twice-daily broadcasts on VHF cease?

Dr Love—I do not believe so. Who is providing those? We do not run a VHF network.

Senator McLUCAS—You don't?

Dr Love—We do some retransmissions further down the coast out of offices such as Rockhampton and Townsville, but that is a supplementary service, it is not a basic service. In the past, we have had some spare capacity in those offices and so we have had our own VHF transmitters, but we do not have anything up Lockhart River way—nothing up north.

Senator McLUCAS—Or Cooktown?

Dr Love—No.

Senator McLUCAS—I am quoting from a letter from the commander of the coastguard at Cairns that says that—

Dr Love—I think it is a Seaphone issue, and it has been questioned whether we would turn that off or not. I think it is the Seaphone distribution of the information rather than VHF that is troubling the people up in the Far North.

Senator McLUCAS—Would you mind doing a bit of research on—

Dr Love—Sure.

Senator McLUCAS—Channel 61, out of Cooktown; Lockhart River, channels 28 and 86; Torres Strait, channels 60, 20 and 66.

Dr Love—Lockhart River, which channels?

Senator McLUCAS—28 and 86; Torres Strait channels, 60, 20 and 66; and Weipa, channel 3. I am advised that BOM provide that service and that it is a twice-daily VHF weather broadcast. The suggestion is that it cannot be replaced by sat phones because essentially people do not have them.

Dr Love—I can assure you the forecast will be available. We do not operate any transmitters in those areas. I will find out whose transmitters they are. We do fund the distribution of our warnings on various transmission services. I will find out what the details are and come back to you.

Senator McLUCAS—I might have some subsequent questions, but for the moment that is all.

Senator BOB BROWN—Dr Love, what is the current measurement of sea level rises in Australia, starting from whenever, and what is the projected sea level rise through to the end of this century?

Dr Love—I cannot give you the precise figures, but they are on our website—the sea level rise for every station in the national tidal network. It is higher up at Cocos Island and in the tropics than it is along the south coast, but it will give you the sea level rise in millimetres per year over the last decade and over that record for all the stations in the network. In fact, I was looking at it yesterday, but I will not try and spout off the numbers because I would get them wrong.

Senator BOB BROWN—And projected?

Dr Love—That is much trickier, of course, as you would appreciate.

Senator BOB BROWN—Yes, but we have to try, don't we?

Dr Love—We do have to try, and the IPCC's range has been quite broad. Most of the sea level rise is adiabatic expansion of the water as it warms up with climate change. You have to project climate change out and, of course, the IPCC has done that. I would not go past their figures, which were quite a broad range. Once again, I would have to go back and look at the numbers. It must have been like nine to 61 centimetres over the next 100 years. Those ranges will be refined in the fourth assessment.

Senator BOB BROWN—They are going to go up, aren't they?

Dr Love—That is hard to say. I think the primary component is adiabatic expansion rather than icecap meltings in the next 100 years. What you then have to do is look at the forecast of climate sensitivity of the models, how much they warm the world for changes in CO₂. I do not think those climate sensitivity estimates are changing substantially. It all then just comes back to greenhouse gas projections and what scenario you believe in. My belief is that they will not be changing that estimate dramatically. They may narrow the window, but the upper end will still be up roughly where it is now. The lower end—

Senator BOB BROWN—We are talking here about CO₂ levels?

Dr Love—Yes, but that is essentially where you are getting your sea level rise from, and CO₂ levels into the future really are a matter of belief and judgment.

Senator BOB BROWN—Have you got any contrary belief or judgment to the IPCC's projections?

Dr Love—As you may or may not know, for a period a couple of years ago I was the secretary of the IPCC, and I do have faith in its assessments. What the IPCC does is assess all the literature that is available and tries to reach a balanced view on it. I accept that balanced view, partly because I am a player in the process.

Senator BOB BROWN—There is a new report called *Stronger evidence but new challenges: Climate change science 2001-2005*, and it states that there is now perceived to be a greater risk that the upper end of the well-known IPCC estimate of 1.4 to 5.8 degrees temperature rise will be reached or exceeded by 2100. They are talking there about the upper limit, approximately six degrees Celsius, being reached or exceeded.

Dr Love—I am not sure who the author is or what the source of that quote is. There was an article in *Science* in the last couple of days and I have seen research that suggests that the long tail, with more and more ensembles, is increasing in magnitude, which is the upper end that you are talking about. There is also research around showing that—in fact, some of the most recent research published in the last three weeks suggests that the distribution is tightening up too, if you run model ensembles of climate change. It is a tough question. I am review editor on a number of chapters in the *Fourth assessment*. Part of being a review editor is that I do not speculate openly as to what the answers are yet, because we have not finally concluded the process. I will not speculate as to where the *Fourth assessment* is going to land right now—it is about a year away. There are people around the world speculating and I do not think it is helpful, because ultimately the scientists have to reach some consensus on what they think the literature says. There will be hundreds of individual studies which are slightly different or significantly different from the consensus, because that is what consensus is all about.

Senator BOB BROWN—Can you comment on this concept of dangerous anthropogenic interference of a two degrees Celcius rise or more? Do you think that is a fair assessment or would you vary that?

Dr Love—There are a number of Australian studies addressing that issue. The central question in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change is: what are dangerous anthropogenic releases of greenhouse gases and at what temperature level do we start hitting danger points? For different systems, different biological systems and physical systems, there will be different thresholds where potentially we reach irreversible change. I do not think anybody has managed to take a global perspective yet on the issue. Many people believe that taking a global perspective on what is a dangerous level is ultimately a political question rather than a science question. I think we will look at a whole lot of little physical systems and we will say the various animals and plants are affected at different temperature levels. The Great Barrier Reef might be affected at a different temperature level. But somebody has to make a political assessment on a country-by-country basis as to what can be tolerated. That really is not the province of scientists.

Senator BOB BROWN—Have you given any advice to the government about that assessment?

Dr Love—No, I have given more advice on the basic science rather than the policy framework surrounding that.

Senator BOB BROWN—That is fair enough.

Dr Love—That is the Australian Greenhouse Office's province, and presumably they come up later.

Senator BOB BROWN—With respect to the Cape Grimm station in Tasmania, have you noted any difference in a rise of carbon dioxide accumulation in the atmosphere in the way that trajectory has been going since the station was established?

Dr Love—I think there is a published paper showing the trajectory is going up. The rate of increase has accelerated.

Senator BOB BROWN—By what degree?

Dr Love—I am trying to think of the numbers. This is a guess, but it was like two per cent per annum at the beginning and it is now sort of three per cent per annum, which is a 50 per cent increase.

Senator BOB BROWN—Just going back to your comment on a tsunami on the east coast in daylight, I am aware of the historic presumptions about that and the potential for a tsunami being triggered, for example, from New Zealand. What would be the warning period available to a city like Sydney in that circumstance?

Dr Love—We would have about 120 minutes warning from the generation, maybe a little bit more. I think there is no part of the entire coastline, looking at the known fault lines, where we would never have less than 90 minutes. From Indonesia, I think we have two or three hours. From New Zealand we probably would have at least 120 minutes—two hours.

Senator BOB BROWN—In a situation where an alert was triggered, in that 120 minutes what would be the process of getting in play the necessary warning to the people who can react on the ground?

Dr Love—We did actually issue warnings for the Boxing Day tsunami in the case of Western Australia. There we used our contacts with the state emergency services, because we work with them all the time, and we said that this was happening. The state emergency services essentially contacted the communities and the port authorities up the Western Australian coast. We also provide commercial services to the oil and gas industry off the coast, and we notified all the rigs, beyond our own client base, and many of them decoupled their pipes from the ocean floor and so on. We had a bit of a test run. On the east coast we would have to notify the New South Wales police and state emergency services. We would probably do that within about 15 minutes of becoming aware of a tsunami, or even a potential tsunami. A system is set up. I think 12 minutes is optimum, 20 minutes is probably the worst case, and somewhere in between I would hope we could be in touch with these people. The bureau has very strong relationships with the ABC and other radio stations, as you would be aware, and, depending on the projected magnitude, we could use those networks as well. We would probably do that on discussion at a fairly high level with the emergency services people, because we do not want to cause unnecessary panic and we do not want to fail to warn. We have to make some very tight judgments very quickly. We do that all the time.

Senator BOB BROWN—What is the projected potential magnitude of a tsunami triggered from New Zealand?

Dr Love—I have not seen a projection of a magnitude. The best evidence we can really get is historical. Geomorphologists look at the debris lines along the coast. I have seen some fairly frightening assessments from geological surveys. I really have no—

Senator BOB BROWN—They are in the order of 60 to 80 metres?

Dr Love—I am not sure it is quite that large.

Senator BOB BROWN—What is your assessment?

Dr Love—I do not want to speculate in this forum.

Senator BOB BROWN—No, I mean on the geological—

Dr Love—My belief was that the geologicals are 20 to 30 metres, but I suspect all of that evidence is subject to interpretation as to what caused the particular geological formations, which are very old of course. You have to know what the sea level was at the time that the rocks and whatever were put where they are. That is an uncertainty in the whole equation. If you assume it was in the ice ages and the sea level was quite low you could get a very big surge, but if it was in a warmer period and the sea levels were up you might assume it was a much smaller surge. There are those sorts of issues involved.

Senator BOB BROWN—Than you. I think my further questions on that are outside your bailiwick.

Senator McLUCAS—Dr Love, I return to VHF radio broadcasts. Your website states:

The Bureau of Meteorology advises that as of 3 am Eastern Standard Time 31 May 2006 the bureau will no longer be using the Telstra Seaphone service to broadcast coastal weather forecasts twice daily.

I asked you if you were to cease to broadcast VHF radio marine broadcasts from a range of channels. I do not know how you said ‘no’.

Dr Love—I will have to step back from that, because I have had discussions in recent times and my understanding was that we had decided to continue. I will find out when that was put there, because it may well have preceded some decisions we have taken internally. That surprises me.

Senator McLUCAS—That is just off the website now.

Dr Love—It has been a matter of intense discussion in my organisation as to how we would continue to fund that Seaphone network, but I believe we had agreed to do that. That may be one that slipped through the network, but I will find out what happened.

Senator McLUCAS—Given the date, here we are on 25 May and this is meant to happen on 31 May; I note we have a period of time for answers to come back, and I would appreciate it, if possible.

Dr Love—This has been a seven-year saga.

Senator McLUCAS—Maybe a little chronology might be helpful for me as well.

Dr Love—Yes.

CHAIR—I think that is all there is for the Bureau of Meteorology. I thank you for appearing, Dr Love. Your comments have been very interesting.

Senator WORTLEY—I do have some questions for the bureau, but given the time I will put them on notice.

CHAIR—Yes, if you would. I think we are extending the questions on notice deadline until tomorrow week.

[11.55 a.m.]

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

CHAIR—I welcome back Mrs Chadwick and her group.

Senator McLUCAS—Firstly, going to the budget, we have a different format year that I have found hard to compare with previous years. Can you explain to the committee what seems to be a new section headed ‘Other resources available to be used’?

Mr Barrett—Are you talking about table 3.1 in the portfolio budget statements?

Senator McLUCAS—Yes.

Mr Barrett—The table has been included in previous reports. This year they have managed to fit it into one page, so it probably looks a bit different from what you might have been familiar with. The only change we have made to previous years in terms of the actual information included there is to split up output group 1.7 on reef education and communication—funding for communication and education and Reef HQ Aquarium is split into two different revenue items. As to ‘Other resources available’, basically that part of the table talks about other than government sources of revenue. The major sources of revenue we have had in the last financial year and the next financial year is funding from the NHT for education on the new zoning plan, compliance activities, which comes under field management, and water quality monitoring, which is under ‘Science and information for park management’.

Senator McLUCAS—Where would I find that disaggregation for other sources?

Mr Barrett—In table 2.3 on page 207. It has a list of departmental resources and shows up the sources of funding from various areas, including Queensland government contributions for day-to-day management, revenue raised through the Reef HQ Aquarium and grants from related entities, which is the NHT funding.

Senator McLUCAS—One day I will get my head around how to read a PBS. Can I go to my predictable question about staffing, please?

Ms Chadwick—Staffing is currently 195, which is a little up on last year. That is largely due to the fact that we have added in some people who are on casual work.

Mr Barrett—Since the last Senate estimates some of our positions that were vacant at that time have been filled. Some of the positions that were being filled by agency temps as contractors are being filled with APS staff, and, as the chair has just mentioned, there are some positions in Reef HQ that are casual positions, which vary from time to time. At the moment there are probably four or five equivalent full-time staff in those casual areas that we probably have not previously included in our reports.

Senator McLUCAS—Do you have a document that you would like to table?

Mr Barrett—I do not have one with me at the moment, I am sorry. Our overall staff report is due any day, and we can take that on notice.

Senator McLUCAS—Can you show me where the reef tax revenue is shown in that document?

Mr Barrett—It is in table 2.1, on page 204. It shows up as a special appropriation of \$7.5 million.

Senator McLUCAS—Has there been any work on ascertaining whether the actual revenue for the 2005-06 year might go down?

Mr Barrett—We keep very close tabs on the revenue from EMC. At the moment the revenue is down on our projection of \$7.5 million for the year. We have been monitoring that during the year. In some quarters it has been up, some quarters it has been down. At the moment, from the figures at the end of April it was probably down \$200,000, but we expect some further payments in May. Last year I think we received \$7.6 million roughly, and it is slightly less than that at the moment but it is very close to the \$7.5 million figure that is forecast for the year.

Senator McLUCAS—For 2005-06? If it stops raining, we might get some money. Could I get an explanation of why the government has decided to provide the rapid response vessel to the authority?

Ms Chadwick—We were very fortunate to receive funding for a vessel in the last budget, and it is part of the government's overall response to the intrusion of foreign fishing vessels in northern waters. We have been concerned from GBRMPA's point of view that there have been incursions in the Far North. As we know, there have been something in the order of 14 vessels apprehended. Some of those waters are in fact unsurveyed or uncharted waters, and so are very difficult for large vessels, particular our naval vessels, defence vessels, to enter. Our current small boat that we have up there has in fact formed part of the operations and it has been helpful and effective. As a result, we have been very grateful indeed that we have the funding for a new vessel, its staffing and maintenance. That is the \$2 million.

Senator McLUCAS—Is the reason that GBRMPA has had to find this money out of the environment budget because waters are not charted in Far North Queensland?

Ms Chadwick—Sorry?

Senator McLUCAS—Everywhere else around Australia, Navy and Customs do surveillance work.

Ms Chadwick—Absolutely.

Senator McLUCAS—Why is it that the environment department had to find \$2 million to—

Senator Ian Campbell—We did not find it. It is new money and we do it because we already have a surveillance capacity, which is a core responsibility of the marine park authority. We thought it was useful to double the size of that capacity—or more.

Senator McLUCAS—Why does it need the funds?

Senator Ian Campbell—We went to the government and asked for more money, and we received it.

Ms Chadwick—I think it is fair to say that, without the work of Coastwatch, Customs, Federal Police, state authorities, Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol—surveillance in the marine park is very much a cooperative effort and for most—

Senator Ian Campbell—And the private boat users.

Ms Chadwick—In terms of most sightings of illegal activities, the overwhelming proportion of the reports are from Coastwatch.

Senator McLUCAS—Certainly. But in terms of international security, we usually rely on the Navy and Customs to undertake that work. I am unsure why Navy and Customs do not do that work.

Ms Chadwick—The main purpose of using a small GBRMPA vessel, which I would have to say is a very small component of a national response to this issue, is in large part because, as I mentioned earlier, some of the waters in the Far North are unsurveyed or uncharted. Hence, it is difficult, if not impossible, for large Naval vessels to enter that area. As a consequence, there is a role in that area that can be played by GBRMPA using this small fast-response vessel. Effectively, that vessel has doubled the capacity, as the minister has said, and it provides us with the opportunity to have a dedicated presence in the north while that problem is still there, and to put the other vessel further down south back to its traditional work.

Senator McLUCAS—Does it have the capacity for apprehension?

Ms Chadwick—Yes.

Senator McLUCAS—I understand it is quite a small vessel.

Ms Chadwick—Yes.

Senator McLUCAS—I understand it is an inflatable vessel.

Senator Ian Campbell—It is called a semi-rigid. We should organise for you to have a visit there. They are an incredibly impressive craft. They are semi-rigid. They are very, very fast, very stable and ideally suited for those very shallow littoral waters. I would be very happy to ensure that Mr Tanzer and Ms Chadwick allowed you to go and inspect one of the vessels. They are very effective in closing rapidly on any unwanted intruders.

Ms Chadwick—Indeed, but I think what the senator was alluding to was whether we could put 20 Indonesian fishermen on board such a vessel. The answer is, no, but we would not be out there working unilaterally. We would be out there working as part of an overall coordinated operation. We can apprehend, we can urge people to follow us, or we can, in a sense, contain the person until the Navy or Coastwatch arrives.

Senator Ian Campbell—What is the maximum licensed carrying capacity for the existing vessel?

Ms Chadwick—I would have to ask Mr Tanzer.

Mr Tanzer—I think it is about six for day operation; overnight, three or four maximum. We do not take the—

Senator Ian Campbell—I understand that. From my own experience on a similar craft in Western Australia, I would have thought you could probably safely put a lot of people on it without endangering anyone or the operation of the vessel, but I am happy to be told I am wrong.

Senator McLUCAS—It also could be useful if the Navy used the two oceanographic vessels to do what they were designed to do, and that is to survey the waters of Australia instead of using them in the area between Indonesia and Christmas Island to look for alleged asylum seekers, but that is not a matter for this committee. Before I go on to other questions, I

have just been alerted to what I think is an extremely false and mischievous press release that you have just issued. You have completely misrepresented my comments that I made in this place, and it is wrong for you to do so. You know exactly that you have misrepresented me. I ask you to withdraw the intent—

Senator Ian Campbell—I think you should attempt to explain to the committee what you are talking about. It is an estimates issue; I think that the chairman and the committee should know what we are talking about. If you think you have been misrepresented, then please inform us how.

Senator McLUCAS—It is your press release that you released—

CHAIR—Through the chair, Senator McLucas, please.

Senator McLUCAS—Thank you, Chair. I am happy to table—

CHAIR—If you would.

Senator McLUCAS—this press release that has misrepresented my comments in this place. I table that press release, but I also need to make a statement, and I seek leave to do so.

CHAIR—Let us see the press release first. We will have that distributed and then we will look at it.

Senator McLUCAS—I seek leave to make a statement.

CHAIR—In fairness, each member of the committee should have the press release before you make your statement so we know what you are talking about.

Senator McLUCAS—This is in the public arena.

Senator Ian Campbell—I think the issue is that the Labor Party are very embarrassed that they failed in an attempt to force me to get the Antarctic Division to start doing investigations into mining. I reminded the committee that it was actually John Winston Howard, back in the eighties, who stopped the then Labor government negotiating—

Senator McLUCAS—Why is it that the minister can make a statement and I cannot?

CHAIR—You sought to make a statement. The minister is making an explanatory comment while we are waiting for the press release to be photocopied and distributed.

Senator BOB BROWN—We do not need to see that.

CHAIR—I think we do, Senator Brown, if you do not mind.

Senator BOB BROWN—I would give leave to the—

CHAIR—Through the chair, Senator Brown, and I am speaking.

Senator BOB BROWN—Listen to her statement and then respond to it.

CHAIR—I am speaking, Senator Brown, through the chair. I have just said we now have photocopies coming. They will be distributed, everybody can read it and then Senator McLucas can make her statement. The minister was simply explaining the situation in the interim.

Senator Ian Campbell—My position is that, if the Labor Party are going to come in here and play politics and distort issues, as they did at a previous estimates hearing—I think

Senator Ferris would have been there the other day—where they asked a question about improvements to the runway at Canberra airport and said that President Bush had ruined the airport so we had to spend millions fixing it, and they ignored the fact that dozens of other world leaders landed there, pursuing their Lathamesque anti-Americanism, if they want to play those sorts of games, then two can play them. I am going to call a spade a spade. If you want me to divert resources from the Australian Antarctic Division to investigate mining in Antarctica, I will call a spade a spade.

Senator WORTLEY—That was not—

Senator Ian Campbell—That is exactly what you are trying to do and I said, no, I am not going to divert my—

CHAIR—Through the chair, everybody.

Senator Ian Campbell—If Labor want to investigate mining in Antarctica, then do it in their own time, but we are not doing it; we want to protect Antarctica.

Senator McLUCAS—The *Hansard* will show that—

CHAIR—Senator McLucas, through the chair—

Senator Ian Campbell—Anyone can read the *Hansard*. I would recommend *Hansard*.

CHAIR—The minister has finished making his statement. You can now make your comment or statement. We now all have the press release.

Senator McLUCAS—The *Hansard* will show that the context of that statement was absolutely clear. The context was that Senator Joyce had advocated mining in Antarctica.

Senator Joyce interjecting—

CHAIR—Through the chair, Senator Joyce!

Senator McLUCAS—Senator Joyce had advocated mining in Antarctica—

Senator JOYCE—You are being misleading, Senator McLucas.

Senator McLUCAS—The minister would not—

CHAIR—Through the chair, Senator Joyce, if you do not mind.

Senator JOYCE—Mr Chair—

CHAIR—Senator McLucas has the call, so please proceed.

Senator McLUCAS—Senator Joyce had made the assertion in the media that mining was an appropriate thing to do and we should get in front of other people to achieve that. Senator Wortley and I asked legitimate questions about what the potential for mining was, asked legitimate questions about whether or not there was any evidence to support the position that Senator Joyce, a member of this government, had made. As you will recall, the minister refused to answer those questions—

Senator Ian Campbell—I did not.

CHAIR—Through the chair, please.

Senator McLUCAS—He refused to answer—

Senator Ian Campbell—I answered the questions and said—

Senator McLUCAS—He refused to answer the questions and, in fact, you will recall, Chair—

Senator Ian Campbell—You really should stop misleading the committee, Senator McLucas. It really is a disgrace.

CHAIR—Let Senator McLucas finish and we will come back to you, Minister.

Senator Ian Campbell—Thank you very much.

Senator McLUCAS—You will recall, Chair, that he directed his personnel not to answer a question, not to take a question on notice; you will recall that. I then asked the question, these words, which I believe are correct, but they were in the context, very clearly, of ensuring that the assertion that Senator Joyce had made could be disproved. It is mischievous in the extreme. Minister, you come into this place talking about politics being played and people making political points. This is the worst example I have seen. This is the worst example I have seen—

Senator PATTERSON—I have seen worse.

Senator McLUCAS—of the abuse of the use of this place.

Senator JOYCE—Mr Chair, I would like to say something about this.

Senator McLUCAS—Labor's importance for a listing of Antarctica as a World Heritage area: that is the legitimate question that we had a discussion about. A Labor government will support World Heritage listing, working with other nations to give Antarctica the environmental status that it deserves. Antarctica is one of the last unspoiled parts of the planet. It must never be mined.

Senator Ian Campbell—Are we going to have a paid advertisement for Labor's—

Senator McLUCAS—I have always had this view. If you put out rubbish like this, Minister, I have a right to correct the record.

CHAIR—Through the chair.

Senator Ian Campbell—Mr Chair, could you ask the senator to behave herself. She is behaving like a grade 2 school child. This is outrageous behaviour.

Senator FERRIS—On a point of order. Senator McLucas—

Senator Ian Campbell—She should have a Bex and a lie down.

Senator FERRIS—is finishing her statement, and I believe Senator Joyce then wanted to make a clarifying statement before the minister. Can we have that done and then we will know where we are all at?

CHAIR—Senator McLucas was reading a party political statement there, I think.

Senator McLUCAS—I was correcting the record.

Senator FERRIS—And Senator Joyce has a clarifying statement.

Senator McLUCAS—I was correcting the record.

CHAIR—Have you concluded?

Senator McLUCAS—Yes, I have finished.

CHAIR—Senator Joyce?

Senator JOYCE—To be fair, Senator McLucas has been misleading. My advocating mining is a furphy. What this is is a statement of how Australia would react to the issue should it be inspired by another country, and I have clarified that today in estimates. Senator McLucas, for political purposes, has decided to build on a misconception, because it serves her political purpose to do so. In fact, if we go back to the inception of it, it was John Howard and Chris Puplick who actually stood up against the Labor Party, trying to stop mining in the first place. That should be placed on the record, because it is a vital part of the information that we should deal with. I would also like, once more, to draw their attention—so they do not just think that these are the ravings from the corner—to the Pentagon's report by John Mulvenon, who talked about the 'larger ambitions in resource and territorial claims by countries such as China'. I am not making that up, I am reporting on what someone else has already made a report on and asking for comments on that.

Senator McLucas can get as hot under the collar as she likes, but in claiming that the minister has misled her, she is straightaway misrepresenting my position and claiming the whole of it as our position. I think that she should withdraw the comment that I advocate mining—because she has just said that—because I do not.

CHAIR—Thank you for that clarification. As I understand it, the minister merely made it clear that the government's position had already been stated several times in response to questions from Senator McLucas. Minister, do you wish to make a further comment?

Senator Ian Campbell—I do, because I have been misrepresented once again. Firstly, I did answer all the questions. I said that mining cannot occur in Antarctica because of the Madrid protocol, which we support. I made that very, very clear. Then the Labor Party decided that it wanted the Antarctic Division to go and do some extensive investigations into mining in Antarctica. Firstly, I said that I am not going to allow that question to be taken on notice, because it would be a distraction and a waste of resources from a division of the government, which I am responsible for, at a time when we are putting massive resources into protecting Antarctica, as well as efforts to lead the world in terms of our bid to bring an end to whaling, as we lead up to the International Whaling Commission in St Kitts in a fortnight's time. And the Labor Party are coming in here saying, 'We want the Antarctic Division to go and do a whole lot of new work on mining in Antarctica.'

On 2 May 1989, John Howard, the then Leader of the Opposition, and Senator Chris Puplick, the then shadow minister for the environment—and a very successful shadow minister, I might say—made a statement saying that Australia should not sign the Antarctic Mining Convention. This is at a time when Mr Hawke's government was negotiating it. A few days later, because John Howard showed the political leadership that he has now become world famous for, Mr Hawke did a U-turn and, on 22 May 1989—which happened to be my 30th birthday—the Hawke Labor government decided Australia would not pursue the mining convention in Antarctica and, as a result, Australia became a leading advocate for the Madrid protocol, which includes a prohibition on mining in Antarctica. That has been a bipartisan policy ever since. Those are the facts, and I will not stand by and allow the Australian Labor Party to use this Senate committee to distract the resources of the Australian Antarctic

Division to basically start a search on mineral resources and exploration in Antarctica. I will not allow that to happen while I am the environment minister. I am not going to allow time to be wasted because of the Labor Party's political shenanigans.

Senator CARR—How does that—

CHAIR—Through the chair, Senator Carr, if you do not mind.

Senator JOYCE—There is—

CHAIR—And also Senator Joyce. You have actually made a comment.

Senator BARTLETT—On a point of order. I think everybody who thinks they have been misrepresented has had that cleared up. Hopefully they will not keep misrepresenting each other or we will be going around in a circle all week. We are actually with GBRMPA at the moment. As long as everybody has now had their misrepresentations cleared up, could we please move back to the agency before us?

CHAIR—I take Senator Bartlett's point of order. The people who have been misrepresented have had their opportunity to make a statement. If you have got something new to say, we will permit you to do so, Senator McLucas, but I do think Senator Bartlett's point is a very good one and we should move on.

Senator BOB BROWN—Can we just report—

CHAIR—Senator Brown, with respect, Senator McLucas has the call.

Senator McLUCAS—The purpose of our questioning was to ascertain whether or not the Antarctic Division had done any work on—

Senator FERRIS—You—

Senator McLUCAS—Can I finish?

Senator FERRIS—No.

Senator McLUCAS—I will now quote from the Antarctic Division website.

Senator FERRIS—On a point of order, Chair—

Senator McLUCAS—Where the question—

Senator FERRIS—You allowed a point of order to Senator Bartlett; we all agreed.

CHAIR—Senator Ferris has the call.

Senator FERRIS—I think we should now move on.

CHAIR—I think it really would be preferable to move on.

Senator McLUCAS—Can I just read from the website one sentence?

Senator FERRIS—No.

Senator RONALDSON—Come on—

Senator McLUCAS—The question: 'Is mining in Antarctica worth while?' We asked a very clear question.

Senator FERRIS—You have already—

Senator McLUCAS—Was any money of the Antarctic Division used to ascertain whether or not the mineralogy of Antarctica—

Senator FERRIS—On a point of order, Chair: this is vexatious—

Senator McLUCAS—It is on the website.

CHAIR—Senator McLucas, Senator Ferris has a point of order.

Senator McLUCAS—This Senate committee has been misled and it would have been simple for the minister to refer us to that.

CHAIR—Please, Senator McLucas. Senator McLucas, the chair has the floor. Senator Ferris is raising a point of order, now let that point of order be heard.

Senator FERRIS—Chair, I am just making the point that we have tedious repetition occurring here, because we have all agreed, without dissention, to the point of order that was raised previously by Senator Bartlett. I agreed with that point of order. I think all of us did. Therefore, I suggest now that tedious repetition be no longer heard. That is my point of order.

CHAIR—The standing orders require that, if we disagree with this, if you want to continue, we can require that this question be put to the whole committee and then the question whether or not there should be further discussion will be put. If it is carried, that will be so; if the decision is not to hear further discussion, then that will be the decision and it will proceed without further debate. I put the question whether or not this matter should be continued with. Those in favour? And those against?

Senator CARR—What are you talking about? Who is voting on this?

Senator FERRIS—The members of the committee.

CHAIR—Core members of the committee.

Senator CARR—Which members are entitled to vote on this question?

Senator RONALDSON—The ones that have been sitting here all week.

Senator CARR—Are they? You would know, would you? You have been here that long you would know?

CHAIR—Senator Carr, I have the floor, as the Chairman. I am quoting standing order 196. The core members of the committee, the full members of the committee are the people entitled to vote.

Senator CARR—Which are they?

CHAIR—Senator Ronaldson, Senator Patterson, myself, Senator Wortley and Senator Siewert. That vote has been carried, so we will now proceed.

Senator WORTLEY—We have not voted.

CHAIR—We have.

Senator WORTLEY—We have not voted.

CHAIR—You did not see it, but it happened.

Senator WORTLEY—So what was the vote?

Senator Ian Campbell—Mr Chairman, would it be helpful if we had a brief adjournment so that the Labor members can go out and have a cup of tea and maybe—

Senator WORTLEY—Two of us have not voted.

Senator Ian Campbell—You are assuming they are. They are obviously very upset.

Senator WORTLEY—Well, how did I vote, Chair?

Senator Ian Campbell—You have got a rage problem. If you would calm down a bit.

Senator FERRIS—You did not vote.

CHAIR—We will put the question again. Those in favour of supporting Senator Ferris's point of order, which is that there be no further discussion on this matter?

Senator WORTLEY—Senator Ferris is not a member of the committee

Senator FERRIS—I am a participating member and I am able to move points of order.

CHAIR—Those in favour? Those against?

Senator WORTLEY—What about—

CHAIR—I declare the motion carried and we will now proceed.

Senator PATTERSON—He is a member.

Senator McLUCAS—I just want to put on the record that this matter is not completed.

CHAIR—Thank you, Senator McLucas. Let us proceed.

Senator McLUCAS—Thank you. I have some questions probably of Mr Borthwick about the review of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. Can you tell me where it is up to, please?

Mr Borthwick—The review panel submitted its report to the minister towards the end of April.

Senator McLUCAS—At the end of April?

Mr Borthwick—Yes.

Senator McLUCAS—I know we have spoken about this at other times. What happens after that?

Mr Borthwick—That is a matter for the minister and the government to decide.

Senator Ian Campbell—I should say what is happening now, for the benefit of the committee: I am very keen to ensure that as we move down this path the Queensland government is a partner.

Senator McLUCAS—Oh, really. That is a change.

Senator Ian Campbell—It is not a change, actually. It is interesting that you should say that. The Queensland government have been intimately involved in the process and Mr Borthwick has met on a number of occasions now with the senior officials in the Premier's office. I have corresponded with Mr Beattie, and if you want to make those accusations I make the point that at a conference on Hayman Island last year the Commonwealth was attacked by an international person, whose name I forget now, for not doing enough to look

after the reef. Mr Beattie actually got up in the presence of the Treasurer and myself, attacked this person, said the Commonwealth is doing a magnificent job protecting the reef, had done a magnificent job in resourcing the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and had done a magnificent job in reef protection. I will quote him up and down the Queensland coast at that meeting. And that is the truth. We work very cooperatively on the ground with the Queensland government and its agencies, and we work very cooperatively with the Premier's department and all other ministers. To describe it any other way is again another example of cheap and petulant political populism—

Senator McLUCAS—Which you would know all about.

Senator Ian Campbell—and which has been on display all morning.

Senator McLUCAS—Which you would know best about. I quote then the Premier of Queensland, who says that he is concerned that the review will be 'used as an excuse for Canberra to take control of the marine park'. Can you tell me the number of times that the review team met with Queensland government officials and on what dates?

Mr Borthwick—I am happy to take that on notice. The Queensland government made a submission to the panel. I do recall that the panel met with the then head of the Premier's department in that context. Subsequently, and also I think before finalising our report, I spoke to the current head of the Premier's department, but I will confirm the exact dates and on how many occasions that has occurred.

Senator McLUCAS—Has your office been requested for advice to the Prime Minister's office to respond to correspondence from Mr Beattie?

Mr Borthwick—There have been several pieces of correspondence from the Premier and I am not sure who exactly responded, but I am sure the minister has responded once or twice.

Senator Ian Campbell—I am sure I have written to Mr Beattie on at least a couple of occasions on this and given him absolutely categorical reassurances in regard to these matters. There are a number of people around the countryside who are saying that this is some exercise to tear apart GBRMPA and bring control back to Canberra. It would not be the first time that Queensland Premier has said: 'Beware. Those nasty Canberra people are going to take control.' It was well honed by Joh Bjelke-Petersen and many other premiers round the place. Senator Siewert would remember Sir Charles Court and others doing that, and even Labor premiers. So it is not a new game in Australian politics, but I do not honestly believe we could have worked any more closely than we have with various levels of the Queensland government right up to the Premier's office and the Premier himself. I discussed these issues with the Premier on Hayman Island last year. I do not really think you could be more fair dinkum than we are.

Senator McLUCAS—So the fear that the Premier is expressing, that is, that there will be a change to the structure of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, is unfounded. Is that what you are telling me, Minister?

Senator Ian Campbell—I would be deeply surprised if there are not changes to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. I think even most of the members of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority would advocate some changes, so we do not do an extensive high-level review like this aimed at ensuring that the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park

Authority provides the protection and governance structures for this most incredibly important piece of world heritage for 30 years into the future, as it has done for 30 years in the past, if there will not be some changes. Will they be the sort of changes that Mr Beattie is publicly talking about? No.

Senator McLUCAS—So you can confirm that the authority might be in a different structure. The authority itself has made a submission to the review suggesting a number of changes, which I hope are picked up, but there will be an entity called the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. Can you confirm that that will be the case?

Senator Ian Campbell—I have not made any decisions about that. I will be announcing decisions, but I think the sort of political posturing that is going on is just that. It is not based on any understanding of the issues and I do not honestly believe that we could have been any more cooperative with the Queensland government at all the different levels, at the agency level, the level of Mr Borthwick's interaction with his opposite number in the Premier's office and Premier's department, and my own personal interactions with Mr Beattie.

Senator McLUCAS—How many times have you written to Mr Beattie on this issue?

Senator Ian Campbell—At least twice that I recall. I am happy to tell you that I recall signing at least two letters in recent weeks on these sorts of issues.

Senator McLUCAS—Are you aware whether or not the Prime Minister has responded to Mr Beattie's correspondence? I know that that is technically not a question I can ask you.

Senator Ian Campbell—I have got to say it is probably a bit unusual to have a cabinet minister dealing directly with the Premier, but on this issue Mr Beattie seems to be quite happy to deal with me on it. I am sure there are other issues he would deal with the Prime Minister on. Mr Beattie and Prime Minister Howard have had a very good level of cooperation that is delivering quite historic outcomes for the measures that we are putting in place to protect the reef. The water quality plan is again, although it has not had a lot of coverage in the media, really an incredible achievement in terms of getting the institutional arrangements in place, and as more and more money hits the ground in terms of implementing the reef water quality plan, I think the likelihood of having substantial achievements in the quality of the water on the reef are there as well. That has been made possible because Mr Beattie and Mr Howard are both, to use a colloquialism, fair dinkum about getting this right, and the level of cooperation is, from my fairly thorough reading of the history of measures to protect the reef going back for just over 30 years now, at an all-time high, and it needs to be.

Senator McLUCAS—Can you confirm, and maybe Mr Barrett will be able to help us here, that the actual contribution by the Commonwealth to water quality in coastal development, both in the departmental appropriations and other resources available to be used, are in fact less this year?

Senator Ian Campbell—The substantial contributions from the Commonwealth to the water quality program are the substantial investments through the Natural Heritage Trust.

Senator McLUCAS—They are actually less this current year—compared to last year.

Senator Ian Campbell—Through the Natural Heritage Trust?

Mr Barrett—If I could just clarify that, the NHT funding for water quality monitoring appears under output group 1.6, science and information for park management. They are the research group of the organisation. There is a slight drop in there and it is basically in relation to the accounting for when the funding is received and spent. Basically, the original arrangements for funding under NHT for water quality monitoring is \$2 million a year for three years. It is just basically what is accounted for in terms of a reduction.

Senator McLUCAS—Minister, when do you intend to make your decisions known in terms of the review?

Senator Ian Campbell—Just before we leave that—and we will seek to get you more figures—my broad understanding would be that the investments going into on-the-ground investment directed towards reef water quality projects through the Natural Heritage Trust are more likely to be higher this year than in previous years, because a lot of the investments—the three-year investment plans—have been approved during the past 12 months. Much of that investment along the catchments that flow into the lagoon have been approved in the last year and a lot more money is flowing this year, excuse the pun. And I would be very surprised if the quantum of money going into investments to improve reef water quality are not higher this year and next year than they have ever been before in history. If there is some sort of quirk in terms of spending because spending might straddle 30 June or 1 July, then I am happy to be proven wrong. The reality is that over the past year or so we have put in place natural resource management plans, investment plans, integrated with the reef water quality plan, which will now see regional-wide and landscape-wide investment patterns and investment strategies that this country—and that region in particular—has never seen before, which should create measurable improvements to the quality of the water and therefore the health and resilience of the reef.

Senator McLUCAS—I would be interested to see those figures and the spin that you might be able to put on them. The budget says there is an actual decline. So please provide that at your leisure.

Senator Ian Campbell—Where we need to clarify this so that you cannot put out the sort of press release that—

Senator McLUCAS—That you just put out?

Senator Ian Campbell—the Labor Party are renowned for putting out and misrepresenting issues, is that the expenditure directly under this portion of the portfolio is a tiny fraction of the money that gets invested in the reef water quality investments. They predominantly fall under the Natural Heritage Trust and the natural resource management programs, which are in total in excess of \$400 million—nearly a 200 per cent increase on previous Labor government spending on similar programs.

Senator McLUCAS—You cannot tell the committee when you are going to respond to the report of the review?

Senator Ian Campbell—I have not made that decision yet. It is one of the things I am giving a lot of consideration to. It is incredibly important to get it right, and my commitment is to ensure that the governance and management structures for the Great Barrier Reef surpass the great achievements of the past 30 years for the next 30 years.

Senator McLUCAS—Ms Chadwick, as chair of the board and CEO, it has been a difficult time going through the review, I think you would agree?

Ms Chadwick—It has certainly been a challenging time.

Senator McLUCAS—What is the morale of the staff of the authority while this process continues?

Ms Chadwick—I think the morale of the staff of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority is very, very high, despite the fact that there has clearly been a level of anxiety about both the conduct of the review and the possible outcomes of the review. I would have to say that there has been a lot of goodwill between the review team, senior officers and me. That, I think, has enabled me to tell staff that we are in fact getting a fair hearing, that we are in fact being offered the opportunity to provide information and material about our work and our role, and that as a result it would be anticipated that our view of our record and our interests would be considered as part of the general review. So there is that aspect.

A second aspect is that of course the review is just one part of our work. I think we have had an incredible 12 months. We have established our regional offices, brought LMACs for a new term and re-established the Great Barrier Reef Consultative Committee in an enlarged and expanded form. We have had some great achievements and I think morale is pretty high.

Senator McLUCAS—Despite recent events?

Ms Chadwick—Indeed.

Senator McLUCAS—The final question I have relates to the involvement from the authority in the establishment of the MTSRF.

Ms Chadwick—If you will pardon the slightly frivolous note, I have the honour to be on a surf board. So I find myself on the—

Senator McLUCAS—You have no waves out there, Ms Chadwick.

Ms Chadwick—There are not a lot of waves in the GBR. We have been involved at almost every level in the establishment of the MTSRF and its work program. Our directors have been negotiating with both MTSRF interim staff and research providers in terms of a research program and just what is achievable. As you know, we produce our own research priorities and these are publicly available on the web, so we have tried to ensure that those priorities are met. As I mentioned, I am lucky enough to be on the interim board. If the minister approves of this structure that is being advocated by the interim board, we are likely to find that Mr Skeat and Mr Tanzer chair some significant committees that will guide the work of the MTSRF. While there is always room to promote our priorities even further, given we are one significant, but again one, of the end-users of this research, I think the progress to date has been quite good. I am happy with our level of involvement.

Senator McLUCAS—There was a contribution from GBRMPA to the old CRC Reef, but I cannot recall how much that was.

Ms Chadwick—That is indeed true. The level of funding was capped annually. It went as a block grant and it also had, under the rules for the CRC, the capacity to act as leverage to generate further Commonwealth funds. That sort of leverage is not available to us under the structure of the MTSRF and that is fine and well understood. It is also well understood by the

research providers, and indeed by the MTSRF interim staff, that GBRMPA's financial involvement in MTSRF will in fact be on a project-by-project basis. At the moment the minister has not been presented with and had the time to consider the work plan, so in fact there is nothing firm for me to invest in. Even should the minister agree to the work plan once that is available, the projects, many of which are conceptual at the minute, will have to be further developed. It is going to be at that point that GBRMPA decides where and in what projects and in what form it chooses to coinvest.

I am well aware that there are a number of people, including some research providers, who would like GBRMPA to simply hand over a bag of money and researchers will be pathetically grateful and do whatever research they no doubt want. I do not regard that as a wise use of GBRMPA's scarce resources. In fact, I think around this room there are several senators who have been approached by research providers to discuss this very matter. I am not minded to simply hand over our scarce resources.

Senator McLUCAS—The understanding particularly from the tourism sector is that the money that was previously allocated to CRC Reef was EMC or reef tax money. I am not sure how you account for that internally within your budget. What then will happen with that money that the tourism sector in particular believes was well applied, in CRC Reef, into research projects that benefited not only the reef but their investment as well?

Ms Chadwick—Given you asked a question on EMC earlier in this sitting, you would be well aware that the reef tax—which is not a reef tax but an environmental management charge—in fact goes from GBRMPA once collected into consolidated revenue. When you look at our budget papers you will see that there is special appropriation and that special appropriation is in fact the quantum of the EMC. At the time of the increase, which thankfully was before my time in the marine park authority, there was considerable controversy. Then Minister Hill agreed with the AMPTO, the tourism industry representatives, that a portion of the so-called EMC, or special appropriation, could in fact go to fund research through the CRC. That is now capped. The tourism industry is credited under the CRC format with \$1.2 million per year. As you are very well aware, GBRMPA has a very strong partnership with AMPTO and the marine tourism industry and it will come as little surprise that there is a commonality in terms of a number of our research priorities. So I have no hesitation in saying that the quantum that the tourism industry sees as its contribution to reef research will in fact be continued into the future. The reality is that there is no CRC after June or September and, while money will be of course supplied to research, there is no particular requirement that all of it should go to MTSRF or, worse still, that in going to MTSRF it goes to a particular research institution that happens to think its budget is tight at the moment.

Senator McLUCAS—I think that is good to have on the record, the perspective of the tourism industry. I have finished my questions.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Ms Chadwick, can you just be specific with figures? I gather from what you just said that this came up earlier, but in cash terms what is the EMC annually?

Ms Chadwick—The EMC is round about \$7.5 million.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—You collect it; it goes to consolidated revenue?

Ms Chadwick—It goes to consolidated revenue and then reappears in the budget paper as a special appropriation.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—For how much, \$1.2 million?

Ms Chadwick—\$7.5 million.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—So the whole \$7.5 million comes back to you and of that in the past you put \$1.2 million into the CRC?

Ms Chadwick—No, there is \$1.2 million that is attributed to the tourism EMC, and there is \$665,000 that is designated as GBRMPA's involvement in the CRC Reef. That does not represent our total investment in research in the GBR.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Of course.

Ms Chadwick—We have many other projects with many other institutions.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—So \$1.8 million in the past has gone into CRC Reef, \$1.2 million indirectly through the EMC and \$600,000 from your own funds elsewhere.

Ms Chadwick—That is right.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—And the rest of the EMC appropriation to GBRMPA is part of your annual running cost. Do you have a rough estimate? How has the EMC increased over the last several years? Or has it increased and, if so, by what?

Ms Chadwick—I would have to turn to Mr Barrett on that, but as Mr Barrett said in answer to an earlier question, EMC is actually currently down in the order of about \$200,000 and we are watching that very closely.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Do you mean this financial year to date over last financial year?

Ms Chadwick—On projections it is—

Senator Ian Campbell—You are not going to apply structural adjustments?

Senator McLUCAS—Is that possible?

Ms Chadwick—So it does fluctuate but it has been around the \$7 million, \$7.5 million, for several years now. Is that right, Mr Barrett?

Mr Barrett—That is basically correct. As Senator Macdonald would be aware, the EMC was introduced in 1993 at a \$1 charge.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—I am very well aware of that.

Mr Barrett—It increased to \$2 in, I think, 1996 and then to \$4 in 1998, so obviously the amount—

Senator IAN MACDONALD—I viciously opposed it in the beginning and then I was a great supporter of doubling it.

Mr Barrett—So obviously the actual individual charges increased and then as a result the amount that GBRMPA has been collecting has increased in total. It went up to about \$6 million. The last couple of years it has been over \$7 million when the charge increased from \$4 to \$4.50, and that is in line with the indexation arrangements agreed when the charges

increased to \$4. It is due to be indexed again in April next year to \$5, so obviously the amount that GBRMPA will collect then in the following financial year will increase.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Is the amount you have appropriated to research through the CRC been increased in accordance with inflation or CPI?

Mr Barrett—This is the second life of the CRC, if you would excuse the term, but in the original CRC I think it was a lesser amount. It was due to increase each year in line with expectations of increased EMC, and I think it was increased to around \$700,000 or \$800,000 in those days. When the new CRC started in 1999—seven years ago—it was agreed at the time that the amount would be capped at the \$1.2 million.

Ms Chadwick—I can add to that. It was at that point that in fact I was at the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. Sadly I missed the EMC wars with the increase that the minister and you recall so vividly. With the construct of the second CRC, I sought the advice of then Minister Hill about whether it was in fact appropriate to keep CPI-ing and applying a particular formula to the so-called AMPTO-EMC contribution to the CRC. With the agreement of then Minister Hill, I advised both AMPTO and the CRC that it would be a capped contribution both in terms of the EMC—so that is how the \$1.2 million arose—and a capped contribution over the life of the CRC by the GBRMPA—that is how the \$665,000 arose. I am well aware that there are still some people who recall fondly, and would like to see reintroduced, some sort of increase in that contribution based on a formula that has not applied for seven years.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—What part of GBRMPA's total revenue is the EMC—what percentage, approximately?

Mr Barrett—Approximately 20 per cent.

Ms Chadwick—No, it is more than 20 per cent. We have two appropriations: appropriation 1 is \$24 million and special appropriation is \$7.5 million.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—The EMC money was my question: what percentage of your total revenue is the EMC money?

Ms Chadwick—If one excludes particular grants such as NHT, which is what I am suggesting Mr Barrett do at the moment, my instinct is that it is about a third.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Of your total operating costs I probably should say, what percentage is the EMC?

Ms Chadwick—I think John is doing the arithmetic. Can we get back to you on that?

Senator IAN MACDONALD—All right. It is only just by the way. You mentioned the projection is for it to be down this year—and I am sorry if you have been through this earlier today. Is there a feel for why that is?

Ms Chadwick—Two cyclones. And it is not just that we had Cyclone Larry around Innisfail. This has had a detrimental knock-on effect with people not realising the sheer scale in that it did not hit Cairns or it did not hit the Whitsundays.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—No, I understand that. Your allocation to the CRC has been paid for the final financial year of the CRC. That is correct?

Ms Chadwick—We still have one-quarter's payment to go.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Then it will be a decision of the GBRMPA board, assuming you still have a board, and I have no idea about that—

Ms Chadwick—I live in hope and anticipation, Senator.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—I was hoping the minister and Mr Borthwick were both listening to me there but they both are totally involved in other things. But I am sure they have developed a sixth sense for hearing two conversations at once. So if there is a board, as I certainly hope there will be, it is then a decision for the board on what you put into research generally. Is that right?

Ms Chadwick—Yes, that would be so.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—And it is a decision of the board on how much you might put into any new configuration. One of the tenderers, I understand, is MTSRF.

Ms Chadwick—I am not sure whether the board would be looking to the detail of each and every project or percentage of investment, but I think it would—

Senator IAN MACDONALD—If not the board, would it be officers? Is that what you mean?

Ms Chadwick—No, the board would actually make a decision or recommendation. Obviously, I would be taking advice also from the minister, because he is ultimately responsible.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—It is always a curious thing—

Ms Chadwick—I think it might be helpful, Senator Macdonald, if I were to say that, first, I place a very high value on, and wish every success to, MTSRF.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Yes.

Ms Chadwick—Second, in the almost seven years that I have been in Townsville I have built a high regard for the institutions such as JCU and AIMS and others and would not wish them anything but every success for the future. Third, I put a very high value on my and GBRMPA's partnership with the marine tourism industry, and I know that they share many of the research priorities that we have. So I would absolutely anticipate that there would be a similar level of investment in research of priority to both GBRMPA and the tourism industry in the future.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—So until the new reef and rainforest organisation is up and running, you are not in a position to make any decisions on what goes to them and what goes elsewhere?

Ms Chadwick—We, in fact, have already advised the MTSRF interim board of what we believe is our in-kind contribution. That is the time that our people already do spend producing material which can then inform and assist the work of MTSRF—chairing committees, working with them and so forth. I would be happy to provide you with that document. It represents an investment in kind by GBRMPA of something in the order of just over \$3 million per annum.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—To research?

Ms Chadwick—In kind, as opposed to cash.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Okay.

Ms Chadwick—That is to MTSRF.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—The decision on cash has not yet been made.

Ms Chadwick—No, on cash it has not been made.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—So there are opportunities for interested members of the public or parliament to lobby the board towards various outcomes should we be convinced that such outcomes are in the right interest. I hear what you say.

Ms Chadwick—And such persons already are lobbying.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—I have not spoken to you yet, but hang around! I appreciate your point that there are a lot of research providers and that you should not be committed to one or the other. Finally, Mr Chairman, I do not want to—

Ms Chadwick—It may be helpful on that point to say that when we, and I use ‘we’ in the generic sense, do make a decision on where funding will be usefully applied, to add value or enhance a project in the MTSRF, it will be on a project-by-project basis rather than funding to a particular institution that might be part of the MTSRF family. So it does not necessarily mean that if, for argument’s sake—

Senator IAN MACDONALD—So you are saying it will not be a decision on a straight \$1.2 million going to a CRC Reef?

Ms Chadwick—No.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—That decision has been made, has it?

Ms Chadwick—There is no point in it at all, because the only value of putting an annual grant in was in fact that it leveraged a sort of two to one advantage from the CRC. That advantage is not available with the MTSRF and as a result it will be largely a project-by-project approach that forms the basis of our funding to MTSRF.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Okay, we are running close to time. I will have to think about that and research a bit more on what you are just saying there. Finally, this is a sort of dorothy dixer, but it is also something that I am interested in. Do you keep any record, apart from in your mind, heart or soul, of the compliments that GBRMPA is given around the world for the work it does? Is there a record kept or do you just keep it in your heart?

Ms Chadwick—I would have to say, if I have had a bad day or week or have been lobbied assiduously by people looking for research funds, it is a great comfort to my heart and soul to recall some of the great compliments and awards that we have received. But, in all seriousness, we now immodestly have a shelf and cabinet at GBRMPA where our national and international awards and citations are for visitors to see and, yes, we do keep a record of the positive comments and feedback. In fact, I might just turn to Mr Tanzer, because he is just back from Germany where, in fact, we were applauded for our management of the marine environment.

Mr Tanzer—I would just say that the model applied in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is internationally seen as best practice. Other countries around the world, including northern

Europe and North America, are very keen to learn from our experience and actively seek it out, to the extent that we really cannot fulfil the demand, given that our core business is the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, obviously. But there is an insatiable demand for knowledge on how they can adopt the tools and processes that have been applied in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Do you offer yourself for paid consultancy work to other areas or do people just want you to give this advice free?

Mr Tanzer—It is a bit of both. We pulled back a lot from external consulting—GBRMPA used to have a consulting arm, but we found that it was distracting, can I say, from what our core business is. Our core business under the act is, of course, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and its management. We have got a strong focus on our core business. But, for instance, the German nature conservation agency, which is part of the German ministry, paid for my attendance at the conference.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—I would be interested in getting a bit more on that, perhaps on notice. Can I say, with respect, I do not think you publicise that well enough. You know that I have had some issues with GBRMPA over the fishing boundaries, and I maintain that you were wrong and I was right on some of those. However, by and large I think you do a very good job, but I do not think you publicise well enough some of the successes.

Senator Ian Campbell—It is a continual area of frustration for the Minister for the Environment from Australia. I shared the stage with Virginia and David Kemp last year at a global conference on marine protected areas and received the award from the World Wide Fund for Nature, a Gift to the Earth Award, for one aspect of the work we have done on the reef—that is the representative areas program which I know is very controversial. But we are leaders not only in reef conservation—the Great Barrier Reef is probably the number one marine protected area on the planet—but also in terms of marine protected areas generally. The south-east area that we have declared recently makes Australia the number one nation on the earth in terms of marine protection and the size of our zones. I think about a third of all marine protected areas in the world occur within Australian waters. The reason that we do not get coverage for that is that it is not a particularly newsworthy story. The papers and the television generally cover conflict and things like that. No-one is going to hold the front page and say that Australia's done a marvellous job at protecting its marine environment. But if anyone has got suggestions on how we should better promote what the Great Barrier Reef Marine Authority is doing and what the Australian government is doing, I am all ears.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—I just want to finish on this. As I say, I had my issues with you on the fishing boundaries. I, like every other parliamentarian, had the right to put in a notice of disallowance in the Senate. I do not think anyone did. Notwithstanding that, broadly I think you do a good job and I will put my mind to it and speak to the minister about how some of your good works can be better publicised across the area. But well done.

Ms Chadwick—Thank you, Senator.

Proceedings suspended from 1.03 pm to 2.08 pm

CHAIR—The committee will resume with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. Senator Bartlett, do you have any questions?

Senator BARTLETT—Senator McLucas has covered most of the ones that I was going to raise, but I have a couple that predominantly flow out of the PBS. Table 4.1, Australian government Indigenous expenditure, is detailed as \$1.5 million. I presume most of it comes out of your output 1.1 to deal with conservation, heritage and Indigenous partnerships, but can you break that down a bit?

Mr Barrett—That is a representation of our total expenditure or estimated expenditure across all the groups. About \$500,000 of that would be directly in relation to the conservation, heritage and Indigenous partnerships group. There would also be contributions from other parts of the organisation that are involved in those various programs.

Senator BARTLETT—How do you arrive at that? It must be a bit of a general guesstimate.

Mr Barrett—It is a notional allocation of people's involvement with the various issues that come up across all areas—for example, some of the fisheries involvement involves Indigenous groups, similarly with tourism groups. There is a whole range of activities across the organisation.

Ms Chadwick—I will give you an example. As you know, there are a large number of sea country claims in the Great Barrier Reef. With each permit application, we notify each affected group and they have the opportunity to comment. That is just one small example of how assessing a permit does have quite a significant involvement from potentially affected Aboriginal communities.

Senator BARTLETT—Could you tell me how many Indigenous staff you have?

Ms Chadwick—I would take that on notice. In simple terms, not as many as I would like to have.

Senator BARTLETT—That output would come under that Indigenous partnership area. I know it is something the authorities put some energy into. At least from my intermittent feedback over the years, it still falls a bit short of what everybody would find desirable from all perspectives. Could you give me an outline of what sort of work is being done to strengthen the partnerships with traditional owners and other Indigenous groups?

Ms Chadwick—We are happy to.

Mr Tanzer—We undertake a range of activities. The new community partnership initiative that we are running actually has an officer responsible for the Cape, and much of his time is spent dealing with Indigenous communities on Cape York. I would say that probably 80 per cent of his time is involved in community consultation on issues to do with the marine park and its management, fisheries and tourism. The single biggest factor or matter would be our traditional use and marine resource agreements, which are to deal with hunting in the marine park. We have successfully negotiated one with the Giringun community, which covers the Hinchinbrook Island-Cardwell-Kennedy-Mission Beach areas. We have another two that are close, one to do with the Mamu group out of Innisfail and the other the Darumbal people, at Yeppoon, Keppel Island and Shoalwater Bay. These agreements are really about a cooperative management approach whereby we reach certain agreements through negotiations and listening as to what hunting will or will not occur, but they also end up covering a whole range of other issues. Once you sit down to start talking about management of sea country it

starts to cover a whole range of matters, not only turtle and dugong and hunting. That is the vanguard of our engagement mechanism. I hold high hopes for it. We now have the first one in place and operating successfully. There is a lot of interest from Indigenous communities along the coast about following that model.

Senator BARTLETT—In terms of the overall budget amount, you have stated in your statement that there is a slight decline in your total resource that reflects the decline of the—

Ms Chadwick—NHT.

Senator BARTLETT—Sorry?

Ms Chadwick—That is some of the NHT funding going down.

Senator BARTLETT—I was thinking about the representative areas process and all of that consultative stuff, which is starting to taper out. Looking down the track a bit, after the coming financial year the forward estimates dropping about \$5 million, from \$38 million down to \$33 million, if I read it correctly. That is table 5.1. Is that all reflecting the end of that process or is there some other reason for that?

Ms Chadwick—No, there is not. I think it is the NHT, but I will turn to Mr Barrett for advice.

Mr Barrett—There are a number of programs funded out of NHT for a three-year period. This is the last year of that three-year period. That includes education on the new zoning plan, compliance with the new zoning plan and water quality monitoring. Those programs are actually funded out of NHT for a three-year period.

Senator BARTLETT—They were basically related to the rezoning?

Mr Barrett—Two of them were.

Senator BARTLETT—It seems that output 1.5, the field management staff, would be the main area that is policing, for want of a better word, compliance with the new zones. Other than your rapid response vessel, do you have any extra resource inputs to assist with managing the extra protected areas?

Ms Chadwick—Not really. The core work of the day-to-day management program is jointly funded fifty-fifty between the state of Queensland and the Commonwealth. While that amount is indexed, there has not been a significant increase in that core funding for a considerable time, and there has not been in this current budget either.

Senator BARTLETT—Turning to table 2.3, page 207, the Queensland government's contribution to day-to-day management, which is a bit under \$5 million, seems to go down in the next financial year. From a CPI point of view, it would be better if it went up. Is there some reason for that?

Ms Chadwick—I think it is accounting magic, but I will turn to Mr Barrett.

Mr Barrett—The amount has been indexed and it is matched by the Commonwealth. In the 2005-06 current financial year there was some unearned revenue carried forward from the previous year that is accounted for this financial year. It is a matter of timing.

Senator BARTLETT—It is not some symbol of some dissatisfaction from the Queensland side of things or any such thing?

Mr Barrett—No.

Ms Chadwick—I would hasten to add that, while that represents the core funding for day-to-day management, there are many aspects of the work of GBRMPA—for example, permitting, assessment, education, production of materials and the like—which help feed into the general day-to-day management of the park. Similarly, from the state of Queensland there are any number of forms of assistance that go beyond that core funding. We mentioned NHT a moment ago. We received a little under \$9 million for compliance over a three-year period. There are many sources of funds that go towards the day to day management program overall.

CHAIR—Are there other questions on the Marine park?

Senator JOYCE—I have questions.

CHAIR—Senator Joyce, please proceed.

Senator JOYCE—Unfortunately I do not agree that the outcome for GBRMPA has been good for people, especially North Queensland. I am talking specifically about fishing and recreational fishermen. In that light, I have a couple of questions to ask. Output Group 1.3 talks about working with fisheries managers and stakeholders to review and improve management arrangements for the reef fish, fin fish, trawl, crab and inshore et cetera. How do you think you are going in your relationship with the fishing interests in North Queensland?

Ms Chadwick—I think it would be fair to say that it is patchy, particularly with their key organisations. This in large part goes back to disagreements in respect of the representative areas rezoning program. When I say it is patchy, there are areas both with commercial and recreational fishers where we have good relationships, but it would be most foolish of me to suggest that that is universal or that it reflects particularly the commercial fishers association, QSIA.

Senator JOYCE—Do you think the majority of the industry are happy or unhappy with the role of GBRMPA?

Ms Chadwick—I would think, particularly in relation to rezoning, that there would be still some questions that raised particularly by those who feel they have been negatively impacted by the zoning plan. However, I do not necessarily believe that is a view universally held by all fishermen, recreational or professional.

Senator JOYCE—Have the ones who have concerns conveyed those concerns to you? If they have, can you give a summary of what those concerns might be?

Ms Chadwick—I would have to say that in recent times I have received very few complaints from either commercial or recreational fishers. However, during the time of the rezoning, fishermen, both recreational and commercial—just the same as any other citizen or interest group within the GBRMPA—were very vocal in their views on various aspects of the rezoning.

Senator Ian Campbell—We do obviously hear a lot of feedback and input from people who have been affected by the representative areas program and, as you would know, we are dealing with most if not all of those through the structural adjustment package process. That is a process on which we have spent a lot of time trying to get right and a lot of time trying to finetune and listening very carefully to the concerns. Many of them are from fishing families

and fishing businesses and, of course, many recreationalists as well. So we do hear from those who are not happy with the rezoning, even if they are ambivalent about the rezoning and are affected by it. When he was doing the review, Mr Borthwick also analysed a lot of the process of the rezoning and the impacts and talked to a lot of the people that I have spoken to over the past nearly two years. It is worth mentioning that there are many others who are either benign about it or are generally supportive in the recreational area, the tourism area and even fishing families. It is only natural that we would hear from those who are upset.

In reviewing some correspondence recently, I saw a large article in the *Australian* newspaper that focused on this and the structural adjustment package and the impact. I cannot remember the date of it, but I think it had a photograph of some game fishing boats tied up at Cairns. Interestingly, after that article appeared—which was tending to be very anti the representative areas program, which I do know is very controversial—I got a lot of mail from fishing people, charter boat operators and others who were incredibly supportive of what the government had done there, which did surprise me because, like you, I had heard torrents of abuse from people saying the process was a disaster and GBRMPA were a bunch of things I cannot say on the *Hansard* and that they should all be shot. But there is a substantial body of people up in the Barrier Reef Marine Park greater area that have been incredibly supportive of it as well. There is a balance there, and I just want to put that on the record. A lot of people wrote back when that big article appeared in the *Australian* newspaper. They said, ‘We know it has been tough, we know it is hard and maybe it could have been done better, but you have done it and you have done it well, and it is good for Australia. At least fishing in that area will be put on a sustainable footing.’ I think that is one of the benefits of all of this, and we want the fishing businesses that remain on the reef to be sustainable going forward.

Senator JOYCE—That is the issue I wish to concentrate on. Obviously, you would have heard ad nauseam about the studies of people such as Dr Walter Stark—and correct me if I am wrong—that fishing on the reef was at about 17 kilograms per square kilometre. Would you agree with that? Do you know?

Ms Chadwick—No, I would need to check.

Senator JOYCE—I think it was. Other fisheries in the world collect up to 7,000 kilograms of fish per square kilometre. Prior to the expansion of the zones, what was the evidence of the main environmental threats that inspired it, and can you direct me to the paper that states these in detail, and have the expanded zones alleviated these issues?

Ms Chadwick—There are any number of challenges facing the sustainable future of the Great Barrier Reef, sustainable fishing being but one of them. Water quality is an issue, sustainable tourism is another—

Senator Ian Campbell—Climate change.

Ms Chadwick—and climate change. It is our goal to ensure that in the face of matters over which we, as a small organisation, have very little control, for example, climate change as the minister said, we have built sufficient insurance policy or resilience into the reef so that it in fact has the very best chance of being sustainable against those forces over which I have got no control. That was the basic underpinning.

[2.25 pm]

Senator JOYCE—What is the specific paper that details, outlines and quantifies the threat?

Ms Chadwick—There are any number. I would doubt very much that there would be one single paper.

Senator JOYCE—What was the one on which you based the increased zoning?

Ms Chadwick—We included more than one single paper. There are many. As you are probably aware, the Great Barrier Reef is, thankfully, one of the most studied—

Senator JOYCE—Can you just mention for the record a couple?

Senator Ian Campbell—We could provide to the committee a series of papers that would create substantial scientific underpinning to the concept that you set aside areas of total no-take in terms of marine management. We will provide those to you.

Ms Chadwick—I would have to say that no member of staff, myself included, got up one morning and thought, ‘What will I do today? Let’s rezone the reef.’ Clearly, we had a group of scientific experts who provided us with information on how many bioregions or habitat types there were, what level of protection would afford these bioregions the best chance of resilience, how they should be established, whether there should be lots of pocket handkerchiefs or larger areas, whether there should be replicates. All of that work was done and informed by the best available science. All of that material is available. Much of it is on our website.

Senator JOYCE—Did you communicate those papers to the affected stakeholders, being the finishing industry, for them to get back to you about?

Ms Chadwick—Indeed. We had a round of consultation as well as any number of public meetings. We also had many, many meetings with stakeholders, such as QSIA, Sunfish, being the recreational lobby, and indeed many other stakeholder organisations.

Senator JOYCE—Were they happy with the hearing they got?

Ms Chadwick—I think they were happy to be engaged. I think we provided all material that was available on what the basis of the zoning might be. There was considerable documentation, and through the two rounds of public consultation, as you are probably well aware, we had over 30,000 submissions. People certainly had a lot of information and were not backward in coming forward to tell us their views.

Senator JOYCE—Do you have any intention to expand the current zones?

Ms Chadwick—No, and even if government were to decide that there should be a change to the zoning plan, then our legislation sets down the process by which that should happen, the timeframes in which that should happen, and the parliamentary overview that would occur during such a process, but it most certainly is not on our work program at this time.

Senator Ian Campbell—I do not think Senator Joyce was here last time we addressed this issue as a committee. We made a decision at about the time I became environment minister, when I travelled to the reef to hear first-hand the concerns of those who were not happy with the process or the outcome. There are many of them, and I do not think anyone at GBRMPA

hides from that fact. These are very big, controversial and very hard decisions. They do affect people's lives. I made the point at the Geelong conference when I accepted the Gift to the Earth Award from WWF on behalf of the government that it is all very well to be down in Victoria and be triumphal about this massive environmental achievement and pat ourselves on the back for saving the Great Barrier Reef. It is an incredibly important, globally significant environmental outcome, but it has had massive impacts on many hundreds of lives. I knew that from the outset.

I know from meetings in town halls with people like Paul Neville, Warren Entsch, Ian McDonald, Ron Boswell and others. I went to a number of town hall meetings with those people and I saw first-hand the wives of the fishermen, the daughters and sons of fishermen—fishermen's children who were getting picked on at school because their dads were vandalising the reef, wives who were in tears at the meeting because they were going to lose their homes. I saw it first-hand, and I know that the concerns are deep and genuine and needed to be addressed by the government. When I came back to report to the Prime Minister on how we should handle this as an issue, I said that we should hang on to the environmental achievement of the representative areas program. The last thing we want to do is to reopen the boundaries, because you will never, in that situation, get a set of boundaries that everyone is going to agree on, no matter where you draw them. I reached the conclusion, which I am absolutely certain was the right one, that the environmental achievement and the process that led to it should not be undone or reopened.

The fishermen, apart from anything else, want certainty in their lives and to be able to get on with their lives. That is why I came back and suggested that we maintain the boundaries, that we do not change the boundaries, that we do not review the boundaries and that we create as much long-term certainty as we can, but that we ensure we address the very legitimate concerns of all those people who have lost their livelihoods—and often third- and fourth-generation fishermen and their families—by a very fair and generous structural adjustment package. As you know, I have maintained that commitment. Wherever QSIA or others have come to me and said, 'Look, we have found problems with this', we have adjusted the package and changed it.

It is fair to say that we are looking at it very closely once again, because more concerns are being brought to me by our colleagues, Ron Boswell in particular, Ian McDonald, Warren Entsch, Paul Neville and you. We have taken away the maximum cap, we have changed the assistance available, and we have made it possible to fast-track. Throughout that whole thing, we have done it because the government made a decision to maintain those boundaries and hold on to them for a range of reasons: firstly, for the environmental benefit it will gain for that incredibly important piece of Australia's biodiversity and the world's heritage; secondly, and equally importantly, you could argue, for the certainty for the fishermen and for the sustainability angles of the fishery.

This will upset Senator McLucas. At the same time, the then Labor leader went to those same communities, as you would be aware. Rather than addressing the issue in the way that I said we should address it, which is to hold on to those environmental achievements, he went up to those communities with the Labor Party candidates and said, 'No, we will review the boundaries.' He took the opposite path. To date, Labor Party policy has not changed. I

welcome the fact that in the latest announcements they have softened their position, but as of today the Labor Party's policy, unless they have junked as they did with Medicare Gold and a couple of other ones, is still to review the reef's boundaries and therefore tear up one of the best environmental achievements of this government.

Senator JOYCE—There is a view—I am reading my mail—that even if people cannot get a change in the percentage of the boundaries, they would be looking for an alteration to small areas of the green zone, for example, that could create a much more effective and better working mechanism for how they do their job. The question they pose is: would GBRMPA ever be interested in talking to them about that?

Ms Chadwick—There are many individuals and groups that I and my colleagues have in fact spoken to about those very matters. I must refer to the comments of the minister. One cannot change a little bit of the zoning plan. Our current legislation is such that, if there were to be any change in the zoning plan, the entire plan would have to be opened, and the government has made a decision on that matter. Secondly, one person's error may be not an error from the viewpoint of some other people. While I certainly do not want to debate the rights or wrongs of each and every line, there were significant changes that were made between the draft zoning plan and the final zoning plan. In large part, that was in the light of information that came from commercial and recreational fishermen, including log book data, VMS data particularly, in relation to trawl.

Senator JOYCE—There was a belief out there that there was negotiation or a process of discussion between GBRMPA and the stakeholders, being the recreational and commercial fishermen, where GBRMPA put forward that, if they had specific interest in specific areas, they should let them know. They then believed that these areas were then used as mechanisms to include those specific areas in zones. What are your comments on that?

Ms Chadwick—With the minister's agreement, I invite you to visit GBRMPA in Townsville next time you are there. I would like to have the opportunity to take you through some of the changes that were made between the draft and the final zoning plan, which I hope would be able to allay your fears.

Senator JOYCE—I just noticed in that regard, visiting GBRMPA—

Senator Ian Campbell—Mr Borthwick and I have looked very closely at those changes, because they are, when you see them, quite alarming. I have first met with all the fishermen on a number of occasions and I have then been to GBRMPA and looked at the maps pre and post the consultations, and by and large I have satisfied myself. Then I asked Mr Borthwick, as part of his review, to do that process. I have a totally bizarre diary, and so he was able to do that in far more detail. He has advised me that he is satisfied that the accusation that is made about getting data and information from fishermen and then saying, 'Right, we'll grab those areas', has no foundation in fact. That is not to say that a lot of areas where fishermen got good catches were not zoned. When the planet was created, the areas of the greatest biodiversity also happened to be the areas where mankind wants to reap the best reward of resources. It is not actually that complicated when you think about it, because where there is biodiversity happens to be where the resources are and it is where we happen to want to get them from. As it happened, the uranium was put in the middle of Kakadu and gold is in places where it is hard to get out. I think the creator of the universe decided to make things very

interesting for environment ministers down the track. That is the reality and that is why you do get that overlap. It is only a natural thing.

It is incredibly useful for any member of this committee to accept the invitation of GBRMPA—and you certainly will not need to ask me—and get a detailed briefing. I have made myself as familiar with the process as I can in the time that I had available and have kept across it. I treat all of the complaints about the process from your constituents, Senator, very seriously, because they are, to a man and a woman who I met up there, very decent Australians who are not environmental vandals. They are good citizens who care about the reef. I have followed through the accusations as closely as I can, and I got the head of my department to do the same. I would invite you to go through it. We may reach different conclusions, but there are no secrets there.

Senator JOYCE—No, I appreciate that. The benefit of the conservative government is the diversity of views and you are allowed to extol them, which is good. I am just going back to the budget. I noticed that just shy of \$15 million was spent on employees. Can you just explain to me that figure? How many employees do you have?

Ms Chadwick—We currently have 195, and that includes—Mr Barrett can give you the breakdown—the core staff of the head office at Townsville. As you are probably aware, we run an aquarium, which I would also invite you to come and visit. It is a living coral reef aquarium. There is a shop and a cafe. Then of course we have field management. There are rangers out in the field, so they are not all bureaucrats sitting behind a computer in Townsville. Also, as a recent initiative of the minister, we now have four small regional offices. There is a fair mix that comprises that 195, but Mr Barrett could provide greater detail.

Mr Barrett—At previous Senate estimates we have provided, in response to questions on notice, the breakdown of our staff by group, if that would be helpful.

Senator JOYCE—If you have got to the zones that you think are in place and you are not going to change the boundaries, do we need the same number of staff?

Ms Chadwick—The regional initiative has only two people in four regional centres. In a perfect world, I would like to build on that in terms of community understanding and consultation. Similarly, if I lived in the ideal world, which sadly none of us do, I would very much like to see more resources out there in the field, doing back-burning of weeds on islands, walking tracks, putting up signs at boat ramps and helping in educating the community. That is what I would do.

Senator JOYCE—Does that need to be done under GBRMPA or could that just be done under the ministerial department?

Ms Chadwick—The discussion on that would probably pre-empt what may be in the review that was headed up by Mr Borthwick. I have a personal view, but it is very difficult to run an area the size of the marine park and to liaise effectively and work in partnership with community out of Canberra.

Senator JOYCE—Now you have the zones in place and you have said that they are not changing and you do not intend them to get bigger, what do you see as your role into the future?

Ms Chadwick—We have four critical issue groups and, while critical issues may change, I think for the foreseeable future our issues are going to be as follows: assisting with the reef water quality protection plan, because I see water quality as a major threat to areas of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and its future; secondly, working with the tourism industry to ensure that tourism is sustainable. It is our biggest industry.

Senator JOYCE—It is now.

Ms Chadwick—It always has been, since the eighties.

Senator JOYCE—The fishing industry used to be quite big at one stage.

Ms Chadwick—No. I would have to say, if one looks at productivity—and I regret to have to disagree—the order of magnitude, whether it is pre rezoning or post rezoning—between commercial fishing and the marine tourism industry is overwhelmingly significant.

Senator JOYCE—Can you give me a run-down on the \$12.5 million worth of buildings?

Ms Chadwick—That is largely the aquarium. I would encourage you to come and visit, and I would hope that you would be as supportive of it as we are. It is one of the major tourism attractions in Townsville.

Senator JOYCE—Where do I see the revenues from the aquarium?

Ms Chadwick—Mr Barrett will get that, but I will say that one of the things we are very proud of in the aquarium—given that it is run by bureaucrats, I suppose you would have to say—is that we return something of the order of 80 per cent of our costs. While I have great respect for art galleries, museums and other institutions across the country, I do not think there is another institution across the country that comes anywhere near that.

Senator JOYCE—Can you run through some of the fines that are currently imposed and administered by your department in respect of fishing in some of the zones?

Ms Chadwick—The fines and the quantum of the fines are matters of legislation. We do not impose the fines; courts do. The prosecutions are in fact headed up by the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions.

Senator JOYCE—In your view, do they match the crime? For example, for fishing in the wrong zone, what is the maximum fine I could get?

Mr Tanzer—I am not exactly sure, but I think the maximum fine we have had for a commercial fisherman in a green zone, for an individual, is around \$20,000.

Senator JOYCE—That is the maximum?

Mr Tanzer—That is a maximum that a magistrate has seen fit to apply; that is not the maximum that a magistrate could apply.

Senator JOYCE—What is the maximum that could be applied?

Ms Chadwick—We might take that on notice.

Mr Tanzer—We had better take that on notice.

Ms Chadwick—We can get that figure to you.

Senator JOYCE—It is about \$70,000, is it not?

Mr Tanzer—For a corporation?

Senator JOYCE—No, for an individual.

Mr Tanzer—For an individual, that sounds about right, but let us take it on notice and get it correct.

Senator JOYCE—A \$70,000 fine is immense.

Ms Chadwick—If I were a fisherman, commercial or recreational, who overwhelmingly abides by the rules and acts honestly—and I would say that that represents the overwhelming majority of commercial and recreational fishers out in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park—I would be very unhappy to be told that it is a trivial offence that others can go into a green zone.

Senator JOYCE—I will change it around, then. In your initial maps, did you put the GPS coordinates on all appropriate sections of your zones, or did you have a few problems with that?

Senator Ian Campbell—I think they were actually in the legislation that was put through to parliament.

Mr Tanzer—That is correct.

Senator JOYCE—If I said I could produce maps that you put out of your department without the GPS coordinates, would you accept that?

Mr Tanzer—In terms of the zones, the actual boundaries?

Senator JOYCE—If you were in a green zone, you would never know, because there are no coordinates on it.

Mr Tanzer—The coordinates are all in the zoning plans, the documents that went through the parliament. They had to be there.

Senator JOYCE—They are not on some of the maps that have been distributed around the area.

Ms Chadwick—I am very pleased to see that you have looked at our maps. We are quite proud of them. Those maps, as you read them, will say they are for ‘for information only’. They are not navigational charts.

Senator JOYCE—You have them in some areas but not in others?

Ms Chadwick—Yes.

Senator JOYCE—Considering there is a \$70,000 fine for the offence, should—

Senator Ian Campbell—There are charts that are used for navigation and there are other representations of maps or charts that are not used for navigation. You would not navigate your way around the parts of the coast using a *Melways* or whatever. I have seen representations of the reef boundaries in sailing magazines and cruising magazines that do not have the coordinates on them. They are to show people and alert people to the fact that these exist. Also, whenever you see those, you will see, ‘To obtain copies of the CD-ROM, go to www.gbrmpa.gov.au or ring this number.’ I think it is fair to say that not every single representation of the charts you are going to put out is going to have the coordinates on them.

Senator JOYCE—I understand that. It is just that on some maps they have both GPS coordinates and, in other areas of the map—put out by representatives of GBRMPA, put out by the department—no GPS coordinates. So someone can grab it and you have got GPS coordinates on a beach but a green zone in the middle of the ocean with no GPS coordinates anywhere around it.

Ms Chadwick—There are two points. Somebody thinks that the maps are of value, because almost 900,000 of them have been distributed free of charge since the new zoning plan came in.

Senator JOYCE—So 900,000 people are relying on them.

Ms Chadwick—No. Many people these days have GPS, given that they are relatively inexpensive. We have worked with a number of the relevant companies.

Senator JOYCE—If they have a GPS, they are going to need the coordinates.

Ms Chadwick—There are products out there now that you can use with your GPS that have all of that at, I think, a very modest cost. I do not understand the technology, but Mr Tanzer does. Thirdly, particularly inshore, where the bulk of recreational fishers are, wherever possible we try to draw the boundary lines so that they could be described by land based objects, whether it was a point, a tree, a rock or something of that nature.

Senator JOYCE—What is the situation with the incursions of foreign fishing vessels in the area?

Ms Chadwick—We are desperately concerned about it, as is the entire government.

Senator JOYCE—Do you put on them the same fines that you put on Australian citizens for incursions into those areas?

Senator Ian Campbell—We arrest them and lock them up.

Ms Chadwick—I mentioned earlier that we do not prosecute and we do not determine the level of the fine. That is a matter for the court. But fishermen on foreign fishing vessels are arrested, go to the department of immigration and are prosecuted. In most cases, their boats are burnt. Neither of those two things happen to—

Senator JOYCE—What is the maximum fine for a commercial fishing vessel in the green zone?

Mr Tanzer—Can we take that on notice?

Senator JOYCE—I can help you out if you do not know.

Mr Tanzer—For a commercial fishing vessel in the green zone?

Senator JOYCE—Yes.

Mr Tanzer—That is the question that was asked before. It varies according to whether it is an individual or a corporation. I think it is in the vicinity of \$200,000 for a corporation. They were increased several years ago by the government on the advice of DPP, not on the advice of GBRMPA.

Senator JOYCE—So is \$200,000 your view of the maximum fine?

Mr Tanzer—I would have to have a look. I cannot actually recall.

Senator JOYCE—I think it is a bit more than that.

Mr Tanzer—But we have not had any fines anywhere in that vicinity.

Senator JOYCE—It is in the vicinity of \$3 million, I thought.

Mr Tanzer—For a corporation?

Senator JOYCE—Have any of these fines been placed on Indonesian or any other foreign fishing vessels that come into the area?

Ms Chadwick—No, because they are prosecuted by the Commonwealth under different legislation as operating illegally. They are not licensed. They are in Australian waters. They are in detention centres.

Senator Ian Campbell—The best analogy is one that the secretaries told me informally, and that is that if you catch fish illegally in a river like the Murrumbidgee you will get very similar sorts of fines—well in excess of thousands of dollars. They are on a par with the sorts of fines that would be attracted for illegal fishing anywhere in Australia. The treatment of an illegal incursion into Australian waters is an incredibly different set of issues. You can create an interesting debate about how we treat a Papuan or an Indonesian fisherman versus an Aussie in a tinny who goes across the boundary. That is a fun debate to have, but if you do not think that the penalties are large enough for Indonesian fishermen then that is a matter for another committee and another department of the government.

Ms Chadwick—The prosecution of foreign fishermen entering the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is, as Mr Tanzer advises me, under the Australian fisheries act.

Mr Tanzer—It is under the Australian fisheries legislation; that is correct.

Ms Chadwick—As opposed to GBRMPA legislation.

Senator JOYCE—I still think a lot of work needs to be done dealing with your major stakeholders and the recreational or commercial fishermen. There has been a lot of unnecessary hurt in that area.

Ms Chadwick—I would be the first to agree with you that there is a lot of work that needs to be done, and it is for that reason that we are doing our very best through consultative committees, local advisory committees and regional offices to build bridges not just with fishermen but also with other groups within the community. I would add, however, that, while I share your concern about building those bridges, the surveys that we undertook at the time of the introduction of the zoning plan—and hence I guess the height of the debate—showed something in the order of 80 per cent support for the actions of GBRMPA. While I in no way ignore or trivialise the deep concerns of a number of stakeholders, particularly commercial fishermen, it does not necessarily mean that that view is the majority view in the North Queensland community.

Senator JOYCE—I believe you should be back under ministerial control but, anyway, there you go.

Ms Chadwick—I am under ministerial control as the chairman of a statutory authority. I am under the direct control of Minister Campbell, and I am very pleased with that.

Senator JOYCE—What do you think the final cost will be for the payout of commercial fishermen?

Senator Ian Campbell—I think that is a question for me. The answer, which I have said publicly before, is that I expect it to breach the \$100 million level.

Senator McLUCAS—I want to correct the record again. Labor's coastal plan states:

- Labor is committed to maintaining the existing boundaries of the Great Barrier Reef Representative Areas Program.

Secondly:

- Labor will prohibit mineral, oil and gas exploration in Australian waters adjacent to the Marine Park.

That is something that this government will not do.

CHAIR—Are there any other questions on the marine park?

Senator BARTLETT—How many individual licences would the \$100 million cover?

Senator Ian Campbell—I might get Stephen Oxley to the table. There is a number of facets to it. There was the licence buyout part of it, which was to reduce the fisheries effort, and now there is the structural adjustment part of it—the business restructuring.

Mr Oxley—Sorry, I missed the question.

Senator Ian Campbell—How many fishing licences have we bought out?

Mr Oxley—We have purchased 122 fishing licences.

Senator BARTLETT—So that deals with the buyout. That would not have just been \$100 million divided by 122, I presume.

Senator Ian Campbell—No, there are number of facets to it. Mr Oxley can go through it in intricate detail.

Mr Oxley—The 122 licences to which I refer are those licences that we purchased in the initial phase of the restructuring package, which was the licence buyout.

Senator Ian Campbell—What was the amount?

Mr Oxley—The amount was just on \$33 million spent on purchasing those 122 licences and all the entitlements to fish that go with them, whether that was quota or whatever.

Senator JOYCE—Was there a socioeconomic impact statement on the purchase of the 122 licences and what that would do to the wider community?

Mr Oxley—There was no socioeconomic impact assessment done on the purchase of the 122 licences per se. We did an analysis of how much fishing effort was going to be displaced by the rezoning of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and then, in essence, we bought an amount of fishing effort—in fact, we exceeded the targets—equivalent to that amount of displaced effort so that we were not, through the rezoning, failing to take out an amount of effort equivalent to what was displaced by that rezoning and therefore putting unsustainable economic and environmental pressure on the remainder of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park that remained open to fishing.

Senator JOYCE—What about the impact on fishing communities, such as Innisfail, and whether that is sustainable or not?

Mr Oxley—There are a number of other components of the package that are designed to deal with wider impacts on the fishing industry, the community and the businesses that are dependent on it. We have a very comprehensive program of business restructuring assistance, which is a result of a decision taken by the minister in February. It is an uncapped package and that is available both to fishermen to help them adjust to their changed operating environment and to land based businesses that are dependent on the fishing industry or the recreational fishing industry. We also have another component of the package being managed through DOTARS, under the rural partnerships program, and being run through the area consultative committee network. Approximately \$1.4 million is available for expenditure in communities that are particularly impacted by the rezoning, and its focus is on community or economic development in the fishing communities.

Senator JOYCE—What sorts of industries do you envisage these people will go into when they get out of fishing and/or the associated shipbuilding and other industries?

Mr Oxley—It is not for me to envisage where they are going to go. What we receive is proposals from individual businesses about how they want to—

Senator Ian Campbell—I have asked Mr Oxley to come to the table so he can respond to questions about the detail of the structural adjustment package. It is not his job to determine the policy of the government. He is paid to do, and does, an extraordinarily good job in very difficult circumstances to deliver a structural adjustment package in the circumstances that we have gone into previously. His job is to deliver and to advise on the policy. Stephen has been the key frontline officer who has had to advise the government, me and the cabinet on how we achieve the policy goal of maintaining those boundaries, maintaining the environmental outcome, and ensuring that we treat those who have to avail themselves of the structural package fairly. I am not sure whether I would use the word ‘generously’ but ‘fair’ is the key word. Mr Oxley has spent most of his last two years trying to deliver that. But he does not make the decisions or the policies in relation to the social and economic impacts of the decisions. They are decisions that should feed into the process of putting the boundaries there in the first place. We can have a long debate about whether that occurred or not. But it has occurred. The government has stood by those decisions and is now implementing a very large structural adjustment package to achieve that outcome.

Senator BARTLETT—‘Generous’ is a good word.

Senator Ian Campbell—I beg your pardon?

Senator BARTLETT—I think ‘generous’ is a good word; it is three times larger than the whole of the authority’s budget. That is not too bad.

Senator Ian Campbell—Are you suggesting that we should not pay that amount?

Senator BARTLETT—No, I think you should pay the authority more.

Ms Chadwick—A very wise observation.

Senator JOYCE—They would like that. Do not suggest it. That is what will happen.

Senator BARTLETT—It would be more money for Queensland, Senator, come on.

Senator JOYCE—It is almost to Brisbane.

CHAIR—Are there any more questions for the marine park? There are not, so we thank you very much for being here.

[3.01 p.m.]

Office of the Renewable Energy Regulator

Senator ALLISON—Could you brief the committee on the certificates that have been issued and are pending under MRET? What is your estimation, if you have made one, of the date by which the target will be fulfilled?

Mr Rossiter—The total number of certificates, as of the end of March this year, that have been issued is 15.998 million, nearly 16 million. In terms of what we know about what the proponents who have put forward projects say they are going to produce in terms of energy—in other words, what they have declared on their forms as opposed to what they might generate; and what they ‘might’ goes up and down, that is why I distinguish—it is about 6,200 gigawatt hours of additional generation.

Senator ALLISON—And the next part of my question?

Mr Rossiter—In terms of how we are going towards the target?

Senator ALLISON—Yes.

Mr Rossiter—The target is 9,500 in 2010. So we are, on those numbers, about two-thirds of the way there. If you look at the way that some of the market analyses have been done, they indicate there have been more RECs in the earlier years and fewer RECs in the later years, the number being about three-quarters of the energy at this stage.

Senator ALLISON—And the date by which you anticipate we will meet the target?

Mr Rossiter—The target is met on an annual basis and banking of certificates is permitted, so I expect we will continue to meet the annual targets, as we have done all the way through. The 2010 target, I expect, we will meet in 2010.

Senator ALLISON—Are you suggesting that the other certificates will just be banked all the way up until 2010?

Mr Rossiter—The scheme is designed to do that, yes, all the way through.

Senator ALLISON—If all of the banked ones and the ones that have not yet been applied for were to be put into the market, would we by now have reached the target?

Mr Rossiter—Not the target for 2010, no.

Senator ALLISON—When?

Mr Rossiter—The total number of certificates produced to date is 16 million. The total number of certificates you need to meet the entire target over the entire period that it runs for is about 138 million, so you have a very small number as a proportion. I would expect it would be somewhere near 2020 by the time you have got anywhere near the right number of certificates to meet the ultimate target for the whole of the time period.

Senator ALLISON—2020?

Mr Rossiter—You need to have time to generate the energy from the equipment that has been installed, and you need 20 years to do that. So the equipment may be sitting there to achieve 75 per cent of that target on the basis, as we are at the moment, but you need the 20 years in order to generate it to get the 75 per cent.

Senator ALLISON—What is the current value of the RECs?

Mr Rossiter—We get some information from various places on REC prices. We get it from people who are agents who trade in certificates, generally solar water heater certificates. Generally they trade in quite small numbers. They might be trading in 30 RECs purchasing from an individual. We see those prices. Those tend to be the bottom end of prices, so far as we can see, because the major market participants are wind farms, with perhaps 300,000 certificates a year till the end of the measure. We do not see those prices. The prices we tend to see are those from the smaller producers who do not have a forward contract.

Senator ALLISON—So you are not aware of what the wind RECs are attracting?

Mr Rossiter—We are not aware directly of what they are attracting. We hear rumours.

Senator ALLISON—What about indirectly?

Mr Rossiter—We hear different rumours in different states. It depends on the incentives in the states for those renewable energy certificates. We hear numbers anything from \$25 to \$40 a REC, depending on the size of the wind farm and which state it is in and where it is located. For example, we have heard figures in New South Wales that tend to be a bit higher than they are in other places, partly because there are more incentives in place in New South Wales to do that kind of thing.

Senator ALLISON—Has any retailer been fined so far for failing to achieve the target of their REC?

Mr Rossiter—There have been penalties, yes.

Senator ALLISON—How many?

Mr Rossiter—There are five parties outstanding at the moment out of 63 who did not surrender RECs and had shortfalls. Not all of them had penalties, because there is a tolerance of 10 per cent to allow for the variability in renewable energy output.

Senator ALLISON—There is also a grace period, isn't there?

Mr Rossiter—Yes.

Senator ALLISON—So these five parties have gone beyond the grace period?

Mr Rossiter—They are the five parties just for last year.

Senator ALLISON—Sorry?

Mr Rossiter—They are just for last year. With the grace period, which is the redemption period for the previous years, they are redeeming as they come along through the process. They have got three years to redeem their historic failures where they have actually produced—

Senator ALLISON—So none has actually been fined as yet?

Mr Rossiter—If you call the penalty the charge of \$40 a megawatt hour for every certificate that is not available, several have been charged.

Senator ALLISON—So they are fined?

Mr Rossiter—Yes.

Senator ALLISON—Can you name them?

Mr Rossiter—I do not know if I have their names here directly in front of me, but I can name them, yes.

Senator ALLISON—Would you?

Mr Rossiter—They have been named in a media release we have put out. I can get that information for you.

Senator ALLISON—You do not have it there?

Mr Rossiter—I do not have it in front of me, sorry.

Senator ALLISON—Is there no mechanism whereby you record the value of the RECs, just going back to that question again?

Mr Rossiter—The measure was set up on the basis of quantity, not on the basis of price, so we keep information on quantity, the number of certificates, but we do not keep information on price. One of the difficulties about finding the price of RECs is that it is often bundled into something else, so a wind farm will produce electricity and a renewable energy certificate, and they maybe quoted a price in their own contract, which is private quite often, of, say, \$70 a megawatt hour. Somewhere in there is the electricity and the renewable energy certificate. So even if you see the contract and you see the number in it, you do not know which is the renewable energy certificate component.

Senator ALLISON—Are you seeing any different behaviour in the lead-up getting closer to the target in terms of new schemes coming on board?

Mr Rossiter—There are a lot of schemes we hear about. Some of them are still quite far in the future that we hear about and they are quite substantial schemes. We have far more schemes we hear about than we actually see coming forward and being registered.

Senator Ian Campbell—You will be pleased to know, Mr Rossiter, I just approved construction of another very major wind farm today.

Senator ALLISON—Have there been any changes in the last 12 months in the mix of RECs that have been applied for? Are we seeing growth that might not have been expected in biomass or something of that sort?

Mr Rossiter—The mix is changing progressively as the market moves forward. As you would appreciate, there were incumbents in this measure. The number of RECs has remained the same but the proportion of the market as it grows gets smaller, so you see hydro falling at the moment and you see wood waste falling, which is quite interesting, because they were quite quick to join the market.

Senator ALLISON—They did not have to do anything, did they?

Mr Rossiter—In the case of wood waste they had to do quite a bit to get them started, and they did have to source the wood and get it approved. And on the other side you see wind increasing and you see solar water heaters remaining roughly constant. They did go up for a while but it is now roughly constant. So the mix is changing slightly as we progress.

Senator ALLISON—On hydro, was there a review conducted of the baseline arrangements?

Mr Rossiter—It was discussed during the review that we had in 2003.

Senator ALLISON—But no change was made?

Mr Rossiter—No. Other than the baselines will be, or could be if the amendment bill passes through Parliament, actually published for individual power stations.

Senator ALLISON—Yes. Has there been movement over time in the absolute number of RECs from hydro power? I can see that they would shrink as a proportion of the total but has there been any change in absolute numbers?

Mr Rossiter—Hydro tends to go up and down because it is positively and negatively correlated with rainfall, so storage schemes release their water when it is dry, run-of-river schemes operate when it is wet. So we see quite a wavy output from hydro.

Senator ALLISON—But an overall trend.

Mr Rossiter—Yes. It is trending along roughly where the baseline is when you see the numbers.

CHAIR—As there are no further questions for you, thank you very much.

[3.12 pm]

Director of National Parks and Parks Australia Division

Senator CARR—We will put our questions on notice.

CHAIR—Did you have questions to ask now?

Senator CARR—No.

CHAIR—It appears there are no questions.

Senator BARTLETT—I have a couple. I am interested in the program with the Christmas Island park that I understand you oversee. What is the state with crazy ants there? I know there was a major program a couple of years ago to try and crack down on a major outbreak. What type of ongoing funds are there to contain the ants—I do not know if ‘eliminate’ is too much of a pipedream? Where is the program at?

Mr Cochrane—We have been actively managing the crazy ant problem on Christmas Island for the last six years. Over the last five, including this year, we have spent something like \$2.2 million trying to control crazy ants. We are spending of the order of quarter of a million dollars a year on crazy ant control but, at that current rate and our current effort, the problem is still starting to escalate beyond our capacity, so we are at the moment planning longer term for what sorts of resources we might need to get back on top of it. That is still in the planning stage at the moment.

Senator BARTLETT—So that basically would be assessing what sorts of resources will be needed to knock it back down under control and then seeing if you can get them, I suppose.

Mr Cochrane—We have got a three-arm strategy, if you like. We continue to bait by hand on the island with our existing chemical and its bait. In I think 2001 we did a major aerial delivery across a large part of the island, which is what you were referring to before and which had a huge effect. But there were parts of the infestation that we could not reach and they have started to reseed a new population, and some of that is still in areas that we cannot bait by hand. We are going to have to do another aerial control so we will continue hand baiting. We are planning for another aerial tackling of the issue, and at the same time we are beginning to support some research into alternative methods of control, preferably biocontrol. But you are absolutely right: we are really not focused on eradication. The geography and physiography of the island is just too difficult to really seriously think about eradication, at this stage anyway, with our current technology.

Senator BARTLETT—Given how things have got more critical again now, in hindsight were there not enough resources dedicated originally to try to deal with the problem, or is it just simply that, as you said, the geography is such that until we find another way we will be treading water?

Mr Cochrane—We estimated we were better than 98 per cent successful in terms of tackling the infestations that we got to, so I am not quite sure we could have improved what we did then. Perhaps again in hindsight we should have planned for a more intensive follow-up than we did in the subsequent couple of years.

Senator BARTLETT—Are you, or is that Parks on Christmas Island, responsible for ensuring compliance with the construction of the detention centre there and the potential impacts on Abbott's booby, which I think is the one that people point to the most? I think there are a couple of others. What is your role in that?

Mr Cochrane—It is not direct in terms of monitoring the construction. The Department of Finance has funded a three-year monitoring program into biodiversity on the island, and particularly to help us with the baseline for assessing impacts of the construction of the facility. But at the moment we are really still into that survey and amassing baseline information.

Senator BARTLETT—Can you tell me what the progress is with some of the plans that were there to do some more phosphate mining in some new areas? There were some proposals to rearrange some boundaries and stuff.

Mr Cochrane—There are two separate issues there. The mining company has an application in for new lease areas. That has been subject to environmental impact assessment and at the moment is still under way. The public comment period on the EIS from the company is closed and the department is waiting to hear back from the company with its revised EIS. On the second matter, there is a proposal for some minor revisions to the boundary of the park. I would have to take on notice exactly where that is at the moment. But those are just minor unders and overs due to poor surveying and a range of issues that were a problem some years ago when the park was first surveyed.

Senator BARTLETT—I know it is not directly your responsibility, but the space port has not suddenly reappeared out of nowhere and started being reconstructed?

Mr Cochrane—My impression, and that is all it is, is that it has disappeared into the long distance.

Senator BARTLETT—Are the signs still up there?

Mr Cochrane—I believe so. I saw it last December.

Senator BARTLETT—They would be a tourist attraction in their own right. What is the position with the phosphate leases, including the existing ones? Is rehabilitation meant to play a role? I remember from when I was there a couple of years ago that it is pretty hard work rehabilitating phosphate mined areas. Is that still a part of what is desired or are the difficulties of that recognised?

Mr Cochrane—We still have a very active program rehabilitating former mining leases. That is largely funded by a conservation levy on the company, and our staff manage the on-ground application of that. I was asked a question at the last estimates hearing and subsequent to those questions we tabled a report on the current progress of that rehabilitation, so that will be on the record.

Senator BARTLETT—I will have a look at that. I do not want to use up estimates committee time on things we can ask you through other inquiries that are under way but, as I understand it, there has recently been a review of an Indigenous protected areas program. At what stage is that? Has a report been provided?

Mr Cochrane—It has not finished. It is an evaluation as part of a series of evaluations of various components of the NHT. Most of the others are complete and are publicly available on the web, but the evaluation of the IPA program is in its near final form. The consultant doing that work should be nearly finished.

Senator SIEWERT—I would like to follow up some Christmas Island questions that you very kindly answered for me. First of all, just to clarify: Parks is responsible for rehabilitation of the old areas on Christmas Island and PRL are responsibility for rehabilitating the mining areas?

Mr Cochrane—On their own leases.

Senator SIEWERT—Thank you. I want to follow up some of the answers we had before, and I have just got to find them. Following up answers you have sent me, is it correct that 239 hectares have been rehabilitated on the island?

Mr Cochrane—Yes.

Senator SIEWERT—Are there rehabilitation criteria?

Mr Cochrane—There are, and we reviewed them in 2000. We commissioned the Centre for Mine Site Rehabilitation Research in Queensland to review our methodologies. They made a number of suggestions which we adopted and since then we have been working to their recommended guidelines.

Senator SIEWERT—Have you reviewed the current areas you are rehabilitating against the criteria? Has anybody audited those against the criteria?

Mr Cochrane—I will have to take that on notice. I suspect we have, but to be sure I answer it correctly I will provide you considered answer on that one.

Senator SIEWERT—I appreciate you may not be able to answer this one, because I am asking similar mining questions of Territories and I know that they have not been independently audited, so I am interested to know if yours have. Are they using the same criteria that you are using?

Mr Cochrane—No, the mining company is doing its own thing.

Senator SIEWERT—I do have the report here of the stuff that DOTARS is doing for you, but the company is using—

Mr Cochrane—That we are doing for DOTARS

Senator SIEWERT—That you are doing for DOTARS, sorry. But the company is using separate criteria?

Mr Cochrane—That is correct.

Senator SIEWERT—Have you audited their criteria?

Mr Cochrane—No. That is not our responsibility.

Senator SIEWERT—You are going to get back to me about whether you have had yours independently audited?

Mr Cochrane—We have talked about it internally, I am just not quite sure exactly whether we have actually taken the next step.

Senator SIEWERT—I am learning through estimates, and when I ask a question but don't say 'And then can I have,' I realise that I just get a yes or no answer. So can you—

Mr Cochrane—If we have done it, we will provide it.

Senator SIEWERT—If you have done it, can you provide it please? Then I do not have to ask for it in three months time.

Mr Cochrane—Yes.

Senator SIEWERT—That would be appreciated. Minister, I just got your letter, thank you.

Senator Ian Campbell—Yes, sorry for the delay on that.

Senator SIEWERT—This is the letter about the illegal clearing. So just to confirm, there were no reports that you can find?

Senator Ian Campbell—No. We investigated and that was not the case.

Mr Cochrane—We had a number of island residents come to us as well claiming that there was clearing in the park, so park staff went down to check and it actually is clearing on an existing mine site and they were clearing existing tracks and stockpiles. Because of the vantage point, it looked as though it was in the park, but in actual fact it was not.

Senator SIEWERT—Was it on the boundary?

Mr Cochrane—No, it was actually in the mining lease.

Senator SIEWERT—So it was actually in the mining lease, but because of where people were looking from—

Mr Cochrane—That is right. You look up over it from Margaret Knoll.

Senator SIEWERT—Minister, when do you expect that the assessment is going to be finalised on the mining application?

Senator Ian Campbell—I am happy to have Mr Early come and let us know where it is at.

Senator SIEWERT—I realise I may be jumping into an evaluation section.

Senator Ian Campbell—It is back in PRL's hands, but Mr Early might have more information.

Mr Early—The period for public consultation has closed and we are simply now waiting for the company to come back with the final environmental impact statement, which takes account of all the public comment. It is in their hands.

Senator Ian Campbell—Do you know how long that might take, or is it how long is a bit of string?

Mr Early—It is a bit. They told us four months ago that it was going to be a couple of months, so we are just waiting.

Senator Ian Campbell—When we get that back what is the likely—

Mr Early—When we get that then the minister makes a decision within 30 business days as to whether or not it can go ahead and, if it can, under what conditions.

Senator SIEWERT—So it is 30 business days once PRL gets back to you?

Mr Early—Thirty business days for an assessment report to go the minister and then the minister has another 30 days.

Senator SIEWERT—So that is 60 days.

Mr Early—Yes.

Senator SIEWERT—So you have provided the summary and the submissions to the PRL and are waiting on them?

Mr Early—PRL has all the public comments that have been made. They now need to take that into account and then they come back with the final environmental impact statement. The department then does an assessment report for the minister with recommendations and then the minister has another 30 days to consider what he wants to do about it.

Senator SIEWERT—Again you can tell me if this is out of line. When you are doing your review, will you be looking at whether the company has met the rehabilitation criteria on its existing leases?

Mr Cochrane—We will not, largely because the mining leases are administered by the Department of Territories and any requirements on the leases would primarily be the Department of Territories' responsibility to ensure they take place or not.

Senator SIEWERT—My obvious concern then, from the answers I got back in asking questions of Territories, is that they said 'None of these areas currently meet rehabilitation

completion criteria.' They have only started rehabilitating approximately 60 hectares and they have got 90 more to go. If they have not reached their rehabilitation criteria and they have only rehabilitated 60 hectares, how can you be certain that they are going to be able to meet their rehabilitation criteria?

Mr Cochrane—I cannot be certain, but then it is not a responsibility that I have. Our responsibility is for the park and the progressive rehabilitation of the old mining leases that are actually within the park.

Senator SIEWERT—Do you take that into consideration when you are doing your assessment?

Mr Early—Certainly one of the issues that we have to look at in any assessment is whether we think commitments and obligations that proponents have made can actually be carried out. So clearly that will be an issue for us to look at. We await the final EIS to take that into account.

Senator SIEWERT—There was another question I asked, too, and I asked Territories—it gets confusing to be working across two committees virtually at the same time—about meeting some of the other criteria which relate to dust and noise. I was told they are a responsibility of our EPA in WA. Would you have spoken to them when you were doing your assessment?

Mr Early—In formal terms, we have not actually started our assessment yet. I know that our staff have been talking to various people about this project for some time, including the proponents. I could take it on notice. I do not know specifically whether there have been particular discussions, but there may well have been.

Senator SIEWERT—If there is anything else, I will follow that up on notice.

CHAIR—I think that concludes your appearance today, so thank you for your attendance.

Proceedings suspended from 3.32 pm to 3.52 pm

Department of the Environment and Heritage

CHAIR—We will start with the Approvals and Wildlife Division questions.

Senator BOB BROWN—Can you tell me where the assessment of the listing of koalas as endangered species is?

Senator Ian Campbell—It is on my desk. I am looking very closely at it, giving it very close consideration.

Senator BOB BROWN—When do you expect an announcement on that?

Senator Ian Campbell—I do not want to tie myself down too much, but it just comes down to pure workload as to when I get to the file. With these things I do like to read the supporting material thoroughly and get my head thoroughly around it. I have done consultations on it, spoken to a few people and looked into the issues, but I am still not happy that I have enough information. It is not far away. I could say two weeks, just knowing what my schedule is like in the next couple of weeks. It will depend on how many files I carry in my bag on my trips to the Caribbean and stuff like that. Quite frankly, it is as simple as that.

Senator BOB BROWN—Have you been asked to do or started to do an assessment—and I am sure Senator Bartlett will take this up shortly—of the potential impact on the species in the Mary River area in Queensland, now that the dam has been mooted there?

Mr Early—No. We have had some very preliminary discussions with Queensland and we understand they have said they will refer the proposals under the EPBC Act. We would expect for that to happen in the future.

Senator BOB BROWN—Do you know when?

Mr Early—I think they are basically doing some work to determine what the actual project is. I think it would be in the next few months, but it depends on how quickly they come up with the formal proposals as to what it is they want to do.

Senator BOB BROWN—Is that the case with the Logan River as well?

Mr Early—Yes. That is with both.

Senator BOB BROWN—Regarding the swift parrot, has there been a review of its status?

Mr Early—How do you mean?

Senator BOB BROWN—Has there been work in the last year or so on the status of the swift parrot as an endangered species?

Mr Early—It is listed as endangered under the EPBC Act. As it is an endangered species, we continually try and upgrade our information we have on the species, but we have not reviewed the status as such as far as I am aware.

Senator BOB BROWN—Have you done a specific assessment of the impact of logging, and the projected logging, on native species, on the swift parrot?

Mr Early—If this is in relation to the court case, I am not sure I can comment on the RFA. The RFA procedures are not, as you know, subject to the EPBC Act.

Senator BOB BROWN—I can tell you that the evidence in the court case has been had. I am interested in whether you have done an assessment of the impact of logging in particular?

Mr Early—No.

Senator BOB BROWN—How about with other species—birds and mammals in Tasmania?

Mr Early—In terms of logging?

Senator BOB BROWN—Yes?

Mr Early—No.

Senator BOB BROWN—You would be aware of the Melbourne University study showing that the wedge-tailed eagle in the north-east has a 99 per cent likelihood of extinction if projected logging proceeds?

Mr Early—It is not a matter that is part of my responsibility. In terms of there is an exemption of RFA forestry operations under the EPBC Act and it is not something we look at.

Senator BOB BROWN—You look at the status of those species outside RFA operations, but not as far as RFA operations are concerned?

Mr Early—We look at the species in terms of projects that are within the jurisdiction of the EPBC Act which may have an impact on those species. To the extent that there are activities which are not within the EPBC Act, we do not look at those activities.

Senator BOB BROWN—What about poisoning, either deliberately or otherwise, of wedge-tails? Do you keep a watch on that?

Mr Early—I do not think so. In what context?

Senator BOB BROWN—That is outside the Regional Forest Agreement bailiwick, but it is a known major threat to the Tasmanian wedge-tail which is listed as endangered.

Mr Early—No one has brought to my attention anyone poisoning as an active act.

Senator BOB BROWN—I have now. I wonder if you would look at that for me and get back to me with an assessment on it?

Mr Early—Certainly.

Senator BOB BROWN—There have been reports of two wedge-tails being struck down by wind farms. What is the assessment that is being done there?

Mr Early—Obviously the assessment, to the extent that those wind farms were assessed originally, was taken into account. We have conditions in relation to that and those have now come into effect. There is a review of what actually happened in the case of the wedge-tailed eagle that was killed in Tasmania, and we are awaiting the outcome from the proponent.

Senator BOB BROWN—Do you have any active input into that study?

Mr Early—We will when we get the report, but at this stage we need to find out all the details about what exactly happened and how and when and then we will take it from there.

Senator BOB BROWN—Do you have an overall assessment of the projected impact of global warming on Australian wildlife and how many species will go to extinction because of that, or may be pushed into the categories of rare and endangered because of that, in this century?

Mr Early—Not within my division, no.

Senator Ian Campbell—We do. We are spending millions of dollars on that sort of research through the Greenhouse Office, so we can easily ask those questions, or under the science program.

Senator BOB BROWN—Except the responsibility for wildlife is with this section, and you cannot divorce that as a major threat to a whole range of species, can you?

Mr Early—Wildlife is across the whole department. My Approvals and Wildlife Division has a responsibility in terms of the listing process and the support for the threatened species, scientific committee and examination of projects, but all across the department other divisions also have to take into account wildlife in terms of NHT funding and the Greenhouse Office and Land, Water and Coasts. Just because we have ‘wildlife’ in the title does not mean we are the only ones who deal with it.

Senator BOB BROWN—I have just one more question because I am aware of the kindness in letting me ask these questions early. Going back to the Queensland dams issue,

you said it would be some months before you expect to get a referral there. How long would the assessment take, do you estimate, after that?

Mr Early—It is very hard to tell. If in fact both proposals become controlled actions, then it depends on the level of assessment. It is really in the hands of the proponent. If for example there was an environment impact statement, that would take a fair bit of time, but there would be a lot of work to be done to develop that. It really is a process. These environmental impact statements often take 12 months. There is a lot of work that needs to be done for these sorts of proposals.

Senator BOB BROWN—So the work would be done by the proponent rather than by the Commonwealth?

Mr Early—That is right.

Senator BOB BROWN—But you would oversee the quality of that report?

Mr Early—The minister would determine the guidelines, so the minister would determine what actually has to be examined and we would obviously advise him on that. Then the proponent would need to go away and do all the studies and examination to provide all the information in accordance with the guidelines. They submit it as a draft which we then have the power to either accept or refuse and, if it is not adequate, we can tell them to go away and do more work. So it is a very rigorous process.

Senator BOB BROWN—Thank you.

Senator BARTLETT—I know it will be very approximate, but can you give us an indication of how long the Nathan Dam took for the assessment, leaving aside the court challenges and stuff, but just that process of doing the assessment and decision?

Mr Early—We have not even started the assessment for the Nathan Dam.

Senator BARTLETT—What was the one that went to court?

Mr Early—That was the Nathan Dam.

Senator BARTLETT—Did they not challenge the decision in the court?

Mr Early—No. The decision that was challenged was the minister of the time not including World Heritage and migrating birds. The issue was the indirect impacts having to be taken into account. So it was really a very front end, and we have not actually started the assessment yet.

Senator BARTLETT—It is probably not a good example then.

Senator CARR—Minister, you announced before that you had made a decision on approval today for a wind farm. Where was that?

Senator Ian Campbell—I have just signed a letter to the proponent, so I think it is probably fairer to the proponent that they receive the letter before I announce it here. Do you not think that is the right way to go, Gerard?

Mr Early—Yes.

Senator CARR—In which state was it?

Senator Ian Campbell—I think we will make a nice announcement at the right time.

Senator CARR—I am asking what state it is.

Senator Ian Campbell—It may affect the stock market.

Senator CARR—May affect the stock market?

Senator Ian Campbell—This company, as I understand it, is publicly listed.

Senator CARR—I see.

Senator Ian Campbell—If we were to announce it in here, you have to be cognisant of these things. It may not matter to you, but it might matter to the shareholders.

Senator CARR—Yes, it might indeed. In fact, the whole question of investor confidence is an important matter in these matters.

Senator Ian Campbell—I am glad you agree.

Senator CARR—I do appreciate that and perhaps I would like to go to that issue in a moment, Minister. Could I ask you when the government will be introducing amendments to the EPBC Act?

Senator Ian Campbell—We are hoping for the spring session.

Senator CARR—And will it cover the issue of new triggers for the EPBC Act?

Senator Ian Campbell—I think we will just wait until we expose the legislation.

Senator CARR—It is just that we canvassed this issue at the previous estimates in February and you indicated to me then that a review had been undertaken. When was the review completed?

Mr Early—We are very close to releasing the final draft document of the review which will go out for public comment.

Senator CARR—When you say ‘very close’, when do you anticipate that happening, Mr Early?

Senator Ian Campbell—A couple of weeks.

Mr Early—Yes.

Senator CARR—Will it go to the issue of additional triggers?

Mr Early—It will canvass all the various triggers that have been suggested in the review process, yes.

Senator CARR—Will it include the issue of a climate change trigger?

Mr Early—There were a number of suggestions for that, so that is covered in the report.

Senator CARR—It was canvassed, yes. Will it cover wind farm triggers?

Mr Early—I do not think so.

Senator Ian Campbell—It is not a specific wind farm trigger but there are obviously national environmental issues that will come into question when you are looking at wind turbine decisions.

Senator ALLISON—We are not talking about the legislation, we are talking about something else—a report of the review, is that right?

Mr Early—I was talking then and answering questions in relation to the review of the matters of national environmental significance, which has been under way for some time.

Senator ALLISON—So it is the report of this review, not the legislation?

Mr Early—That is right.

Senator ALLISON—That is all I need. Thanks.

Senator CARR—The reason I asked the question, Minister, is that I recall that in November of 2005 you wrote to environmental ministers proposing that there be a wind farm trigger. Is that correct?

Senator Ian Campbell—No, that is not correct.

Senator CARR—It is not correct. So I have misunderstood that.

Senator Ian Campbell—Yes. I have authorised Mr Thwaites to give you a copy of the letter I sent him.

Senator CARR—To all environmental ministers?

Senator Ian Campbell—No. All I am saying is that I am sure Mr Thwaites lives near you. He lives in Victoria. If you want a copy of the letter I am sure he would give it to you, or I am happy to give it to you.

Senator CARR—I am sure he will.

Senator Ian Campbell—But I did not say that. I did not say that in the letter.

Senator CARR—So in November you did not write to environment ministers across Australia seeking—

Senator Ian Campbell—Yes, I did.

Senator CARR—You did?

Senator Ian Campbell—I wrote to all environment ministers but I did not say that I wanted a wind farm trigger.

Senator CARR—Right. Mr Early, the draft report that you are publishing, this review that you are opening for public comment, will that be a review that satisfies section 28 of the EPBC Act?

Mr Early—My recollection is yes. Let me just double-check.

Senator CARR—That is the one that goes to:

Before preparation of a report is complete the minister must cause to be published in accordance with the regulations, if any, a draft of the report, an invitation to comment on the draft within the period—

Mr Early—Yes. It is section 28A.

Senator CARR—So I look forward to seeing that. The proposed rescue package for the Macarthur wind farm proposal in Victoria, a Roaring 40s project, I understand that they have had discussions with the government. Mr Early, have you been involved in those discussions?

Mr Early—No.

Senator CARR—So you have had no discussion with the wind farm developer known as the Roaring 40s?

Mr Early—The Roaring 40s has got a number of wind farms.

Senator CARR—This is Musselroe wind farm project in Tasmania.

Mr Early—Musselroe, yes.

Senator CARR—So you have had discussion with Musselroe. I understand there is a rescue package for that particular project, is there?

Mr Early—I do not understand what you mean by ‘rescue package’.

Senator CARR—I have a report here from *Environmental Manager News*, claiming that the company had discussions with the environment minister and the industry minister on Wednesday, 24 May. So the department was not involved with that?

Mr Early—Is this about Musselroe or Macarthur?

Senator CARR—This is actually Musselroe, when I read it carefully. It is Musselroe wind farm project. Minister, have you had discussions with the company, Roaring 40s, a wind energy developer, on 24 May regarding the Musselroe wind farm project?

Senator Ian Campbell—Yes, I have met Roaring 40s this week. I meet wind energy people on a virtually weekly basis and we did not discuss a rescue package.

Senator CARR—You did not?

Senator Ian Campbell—What I did discuss specifically with Roaring 40s, although there were a number of people at the meeting, was the plan for me to go up and launch their new wind energy project in China later this year. One of the outcomes we sought from the renewable energy target program was to build a base of renewable energy industries in Australia that could create a base for them to go and export their intellectual properties and capabilities throughout the world and the region. So we think it is a wonderful outcome of the Commonwealth’s programs that companies like Roaring 40s have established in Australia and are now working in places like China, which is obviously one of the real frontlines in the global challenge to address climate change.

Senator CARR—So you did not discuss a rescue package with Roaring 40s on the 24th?

Senator Ian Campbell—No. You said a rescue package.

Senator CARR—That is what it says here, a rescue package. You are saying that is not true?

Senator Ian Campbell—Absolutely untrue. Who says that I did?

Senator CARR—It is reported here in *Environmental Management News*.

Senator Ian Campbell—I missed that one. Did they bother to ask Roaring 40s?

Senator CARR—I am just repeating what their—

Senator Ian Campbell—What does Roaring 40s say? Is there a spokesman from Roaring 40s? You could email it to me if you want to and I will have a look at it.

Senator CARR—I am sure we can probably organise that. In regard to a number of decisions that have been made, I am just wondering about administrative consistency. Mr Early, how long have you been with the approvals branch?

Mr Early—Since 2000.

Senator CARR—Yes, I thought you were sitting here a fair while and your smiling face has been the other side of the table in this regard. You would be familiar with the approvals that were granted to Wind Energy Developments Pty Ltd, Jim's Plain wind farm project, north-west Tasmania.

Mr Early—What is the title exactly? Is it the Woolnorth?

Senator CARR—I am quoting here. It is the Wind Energy Developments Pty Ltd, Jim's Plain wind farm project, Jim's Plain, north-west Tasmania, known as EPBC 2003-1162. I cannot read the signature on it, but it is dated 29 September 2003 and I have here the assistant secretary, policy and compliance branch. Did you ever hold that post?

Mr Early—No.

Senator CARR—So it is not you then.

Mr Early—It is just that I do not recognise the name, but it is probably—

Senator CARR—Jim's Plain wind farm.

Mr Early—I am just looking. There are only a certain number that have been approved, so perhaps if you continue with the question it will become more obvious.

Senator CARR—I am particularly interested in this project because it is one that lists as the threatened species in the project the orange-bellied parrot, which is listed in the documentation and I have been particularly concerned as to the rationale for the department's decision in regard to the orange-bellied parrot.

Senator Ian Campbell—It may well not have been a departmental decision; it may well have been a decision of the minister.

Senator CARR—I see. It says it is pursuant to the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act—

Senator Ian Campbell—What was the actual decision?

Senator CARR—It is:

Martin Flannigan, Assistant Secretary, Policy and Compliance Branch, Department of Environment and Heritage decided that the proposed action set out in the schedule is not a controlled action.

Mr Early—That is why I did not recognise it. There are various decisions that are made under the EPBC Act, and that means that it was decided at that time that that particular wind farm was unlikely to have a significant impact on matters of environmental significance, and that would have been based on the information we had at that time.

Senator CARR—It refers specifically to the orange-bellied parrot. It says that less than one orange-bellied parrot every 55 years is likely to collide with a generator on the proposed wind farm, so on that basis there was no action taken to stop the wind farm.

Mr Early—On that basis, and on the basis of the evidence available at that time, yes.

Senator CARR—It also says that the rate at which the orange-bellied parrot would collide fatally with operating windmills at Jim's Plains wind farm would not significantly increase the risk of extinction of the orange-bellied parrot. That was based on the Dressler and Meredith report of 2000. You are not familiar with that particular one?

Mr Early—I am familiar with the report. As you say, it was six years ago and based on information available at that time.

Senator CARR—So that is 30 wind generators.

Mr Early—I am not familiar with the particular project.

Senator CARR—This is a wind farm operating at a time when orange-bellied parrots are known to migrate through the area. This was based on the recovery team data and Brett Mullane's associated unpublished data. And there is a mathematical formula produced there in that decision. Are you able to advise me as to whether or not that was an accurate presentation?

Mr Early—I think that is accurate. Basically the decision was made on the basis of, as I said, the information and modelling that was available at that time which, as you say, was quite some time ago.

Senator CARR—Could I draw your attention to the decision that you took—because it is Gerard Patrick Early; that is you, is it not?

Mr Early—Indeed.

Senator CARR—That was taken on the 8th day of March 2002 in regard to a Stanwell Corporation to construct and operate a wind farm near Kongorong in South Australia. That again, as set out in the schedule, is not a controlled action, so you obviously have an assessment. Here I note it says that based on the findings of this investigation and review of the species' status in south-west Victoria and south-east South Australia, PPK2000 'has concluded that the proposed wind farm will not cause a significant impact on the population of the orange-bellied parrot.' At that time what did you regard as not having a significant impact? How many birds do you think would be killed running into the wind farms at this particular location?

Mr Early—I cannot answer that. It was more than four years ago.

Senator CARR—Do you think the research was accurate at the time?

Mr Early—The research was the best available at that time, yes.

Senator CARR—Is it a particularly sensitive area for orange-bellied parrots in South Australia?

Mr Early—The coast of South Australia is a known migration route. That is right.

Senator Ian Campbell—As is Bald Hills.

Senator CARR—You mentioned Bald Hills. We will get to that.

Senator Ian Campbell—I hope you do.

Senator CARR—Do you recall the decision of Minister Kemp on 18 October—it says here '2052'. I do not know quite when that was supposed to be. That is what it says on the

documentation, but I think it means the 17th day of October 2002 but it does say '52' in the statement I am reading here. This deals with the establishment of four wind farms at Cape Nelson in Victoria, Cape Bridgewater and Cape Sir William Grant and Nuruntuk. These are all in the Portland region of Victoria. This is Pacific Hydro. Do you recall that particular one? Do you want me to give you a number for that?

Mr Early—I do not recall. There have been a number of proposals. I do not recall all of them.

Senator CARR—This is the one that said:

Pacific Hydro Limited must prepare and submit for the minister's approval either a bird and bat management plan covering the four wind farm locations or bird and bat management plans for each of the four wind farm locations.

Mr Early—Yes, I do recall that.

Senator CARR—You do recall that?

Mr Early—That is the Portland wind farm, yes.

Senator CARR—It says:

Procedures to mitigate impacts in the event of orange-bellied parrots' mortalities as a result of collisions with turbines.

What was the basis of the decision in that regard?

Mr Early—Again, it was based on the best available information and modelling at that time.

Senator CARR—How many birds do you think, in terms of your mortality studies for the Pacific Hydro project at Portland, were likely to be killed?

Mr Early—How many were likely to be killed?

Senator CARR—Yes.

Mr Early—I would have to take that on notice.

Senator CARR—You do not know?

Mr Early—Well, no.

Senator Ian Campbell—I think the best way to answer that question is that we have just completed, at my request, a comprehensive cumulative impact study on the impact of wind turbines on migratory birds and we now have much better information on that as a result of my initiative to get that published. That report, and Mr Early can feel free to contradict me and give me totally fearless advice in this regard, is that it would be the state-of-the-art report on impacts of wind farms or wind turbine installation facilities available in Australia at this time.

Mr Early—Certainly that is true, and that is a much more sophisticated modelling than has ever been available before.

Senator CARR—I would like to know what is the nature of the plan that goes to the procedures to mitigate impacts? How does that occur?

Mr Early—A plan can have any number of elements which mitigate impacts, depending on what the impacts might be.

Senator CARR—I take it that it is birds running into wind turbines—or flying into them. They do not run, do they?

Mr Early—No.

Senator CARR—They do not walk up to them. Is that the idea? Is that the nature of your research, that the birds actually fly into the blades?

Mr Early—Yes.

Senator Ian Campbell—It is something that commonly occurs around the world. Sea birds and migratory birds get destroyed at a very high rate by wind turbines all around the world.

Senator CARR—Yes. I just want to know exactly what it is that we are talking about in terms of mitigation plans. What do you do?

Mr Early—Again, I would have to look at the mitigation plan.

Senator CARR—Do you turn the turbines off? How does it work?

Mr Early—I would have to look at them. I have not looked at the plan, so I cannot tell you what is in it.

Senator CARR—I see. How many of these mitigation plans are there for wind farms?

Mr Early—I do not know. I will have to take that on notice.

Senator CARR—Is it a common feature, or is it just one?

Senator Ian Campbell—Mitigation plans are a very common feature in environmental approvals in Australia and around the world.

Senator CARR—Are they a common feature in Victoria for wind farms?

Mr Early—I do not know.

Senator Ian Campbell—They would be part of environmental approvals for wind turbine installations where there are potential migratory bird or other sea bird risks of collision.

Senator CARR—Are they common in the south-east corner of South Australia?

Mr Early—They will also be commonly part of an environmental management plan, and that is almost invariably part of the conditions for approval. The environmental management plan would have mitigation elements within it, so even if there was not a mitigation plan as such it would certainly exist to that extent.

Senator CARR—So they would be common in Tasmania as well?

Mr Early—I assume so.

Senator CARR—I would like to know—obviously you have been there since 2000, so you have seen a few of these in that period of time—exactly what is a mitigation plan? What actually does it do? How does it work?

Mr Early—It tries to mitigate the impacts.

Senator CARR—How?

Mr Early—It depends on what we are talking about. Are you talking about wind farms in particular?

Senator CARR—Yes, wind farms. That is all I have mentioned so far, isn't it? Have I mentioned any other projects apart from wind farms?

Senator Ian Campbell—There are not a lot of mitigation plans for wind farms and we are still learning. We have just killed a wedge-tailed eagle three weeks ago with a wind farm. That is pretty hard to mitigate once it has been killed.

Senator CARR—I did not kill anything. I do not know about this 'we' business. I just want to know.

Senator Ian Campbell—No, we did. We approved a wind farm and it killed a wedge-tailed eagle.

Senator CARR—Are you personally responsible?

Senator Ian Campbell—This is a highly endangered wedge-tailed eagle, unlike the wedge-tailed eagle that Rob Hulls closed down a wind farm for in Victoria that was not on the threatened species list. The Victorian government closed down a wind farm less than 12 months ago based on the risks to a wedge-tailed eagle that was not even on the threatened species list. Perhaps, Mr Chairman, the senator would be best served, if he does not know what a mitigation plan is and if he does not understand the environmental approvals process, is to maybe go and read a book, or go and see Mr Thwaites or Mr Hulls and do a bit of environment 101.

Senator CARR—Mr Early, can you explain to me what are the common characteristics of these mitigation plans in regard to birds and wind farms in Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania, so we can be precise about this?

Mr Early—As I said to you, I have not read the mitigation plan.

Senator Ian Campbell—Mr Chairman, we will provide on notice a couple of mitigation plans. There is one I know of. We will certainly table the mitigation plan, as long as it is agreed by the owners of the wind installation. It would be their property; they would submit it to us but it would be their property. As long as we get the approval of the owners of the wind farm, we will provide it to the committee and then we can see what a mitigation plan looks like for a wind farm.

CHAIR—Thank you. That will be done on notice rather than today?

Mr Early—Yes, because we will have to ask the owners. I am aware, I think, of two. Out of all the wind energy facilities in Australia, and we have got about 600 turbines now across Australia, I am aware of at least two where there is a mitigation plan that may have some relevance to the potential for what is known in the industry as 'bird strike'.

Senator CARR—In these two that you know of, can you describe to the committee any common features of them?

Senator Ian Campbell—I have not read the plans, but I think in two cases there are mitigation plans in place, but I will see if we can get those mitigation plans and see if they can be put before the committee.

Senator CARR—I am just interested to know what you would expect that they would involve?

Senator Ian Campbell—I would only be making assumptions about what they involve. You have suggested that perhaps—

Senator CARR—You have offered me—

Senator Ian Campbell—Mr Chairman, the senator has suggested that perhaps a mitigation plan would be that if a wedge-tailed eagle or an orange-bellied parrot hits a blade and gets destroyed, that you would turn the blade off. That may well be his idea of a mitigation plan. I could speculate as to what a mitigation plan would be, but I do not know any more than he does.

Senator CARR—You have offered some advice to me about environment 101. I am asking you, as a cabinet minister, can you describe what these mitigation plans involve?

Senator Ian Campbell—I have not, myself, seen—

Senator CARR—I am just a humble senator here asking you a straight question. What is your answer?

CHAIR—Senator Carr, let the minister respond. He said he is going to table some—

Senator CARR—He has avoided the question.

CHAIR—No, he has not.

Senator CARR—He has told me that these are basic. He has told me that these are fundamental. What do they involve?

Senator Ian Campbell—Mitigation plans generally are a very normal part of environmental approval. You have asked a specific question about a plan that may relate to bird strikes in a wind turbine situation. That is a very specific thing.

Senator CARR—Yes, I have.

Senator Ian Campbell—It is a relatively new thing. It is not a particularly common thing and I would be happy to—

Senator CARR—It is not common now. You told me that they were very common.

Senator Ian Campbell—I said mitigation plans are common. If you knew anything about the environment, you would know that mitigation plans are common. I think Senator Bartlett would expect the Queensland government, when it goes to build a massive dam on the Mary River, would no doubt, to seek to get approval from us, put in place a mitigation plan for the impacts that dam may have on the lung fish. That is a mitigation plan. They will, no doubt, find a way to try to stop the impacts on a very rare and threatened lung fish which is a part of Australia's multiplicity of fauna. That is why mitigation plans are common in Australia; there are many hundreds of them. Is it common that they occur for bird strike with wind turbines? No, they are far less common. I am aware of at least two of them, and I am happy to seek—

Senator CARR—You cannot tell me what is involved with a mitigation plan—

Senator Ian Campbell—I said I will actually give you a plan if I am authorised to do so.

Senator CARR—But at this point you cannot tell me what is involved?

Senator Ian Campbell—No, I cannot.

Senator CARR—That is all I need to know. You cannot tell me, that is a pretty straightforward answer.

CHAIR—It is a very clear answer, Senator Carr.

Senator Ian Campbell—I said it three times.

Senator CARR—I would have thought you would get there much quicker.

Senator Ian Campbell—If you closed your mouth and opened your ears from time to time, you might hear.

Senator CARR—Mr Early, in the decision by former Minister Robert Hill with regard to the Hydro Tasmania project at Woolnorth—do you have one at Woolnorth?

Mr Early—Yes.

Senator CARR—It was a decision taken in 2001. Did that involve the orange-bellied parrot?

Mr Early—Yes, it did.

Senator CARR—What was the decision that the minister took? I take it he did approve the wind farm in that case?

Mr Early—Yes. It was approved, with conditions.

Senator CARR—What were the conditions?

Mr Early—I have not got all the conditions in front of me, but we can provide them on notice.

Senator CARR—Is it the case that one of the conditions was that the minister approved the project on the basis that the wind farm, under clause 6, did not kill more than six parrots in every two-year period?

Mr Early—It was some small number, but I am not quite sure.

Senator CARR—Three birds per migration period. There are two migration periods in a year, is that right?

Mr Early—Yes.

Senator CARR—I am just reading the conditions here. So that is three birds per migration period. I was wrong; that means six a year—is that right?

Mr Early—Six in a two-year period.

Senator CARR—Are there two migration periods in a year, or only one?

Mr Early—They go there and back.

Senator CARR—I just want to be clear about this.

Senator Ian Campbell—I think you would call a migration period one year.

Senator CARR—There is an autumn migration, 1 March to June, and a spring migration, September to November. Would that be regarded as two a year?

Mr Early—It is really the one—

Senator CARR—I am just saying what the definition is on the back of the agreement. As the minister has pointed out, I am not an expert in the ornithology of the orange-bellied parrot, but I do read your agreement. It seems to me to suggest that there are two migration periods a year and the authorisation from the minister was that this wind farm could kill six orange-bellied parrots a year.

Mr Early—I think it was in a two-year period.

Senator CARR—No, it is two per year. So is it six a year or six every two years? Let us be clear about that.

Mr Early—Per two years I think.

Senator CARR—So it is three a year and six every two years, is that right? What was the science that led to that decision?

Mr Early—As I said before, it is an old decision and it was based on the best available science and the best modelling that was available at that time, which has since been superseded.

Senator Ian Campbell—The science at the moment shows that there are 50 breeding pairs of orange-bellied parrots left in the whole world. That was not known at that time.

Senator CARR—Wasn't it? Are you sure that is right, Minister?

Senator Ian Campbell—No, I am not sure, but I know that—

Senator CARR—You said it categorically to the committee and you are not sure.

Mr Early—The latest information—

Senator CARR—I appreciate your expertise, but I am a bit concerned about the minister's expertise.

Senator Ian Campbell—I will table the information that was provided to the threatened species committee when the orange-bellied parrot was made an endangered species. It so concerned me and the department when we received the latest study, which we spent a lot of money on getting, that we have now gone to the threatened species committee and asked them to look at upgrading the nature of the listing of that species to critically endangered, which is the level 1 below extinction.

CHAIR—Thank you. When would we expect to receive that?

Senator Ian Campbell—As soon as we can get it. I am very happy to have a very well-informed debate on this issue.

Senator CARR—In 2001 what was the level of advice that the department had when it approved a wind farm that could kill six parrots in two years?

Mr Early—I would have to take that on notice, but the latest figures show a reduction and show the orange-bellied parrot to be in a much more precarious situation than was thought at that time.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—What was the date of that new information?

Mr Early—That information was provided to the minister earlier this year.

Senator Ian Campbell—It is on the website.

Senator CARR—In what form was it provided?

Senator CHRIS EVANS—What is the source of the new information and when did it become available?

Senator Ian Campbell—A Biosis report, which was made available to me probably a few months ago.

Senator CARR—It was published in January 2006. Was it available to you immediately in January, or earlier than that?

Mr Early—It was probably a bit later than that, to be honest.

Senator CARR—Is this the same one I have here? It is Smales project No. 5182, January 2006?

Senator Ian Campbell—No.

Senator CARR—It is not the one. *Impacts of 18 collisions with wind power turbines*—that is not the one you are referring to?

Senator Ian Campbell—No, it is called an accumulative impact assessment.

Senator ALLISON—I have got one called that dated December last year. Is that the one, No. 4857?

Senator CARR—We were told it was later than that. Which one was it?

Senator Ian Campbell—Ian Smales, yes.

Mr Early—There were six reports and the Smales report was the first and the others came a bit later, so the whole report was available later than January 2006.

Senator CARR—Was it the case in regard to Bald Hills—

Senator ALLISON—Senator Carr, just before we get off that, could we have a list of the reports—these are all to do with the orange-bellied parrot?

Mr Early—No, they were involved with the orange-bellied parrots, swift parrots—

Senator Ian Campbell—Swift parrots, wedge-tailed eagles and white-bellied eagles.

Mr Early—That is right, yes.

Senator ALLISON—So there was only one to do with the orange-bellied parrot?

Senator Ian Campbell—No. They were all to do with the four species. The other three, although threatened, have populations that the people who wrote the report thought resilient enough to withstand the cumulative impact of the—

Senator ALLISON—There was only one on the orange-bellied parrot—

Senator Ian Campbell—No, the report covers the four species and it looks at the impacts on each four species. What the report said was that, because the numbers of orange-bellied parrots are so low, down to 50 breeding pairs in the world, that even losing one bird would have a significant impact and would—

Senator ALLISON—I know what is in the report. I am asking you whether there are more reports than the one I have got.

Senator Ian Campbell—The report is about four birds. There are more reports, but they are all about the four birds.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—There are six reports, each about four birds.

Mr Early—There are four modelling reports on the four species and overarching reports on the impact of collisions.

Senator Ian Campbell—They are the recent reports; there are many other reports—

Mr Early—That is right.

Senator Ian Campbell—There are far more reports on the orange-bellied parrot that have been done over a number of years.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—I think we are a little confused here. The reports you are referring to are a series of six reports, is that correct?

Mr Early—That is right, yes.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—Are they dated the same date, or are they successive?

Mr Early—They are dated variously.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—Could you tell us when the first and the last was?

Mr Early—There are six reports. There is an overview of the modelling of the cumulative risks posed by multiple wind farms. There is the modelled cumulative impact on the orange-bellied parrot, the Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle, the swift parrot and the white-bellied sea eagle. Then there is a risk level of select species listed under the EPBC Act of collision at wind farms in Gippsland, Victoria. Basically, all those reports add up to—

Senator CHRIS EVANS—It is three reports, isn't it?

Mr Early—There are six individual reports that were slated in this one overarching report, which is available on our website. It was released by the minister some time in the last couple of months.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—When did government receive those reports?

Mr Early—They are variously headed from December 2005, December 2005, through to January 2006. They are the dates on the reports. I think we received them a little later than that. Probably it took some time for printing and stuff.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—When did you provide that information to the minister?

Senator Ian Campbell—I do not think it is up to the department to tell anyone when they provide advice to me. However, I am happy to say that I would have received the reports a couple of weeks before I made the decision, because I recall reading them very thoroughly.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—I am sure you did.

Senator Ian Campbell—Just so you know. The date when I made the decision is public. If you want to work back, I would say that I received the documents a couple of weeks before the decision.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—It has always been accepted process at estimates that officers provide information of when ministers were briefed but not about what they were briefed. So I want to make clear; I do not accept your comment. I got a bit confused, and I just want to be clear. I do not think there is any great conspiracy. I want to understand when that information was made available, that is all.

Mr Early—I can be a bit more specific. Biosis Research finalised the assessment on 22 February 2006 but it would have taken some time for printing and to make the reports available.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—When did you make it available to the minister?

Mr Early—I cannot tell you that. I can find that out on notice.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—If you can find out this evening, that is fine. If not, take it on notice.

Senator Ian Campbell—Could I just say for the record I have a document here, I think from the Victorian government's Environmental Protection Agency. It has a very good compendium of research done on the orange-bellied parrot, its numbers and recovery plans and the nature of the risks of the bird. It goes back to 1978, 1979, 1980, 1983, 1984, 1986, 1987, 1990, 1991, 1992 and there on. There is probably another dozen reports that look at the habitat, the risks and what you do to put in place recovery plans for this unique species—one of them prepared by Carr et al 1991.

Senator CARR—In regard to the Woolnorth wind farm, which has the authorisation to kill the six parrots, has there been any audit done on how many parrots have actually been killed?

Mr Early—We understand that no parrots have been killed.

Senator CARR—How do you know that?

Mr Early—Because we asked the company, and in accordance with their—

Senator CARR—So since 2001, no parrots have flown into the turbines?

Mr Early—No deaths have been recorded.

Senator CARR—There is no evidence that a parrot has flown into a turbine.

Mr Early—That is right.

Senator CARR—That is basically what happens, isn't it? Didn't Mr Smales point out that many birds rarely, if ever, reach rotor-swept height? So in fact it is very rare that a bird actually flies into a rotor blade, isn't it?

Mr Early—It is not a regular occurrence, but then the issue is the precarious nature of the threat to their existence.

Senator CARR—That is basically what this report finds, isn't it?

Senator Ian Campbell—I do not think we need to paraphrase the report.

Senator CARR—I have not paraphrased it. I have quoted directly from it.

Senator Ian Campbell—We know within two weeks of that report coming down that a wedge-tailed eagle flew into Woolnorth and got killed.

Senator ALLISON—A wedge-tailed eagle is not an orange-bellied parrot.

Senator Ian Campbell—The wedge-tailed eagle is an endangered species.

Senator ALLISON—Yes, but it flies up high. Orange-bellied parrots do not.

Senator Ian Campbell—The report shows that further wind farm development in this area would pose a risk to orange-bellied parrots. So you obviously know more than the person who wrote the report.

Senator ALLISON—Isn't it the case that orange-bellied parrots are not generally seen within two kilometres, or beyond two kilometres, of the coast?

Senator Ian Campbell—That is not true, no.

Senator ALLISON—Where is that in the report?

Senator Ian Campbell—The report basically shows that they spend time within two kilometres of the coast.

Senator ALLISON—Where does it say that they spend time beyond that?

Senator Ian Campbell—It states:

It is public knowledge and it is well-documented, going back to 1978, that there are two important regional foraging sites that the orange-bellied parrots utilise at Corner Inlet and Anderson's Inlet near the Bald Hills wind farm site.

Senator ALLISON—Yes, but they are within two kilometres of the coast.

Senator Ian Campbell—It continues—

This is made clear in a draft coastal action plan for the Gippsland area prepared by the Victorian government.

Senator ALLISON—But they are both within two kilometres of the coast. Corner Inlet is on the coast. It is an inlet.

Senator Ian Campbell—Can I just complete my answer:

The site also occurs directly within the known migration path.

Senator CARR—With regard to the Portland site, how many parrots have been killed?

Mr Early—None, as far as I am aware.

Senator CARR—In regard to the South Australian site to which approval was given, the Stanwell project, how many parrots have been killed?

Mr Early—I am not aware.

Senator CARR—In regard to the Jim's Plain site in north-west Tasmania, how many parrots have been killed?

Mr Early—I am also not aware.

Senator CARR—Is it because no reports have come to you that you are not aware, or is it possible that there are reports in the department that you are not aware of?

Mr Early—No reports have come to me, but those latter two cases did not require approval under the EPBC Act.

Senator CARR—Yes, but you have had no complaints about dead parrots?

Mr Early—No.

Senator CARR—With regard to the four Pacific Hydro ones that Minister Kemp signed off on, have we had any reports there of dead parrots?

Mr Early—No. There is only one of those that has actually progressed at this stage.

Senator CARR—Have there been any dead parrots associated with that project?

Mr Early—Not that I am aware of.

Senator CARR—No reports?

Mr Early—Not that I am aware of, no.

Senator CARR—Did the department recommend the adoption of a management plan in regard to the Bald Hills project?

Mr Early—I do not think I can advise what the department advised the minister.

Senator CARR—Would it be standard procedure for you to recommend that a management plan be adopted for a wind farm project of this type?

Mr Early—I do not think I can answer that.

Senator CARR—Why not?

Mr Early—Each project is different and we—

Senator CARR—So you do not have any set procedure that you—

Mr Early—Yes. We look at each project on its merits and it would depend on the circumstances.

Senator CARR—Did you seek legal advice before rejecting the project?

Senator Ian Campbell—This is a matter that is before the courts at the moment.

Senator CARR—Yes. I am not asking if it is before the courts. I am asking about a matter of fact. I am not asking for anything to do with matters before the courts.

Mr Early—We certainly did not seek formal legal advice. We have an out-posted officer from the Australian Government Solicitor within the division and quite often when we are providing advice to the minister on a whole range of things we will discuss matters with that officer. I cannot recall whether we did in this case or not, but we certainly did not seek formal legal advice.

Senator ALLISON—Can I just pursue that?

Senator CHRIS EVANS—That does not mean that there was no formal legal advice provided.

Mr Early—We do not normally seek formal legal advice as part of the assisting process.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—Sometimes in discussing an answer, and I am not being critical of the witness, it is not absolutely clear for the record what the answer to it is. There was no formal legal advice?

Mr Early—Not that I am aware of.

CHAIR—Senator Allison, you had a question?

Senator ALLISON—Yes. How many wind farms have come before the department and through the EPBC process thus far?

Mr Early—There have been three that have been assessed and approved. The total number of referrals we have had is 61 all over the country, basically.

Senator ALLISON—Have some of those been determined as not needing to go through the process?

Senator Ian Campbell—Not controlled, yes.

Mr Early—Most of them are not controlled actions. Some have not been controlled actions in the specified manner, and some have been controlled actions.

Senator ALLISON—Of the three that were given approval through the process how many had conditions applied to them?

Mr Early—All of them.

Senator ALLISON—All of them?

Mr Early—Yes.

Senator CARR—Can you identify which three? Are they the ones I referred to, or are there others?

Mr Early—The Portland, Woolnorth and Musselroe wind farms are the ones that have been approved with conditions.

Senator ALLISON—What sorts of conditions were they?

Senator Ian Campbell—I think that really makes my case—that, out of 61 wind farm approvals, three have got those sorts of potential mitigation plans in place. I would be very pleased to receive from Senator Allison the scientific evidence she has that says that orange-bellied parrots fly below the level of wind farms. These are birds that fly from Tasmania.

Senator CARR—Read your own report.

Senator ALLISON—Yes, it is in here, Minister.

Senator Ian Campbell—I have read the report very thoroughly.

Senator CARR—I can tell, obviously.

Senator Ian Campbell—There is nowhere in the report that says that orange-bellied parrots do not fly at that altitude. Or you think they fly at altitude across Bass Strait and then come in like a jet as they get close to the land—due to some air traffic control system in the Democrats?

Senator ALLISON—They are ground dwellers, Minister, and you know that. They fly high when they are going over the water but, as I understand it, when they are on land, they are on the ground.

Senator Ian Campbell—When they are migrating?

CHAIR—Senator Allison, the minister has asked for your documentation on this.

Senator Ian Campbell—She has quoted my report. I have that report.

Senator ALLISON—Chair, it is our job to ask the questions, not the minister's. I am happy to flip through this report—

Senator Ian Campbell—You are trying to say that orange-bellied parrots fly from Tasmania to Victoria.

Senator ALLISON—Excuse me, Minister, I did not ask the question, I am responding.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—Mr Chairman, it is common for the Senator to ask the minister a question, it is not common, though, for the minister to ask the senator a question. It is quite clear.

CHAIR—The minister was simply asking for the information for his own interest.

Senator Ian Campbell—Can't I ask for some information?

Senator ALLISON—He is not entitled to do that.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—Where is this in the standing orders, Mr Chairman?

CHAIR—There is no limit on the questions Senator Allison can ask.

Senator Ian Campbell—Mr Chairman, I ask Senator Evans to say where in the standing orders does it say that the minister cannot ask for another senator to provide some information to him?

Senator ALLISON—Where does it say he can?

CHAIR—By default, one presumes that means that he can. Let us proceed.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—Mr Chairman, please. I don't mind your being slightly partisan, but you are going right over the top again.

CHAIR—If the standing orders are silent, then—

Senator CHRIS EVANS—Why don't you go around there and get next to the minister if you are going to play those games, Mr Chairman?

Senator Ian Campbell—Oh, come on!

CHAIR—It is a simple matter.

Senator Ian Campbell—I simply want to see the evidence that parrots fly at an altitude where a turbine will slice them up and wedge-tailed eagles do not. I would like to know the difference.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—Mr Chairman, I think you gave Senator Allison the call to ask the next question in the Senate estimates process, which is to question the department and the minister. I think she might have been given the call.

CHAIR—Thank you for your advice.

Senator RONALDSON—On a point of order: if Senator Allison had put an allegation to the minister about flying heights, I think the minister is quite entitled to ask where the evidence is for that. I do not think it is an unreasonable response at all, quite frankly.

Senator Ian Campbell—Senator Carr said Roaring 40s have offered a recovery package or something or other, and I asked who said it. It is fair enough to ask him. He did not mind that. It was a rescue package.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—I thought the chairman was taking a point of order from a member of the committee. Why is the minister talking? Show some respect to Senator Ronaldson, please.

CHAIR—Senator Ronaldson took a point of order, and the minister made a comment. I accept Senator Ronaldson's point that the minister simply asked for information. We now go to Senator Allison, who may have further questions.

Senator ALLISON—What sorts of conditions were set on the three wind farms that were approved, having come through the process?

Mr Early—It is probably best if I provide them on notice.

Senator ALLISON—In general terms?

Mr Early—There are things like environmental management plans. There would be different elements of issues to be addressed in each one. The conditions generally run to two or three pages, so it is a bit hard to summarise very briefly.

Senator ALLISON—So conditions can be quite explicit about it and there is no reason why these conditions could not include management plans for protected species, for instance?

Mr Early—No, they generally do.

Senator ALLISON—The brief to Biosis that resulted in this report on the modelling of cumulative impacts had two aims according to the report. One was that it would look at the potential cumulative impacts of collision risk and the other was that it would determine suitable assessment and provide an estimate of the level at which predicted collision is likely to present concerns. Why were they the two aims? What gave rise to this report being about this?

Mr Early—It was really discussions with the minister about his concerns. One of the issues that is problematic for environmental impact assessment generally is dealing with cumulative impacts. You do run the risk that, if you assess a whole series of projects independently, all of them might be seen to be okay but together they are actually creating a deleterious impact. The minister was concerned, given the number—61 wind farms have been referred—to establish the likely impacts on a cumulative basis.

Senator ALLISON—Was it the minister who decided this was to be about cumulative effects?

Mr Early—It was a discussion the minister had with the department, but it was the minister who initiated it.

Senator Ian Campbell—It was actually the department that suggested to me a cumulative impact assessment, which had not been done before because of the very issue to which Mr Early alluded. Previously, prior to 1996 when Labor was in power, you had 20 turbines in the whole of Australia. We have built over 400, and we are on the way to 600. That is a very different issue.

Senator ALLISON—As I recall, it was a Democrats amendment negotiated that allowed the department to look into cumulative impacts. Was there any assessment done of the fragmentation or degradation of over-winter habitat by grazing, agriculture or urban development?

Mr Early—In what context? I am not quite sure I understand the question.

Senator ALLISON—Shouldn't cumulative impact ordinarily take into account other impacts? How is it that there is a cumulative impact just from one factor and not from other factors that impact on this species?

Mr Early—If you want the cumulative impacts of everything, we might have taken two or three years to do a study on it. We were looking specifically at wind farms as being an issue that had been identified as a problem for the orange-bellied parrot in particular but other birds as well.

Senator ALLISON—Essentially you have identified one of the threats to orange-bellied parrots in this process. As I said, that is one aspect of the threat; isn't that right?

Mr Early—That is right.

Senator ALLISON—Would there also be competition from other seed-eating birds? Would you acknowledge that was a threat?

Mr Early—Yes, there is a range of threats.

Senator ALLISON—Feral animals?

Mr Early—Yes. The way we try and address that in a holistic sense, I suppose, is through the recovery planning process

Senator ALLISON—Yes. Would brightly lit fishing boats be a threat as well?

Mr Early—Yes, they are some of the threats that have been identified in the latest draft, which I am sure you have seen.

Senator ALLISON—What has been put in place to deal with those threats?

Mr Early—There has been a variety of things put in place across a number of jurisdictions. This is a Tasmanian, Victorian and South Australian government issue as well as a Commonwealth issue. I would probably have to take it on notice and give you a clear exposition of the money that has been spent, what it has been spent on and what actions are being taken to try to protect the orange-bellied parrot. There is a captive breeding program for a start, which is obviously a fairly significant element.

Senator ALLISON—Whereabouts is that? Is that in Victoria?

Mr Early—That is in Tasmania. In that captive breeding program they release birds each year in an effort to try to build the population. A whole series of actions has been taken.

Senator ALLISON—Has there been any action on the Victorian coastline or close to it or anywhere near the Bald Hills site?

Mr Early—I am sure there is, but I would have to double-check on what the Victorian government in particular is doing.

Senator ALLISON—What is in the budget to protect the orange-bellied parrot?

Mr Early—Once again, I would have to check.

Senator Ian Campbell—We have identified close to or in excess of \$1 million of funding specifically going into projects to assist the recovery of the orange-bellied parrot.

Senator ALLISON—Specifically?

Senator Ian Campbell—Specifically. I would be happy to table this if I were allowed to by the committee, but we have a detailed schedule of all of the projects that have either been stopped or totally relocated as a result of orange-bellied parrots in Victoria. Depending on how you count them, upwards of a dozen projects over recent years that have either been stopped entirely or moved by the Victorian EPA because of risks to orange-bellied parrots.

Senator ALLISON—At any of those sites had the orange-bellied parrot actually been sighted?

Senator Ian Campbell—The orange-bellied parrot only has 15 breeding pairs. There is a furbie flying around, generally promoted by the *Australian*, that the orange-bellied parrot is not at this site. There are two important regional foraging sites that the orange-bellied parrots utilise at Corner Inlet and Andersons Inlet near the Bald Hills wind farm site. This is made clear in a draft coastal action plan for the Gippsland area prepared by the Victorian government. The site also occurs directly within the known migration route for this species. If you believe what you read in the newspaper that this Bald Hills is not a place where orange-bellied parrots are likely to go or migrate through, then you will be misled.

Senator ALLISON—The report that we have been talking about says:

Our analysis suggests that such an action, that is, avoiding turbine collisions, will have extremely limited beneficial value to conservation of the parrot without addressing very much greater adverse effects that are currently operating against it.

I again ask you: the Bald Hills area, what are those much more important adverse effects and what is being done about them?

Senator Ian Campbell—The community, with the support of government funding, has done an enormous amount to build up a safe habitat for migratory birds, including orange-bellied parrots. That is why many of the locals were absolutely perplexed, after having spent some years and enormous amounts of their own time and government money building safe habitat in wetlands and refuges for a number of birds, including the four that we looked into; the white-bellied sea eagle was one of specific concern, but also the orange-bellied parrot because of its limited numbers. That is why many of the bird lovers, conservationists and the nature lovers in that district were perplexed to see that someone would propose to build a wind turbine installation right near those habitats. So that work has been going on both sides of Bass Strait for a number of years, going back to the 1970s.

Senator ALLISON—How close is this site to the wetland?

Senator Ian Campbell—This government itself, just in the last couple of years, has spent upwards of \$1 million and will spend more in the future.

Senator ALLISON—How close is this site to a wetland?

Senator Ian Campbell—Within less than a kilometre. We will get the exact figure.

Mr Early—It is quite close. I would have to take that on notice.

Senator ALLISON—I understand the orange-bellied parrots do not go to wetlands, anyway. They are all my questions on Bald Hills.

Senator CARR—Senator Heffernan, I would like to actually get some information; if we want to go into a song and dance routine, perhaps a bit later on. In respect of the approval process for Bald Hills, how long did it take for that process to be concluded? How long did the minister take to make a decision?

Mr Early—The minister made the decision quite quickly after receiving the Biosis report and the department's advice, but that in itself was a fairly lengthy process.

Senator CARR—Yes.

Senator Ian Campbell—I am happy for the committee to have all of the key dates of when bits of advice came to me. It is no secret. These may well be matters that go before the court, but I am not the one asking the questions here.

Senator CARR—This is a matter of fact.

Senator Ian Campbell—Yes. The company at the time I received the cumulative impact reports was—I think it is a matter of record—seeking court action to force me to make a decision. I informed the proponents that I was likely to make a decision, and there was no—

Senator CARR—Under 131, the minister is required to make a decision in 30 days; is that correct?

Mr Early—That is right.

Senator CARR—Is it also correct that it took 400 days to make this decision?

Senator Ian Campbell—That is not technically accurate.

Senator CARR—Not technically accurate?

Senator Ian Campbell—No.

Senator CARR—Why is it not technically accurate?

Senator Ian Campbell—Because I sought further advice; I sought further reports. You have to be satisfied when you are in this job that you have got all the information that you need, and we know in hindsight that I did not have all the information I needed at the time.

Senator CARR—So you disagree that it took you 400 days?

Senator Ian Campbell—We would have to look into the key dates that you are talking about. I am not sure who would have given you 400 days.

Mr Early—Probably 400 days from the time that the Victorian government gave us its assessment report and section 131B notice is probably about right. But as I said, there was significant further activity before a decision was able to be made.

Senator Ian Campbell—There was concern that the Victorian government's report had not adequately studied impacts on birds. We went back to them and said that this report does not provide enough information and is not robust enough in relation to bird strike. They went back and had to do some more work, just as we did. It had to go back to them once or twice.

Senator CARR—Have I understood you right, when you indicated that you wrote to the proponents at the time informing them of your intention to take longer than is required under section 131 of the act?

Mr Early—The minister certainly wrote later on. But the department both wrote and spoke to the proponents early on in the process to indicate that there was further work to be done.

Senator CARR—Yes, that it would be in excess of that required under 131?

Mr Early—That is right, yes.

Senator CARR—Did you bring to the minister's attention the time requirements under the act?

Senator Ian Campbell—Yes, that would have been in all the advice I had.

Senator CARR—Do you recall how often that occurred?

Mr Early—I am sorry?

Senator CARR—How often did you bring to the minister's attention the timing?

Mr Early—The minister was aware of the timing. We would have mentioned it to him but, as he said, further information was being sought, so there was not a lot of point in harping on the subject until that information was available.

Senator CARR—I take it that that correspondence with the proponents indicated that the minister wanted more time other than what is required in the act?

Senator Ian Campbell—Gerard can tell me if my recollection is wrong, but I think we would have told the proponents that we had decided to go down the path of having a cumulative impact assessment done, so they would have been informed then and would have been in full knowledge of that, and no doubt they would have been interested to know the progress of that reporting process.

Senator CARR—That letter explained that this process would take a longer period than the 30 days as required under the act?

Mr Early—That is right. We both told them that by telephone and we also put it in writing. In fact, in the documentation that is currently in the court case they have acknowledged that they received that information.

Senator CARR—When did the department employ a consultant to undertake an independent review of the assessment documentation for the Bald Hills wind farm?

Mr Early—In November 2004.

Senator CARR—Do you recall the date in November?

Mr Early—Yes, 9 November.

Senator CARR—Who was the consultant?

Mr Early—Dr Penny Olsen.

Senator CARR—This work was commissioned on the date of 9 November, was it?

Mr Early—Yes.

Senator CARR—So it is the same date, the commission. Was there a tender?

Mr Early—I do not think there was. I think it was on the basis of expertise.

Senator CARR—So it is a select tender.

Mr Early—Yes.

Senator CARR—Based on recognised expertise?

Mr Early—Yes.

Senator CARR—Or pre-eminent expertise. Is there only one person that can do this work?

Mr Early—To be honest, I cannot recall the details. There may have only been the one person who was available at the time who could do it with the appropriate expertise.

Senator CARR—Would you take it on notice as to why it was a select tender and not an open tender?

Mr Early—Yes.

Senator CARR—What was the value of the commission for that work?

Mr Early—I would have to take that on notice.

Senator CARR—Am I right in understanding that the report came back to you on 18 January 2005?

Mr Early—You may be. I do not have that exact detail with me.

Senator CARR—Was it the finding of the independent review that the assessment documentation provided by the Victorian government was accurate and adequate?

Mr Early—The consultant raised a number of issues that could have been done better but concluded that it was adequate to make a decision.

Senator CARR—Are we able to get a copy of that report?

Mr Early—Yes, we can provide that.

Senator CARR—In normal circumstances when you get a report of this type what occurs?

Mr Early—We would examine that report and see whether it would help us solve any issues that we believe are outstanding, and then we decide from there whether we need any further information. Often we will get several reports if one does not address all the issues.

Senator CARR—On this occasion did you inform anyone that you had received this report?

Mr Early—I cannot recall. I expect we probably told the proponent.

Senator CARR—Can you take that on who actually received a copy of the report and who was advised of its contents?

Mr Early—I will take that on notice.

Senator CARR—Under normal circumstances, if there is an approval granted, would the EPBC Act stipulate any further role for the department?

Mr Early—Yes.

Senator CARR—What would that be?

Mr Early—Generally speaking, most EPBC Act approvals have conditions attached, so those conditions are legally enforceable. We have a monitoring and auditing role to ensure those conditions are maintained.

Senator CARR—Was it your recommendation to the minister that led to the commissioning of the Biosis report?

Mr Early—Yes, we certainly discussed it with the minister.

Senator CARR—Who initiated the report?

Mr Early—My recollection was that it actually—

Senator Ian Campbell—This is the cumulative study?

Mr Early—Yes, it was raised in a discussion in your office—

Senator Ian Campbell—I answered that question about 15 minutes ago. I said the department suggested that, because of the number of wind farms that were being built around the coast due to the federal government's pro-renewable energy policies, a cumulative study would be a useful.

Senator CARR—Minister, that is fine.

Senator Ian Campbell—The department gave me advice and I thought it was a very sensible idea so I said, 'Go and do it.'

Senator CARR—You are stating squarely that it was the department's advice to you that led to your—

Senator Ian Campbell—Yes, and I have already said that. I said that 15 minutes ago; you obviously were not listening.

Senator CARR—Did the consultant indicate that the information that was available to the department was inadequate?

Senator Ian Campbell—I beg your pardon?

Senator CARR—Did the consultant, Dr Penny Olson, indicate that the information available to the department was inadequate?

Mr Early—She indicated that there were some problems with the information that had been provided, but she actually thought that there was, nevertheless, adequate information to make a decision. That was her view.

Senator CARR—Yes.

Senator Ian Campbell—Problematic but adequate; less than satisfactory but adequate.

Senator CARR—What was the total value of the research?

Mr Early—Once again, I would have to take that on notice.

Senator CARR—It was not cheap, though, was it?

Mr Early—No, it was not. It was more expensive than the previous one.

Senator CARR—How much was it, roughly?

Senator Ian Campbell—Why do we not get an exact figure?

Mr Early—I would have to get an exact figure on it; I am not sure.

Senator CARR—You proposed to the minister that, despite the fact that you had an independent commissioned report that said that the information was adequate, you needed further research?

Mr Early—Yes, which is not unusual for us to do that.

Senator CARR—Can I take it that it was hundreds of thousands of dollars?

Mr Early—No, less than that.

Senator CARR—Less than \$100,000?

Mr Early—I think so; around about that.

Senator CARR—About \$100,000?

Mr Early—Yes.

Senator Ian Campbell—It is a bit like the Victorian government's environmental assessments; near enough is good enough.

Senator CARR—Is it not the case that in November 2004 the consultant's report said:

More sophisticated modelling would seem inappropriate and unlikely to yield meaningful predictions and that additional specie surveys are unlikely to add much value, or additional information in terms of the EPBC requirements, and any impacts on bird populations are likely to be negligible.

Mr Early—Yes, that is what the consultant said. We did not agree with that analysis.

Senator CARR—You did not agree with it. So you commissioned around \$100,000 worth of extra research, despite having received that advice?

Mr Early—Yes, and as I said, it is not unusual for us to seek several independent assessments.

Senator Ian Campbell—My recollection is that it is a very similar path that the department went down in relation to issues around the Hinchinbrook proposals. For example, the initial advice said, in relation to impacts on dugong populations, that the impacts would be negligible, but there were considerable community concerns at Bald Hills in relation to the adequacy of the assessment of bird strike, as there was in relation to dugongs at Hinchinbrook. I think in both cases the department has gone and done further work.

Senator CARR—Did the consultant recommend—

Senator RONALDSON—Mr Chair—

Senator CARR—I am asking a question and you are interrupting.

Senator RONALDSON—I am taking a point or order, so just be quiet.

CHAIR—If you are taking a point of order, yes.

Senator RONALDSON—Senator Carr has twice now put a figure to Mr Early, which he has not acknowledged.

Senator CARR—Yes, he has.

Senator RONALDSON—He has not. It may be \$200,000 or it may be \$50,000.

CHAIR—Senator Carr, Senator Ronaldson has the call.

Senator RONALDSON—He has not agreed with Senator Carr about the figure. He said he would take it on notice and Senator Carr, again, has put the statement to him that it is \$100,000. It might be more, might be less; he took it on notice. The witnesses may have been listening—

Senator CARR—Check the *Hansard*.

CHAIR—Order!

Senator Ian Campbell—On the point of order, Mr Chairman, could I make some comments?

CHAIR—You may.

Senator Ian Campbell—I suggested that it would be sensible to provide the accurate figure.

CHAIR—Yes, that is right.

Senator Ian Campbell—We agreed and then Senator Carr said, ‘You have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars.’ He has effectively verbalised a senior member of the department, who was happy to provide the exact figure. He said, ‘It is \$100,000, nearly \$100,000’, and Mr Early said, under some pressure from Senator Carr, ‘Yes, around that.’ We can see a press release coming out, just as we saw from the Labor Party in relation to *Air Force One* ruining the Canberra Airport. We have got this badgering by Senator Carr, which is his known style at estimates, where he tries to verbalise the witnesses. He is not interested in the real facts. We have said we will get you the exact amount down, to the last cent. Senator Ronaldson’s point of order is a very good one. I think we should wait for the exact figure rather than continuing to badger and harass, as is his normal thuggish behaviour.

CHAIR—Thank you, Minister, that is exactly right. You have offered to provide the exact figure, so I do not think we need to go back to this again. Let us proceed. We will get the exact figure. Please proceed, Senator Carr.

Senator CARR—What mitigation proposals were advanced by the independent consultant in regard to the orange-bellied parrot in the Bald Hills project?

Mr Early—I cannot recall.

Senator CARR—Will you take that on notice? Can you also take on notice why they were found to be unacceptable?

Mr Early—Sorry?

Senator CARR—Why they were rejected.

Senator Ian Campbell—We will table the statement of reasons, won't we, Mr Early?

Mr Early—Yes.

Senator Ian Campbell—That is a public document now? That explains my decision.

Senator CARR—Was the information contained in the Biosis report taken into account in rejecting the application?

Senator Ian Campbell—It is in the statement of reasons, which will be tabled. It is already a public document.

Senator CARR—Other than the Bald Hills wind farm, were any other studies taken into account in regard to the possible impacts on the orange-bellied parrot population?

Senator Ian Campbell—All of my reasons are contained in that statement of reasons, which is a legal and public document. The figure for the cost of the Biosis report was \$85,700.

Senator CARR—Minister, on 5 April at a press conference in Perth you indicated:

Well it's such that this report says that if you even lose more than one bird per year it will impact on the potential for extinction, they're saying that under current conditions this bird could well be extinct in fifty years and that the wind farm proposal even if you kill one bird per year it will have an impact and likelihood to hasten their extinction.

Was that an accurate reflection of what you said?

Senator Ian Campbell—That is my recollection, yes.

Senator CARR—Was there any evidence based on this report or any other report that you had to support the findings that the proposed wind farm threatened a serious and irreversible impact on the orange-bellied parrot?

Senator Ian Campbell—It is all set out in the statement of reasons. If I am any judge, that will go right to the heart of the court case. This is exactly what will be tested in the court.

Senator CARR—I am just interested to know as a matter of fact whether there was any other evidence.

Senator Ian Campbell—I again direct your attention to the statement of reasons, which sets out in great detail my reasons for making that decision.

Senator CARR—In terms of the study, how many orange-bellied parrots were sighted during the environmental impact studies of the Bald Hills site?

Senator Ian Campbell—The study did not set out to do that.

Senator CARR—It did not set out to do that? Did it report on that matter?

Mr Early—I would have to take that on notice.

Senator CARR—My recollection is that it found none. Is that right? Is that an accurate reflection?

Senator Ian Campbell—Just repeat the question again.

Senator CARR—How many orange-bellied parrots were sighted during the study that led to the production of this report?

Mr Early—That study is a modelling study. It was not a survey.

Senator Ian Campbell—We did not spend \$88,000 sending out a team of consultants to sit in hiding looking for orange-bellied parrots. There are 50 breeding pairs. I find it amusing from a political party that tries to pretend that it cares one iota about the environment that it can discard the interests of one of Australia's most endangered species. In fact, this species is described by the Victorian government as being 'among the rarest and most endangered of the world's wildlife, alongside the giant Panda and the Siberian Tiger'. The senator seems to think that we should just not pay attention to that. The reality is that, when you have 50 breeding pairs of a bird left in the entire world, you would need a lot of people to try to find any of them. They are highly at risk. We know the Labor Party's policy. They want to build hundreds of turbines along Australia's pristine coasts and throw to the four winds any environmental impact of those. They want to see rapid development approvals, unless of course it suits the state minister, who decides for whatever reason that even a species that is not threatened would stop a wind farm where it happens to suit the state government. Labor's environmental credentials on this issue have been absolutely torn to shreds.

Senator ALLISON—Do you regard climate change as being a higher or lower threat to this species than this wind farm or the accumulative effects of wind farms?

Mr Early—I do not think that I can answer that.

Senator ALLISON—Why not?

Mr Early—Because I have not addressed myself to the issue.

Senator ALLISON—Why did we not ask the consultants that question?

Mr Early—Because climate change is an element which is not really directly related or even indirectly related to the project at hand.

Senator ALLISON—Really? It is a renewable energy project, is it not?

Mr Early—Yes, but the impacts of actually building a project and operating it are distinct from global impacts of climate change.

Senator Ian Campbell—I think Senator Allison believes that by building a wind farm next to a bird sanctuary you will stop climate change, and she will continue to tell her constituents, who would be very silly if they believed her. If you genuinely tell people that building a wind farm here will save the planet from climate change, you are doing a massive disservice to the environment. It is an atrocious misleading of the Australian community. You should know that, quite frankly.

Senator CARR—I turn to page 27 of Ian Smales' report, January 2006, project No. 5182. In relation to Bald Hills, under the column 'Orange-bellied parrots and/or blue winged parrots recorded', it says that no orange-bellied parrots were recorded.

Mr Early—Where is this?

Senator CARR—Page 27. Project No. 5182 in Mr Smales' report of January 2006.

Mr Early—Sorry, page 27?

Senator CARR—Yes, page 27. Bald Hills, region 17, bird utilisation study at the site, right?

Mr Early—Yes.

Senator CARR—‘No orange-bellied parrots recorded’. Is that accurate?

Mr Early—Yes, and it goes on to say ‘few blue-winged parrots’.

Senator CARR—Yes, few blue-winged parrots recorded.

Mr Early—Which are the same genus.

Senator CARR—That is right.

Senator Ian Campbell—Passage migrant population, 15.

Senator CARR—That is an accurate statement of what that reports said.

Senator Ian Campbell—If you move further to the right of that column, it talks about being a migration site and that the passage migration population is 15. That is 15 out of a total breeding population known in the world of 50 breeding pairs. It would not suit Senator Carr to expand on that in *Hansard*?

Senator CARR—We will get to that.

Senator Ian Campbell—There is also other evidence to suggest—and I will say it for the third time, because Senator Carr does not want to, because the Australian Labour Party does not care about Australian wildlife, quite clearly—that it states:

There are two important regional foraging sites that the orange-bellied parrots utilise at Corner Inlet and Andersons Inlet near the Bald Hills wind farm site. This is made clear in a draft coastal action plan for the Gippsland area on the Victorian government’s own website. This site also occurs directly within the known species migration route.

Senator CARR—Is it accurate for me to say that the modelling carried out by Biosis Research Limited determined the cumulative annual mortality rate from all 23 wind farms on the southern Australian coast?

Mr Early—That is right.

Senator CARR—That is the brief that you gave, is it?

Mr Early—Yes.

Senator CARR—Did that study find that the cumulative effect was an additional death of less than one parrot per year?

Mr Early—I would have to double check the exact—

Senator Ian Campbell—I read the report very well, and it is around about a parrot per year. It is like your \$100,000—

Senator CARR—Does the Biosis data indicate that, in regard to the proposed Bald Hill’s wind farm, the likelihood of a dead parrot caused by collision with a turbine was 0.001 per year, or one parrot every thousand years?

Senator Ian Campbell—The Biosis report did not reach that conclusion. That is an absolute misleading of the—

Senator CARR—Misleading? Is that what you say, that it is misleading?

Senator Ian Campbell—Yes, it is. Again, we are getting right into the sorts of facts that the court will obviously be making—

Senator CARR—I am interested in the facts, as you say. Can I just go through the question of the formula used to establish—

Senator Ian Campbell—You can talk about facts, but these are facts that are going to be tested in a court of law in a case between the Commonwealth and the proponents. That is what courts find; they find facts and then make decisions.

Senator CARR—I am interested to know what the formula was used to establish the one in a thousand years figure. Can you confirm in determining the likelihood of the bird deaths from wind turbines at a particular site the Biosis report used a model that multiplies the number of annual mortality rates by the number of individual birds modelled as interacting with the site each year? Is that the methodology used?

Mr Early—I do not think it is appropriate for me to be talking about a methodology that was used by Biosis.

Senator CARR—Is that what the report says?

Mr Early—The reason we paid \$88,000 is that I am not an expert modeller, and so I am—

Senator CARR—I am interested in the facts, as to whether or not I have read the report accurately—

Senator Ian Campbell—If Senator Carr reads the report and that is what it says in the report, why does he need to ask us if that is what it says in the report?

Senator CARR—Because you are accusing me—

Senator Ian Campbell—Why did he not say that on page whatever it is of the report it says this? Next question, Senator Carr.

Senator CARR—Can you confirm that the correct formula for potential mortality rates at the Bald Hills wind farm is one minus 0.999392 multiplied by 15? That is the formula. Can you confirm that? You have said to me you have read it very thoroughly.

Senator Ian Campbell—All I know is that the report does not reach the conclusion about the percentage likely mortality at one particular wind farm, because that was not what the report was asked to report on. What has occurred since the report came out is that the state minister, the same minister who stopped a wind farm because of a non-threatened species when it suited him 10 months ago, got his department to take the Biosis report and remodel it to suit his political argument. Now what has happened is that Senator Carr—Comrade Carr—has decided to bring up that fact and then try to say that the Biosis report creates the underpinning for those politically motivated mathematics. I know for a fact, because I have investigated this, that the Biosis report does not say that at all. What the Biosis report actually says is:

Given that the Orange-bellied Parrot is predicted to have an extremely high probability of extinction—which is obviously of no concern whatsoever to the Australian Labor Party and, for that matter, the Australian Democrats, who you have to think, whenever you hear them talking

about the environment or worrying about it, are doing so with nothing other than crocodile tears—

in its current situation, almost any negative impact on the species could be sufficient to tip the balance against its continued existence. In this context it may be argued that any avoidable deleterious effect—even the very minor predicted impacts of turbine collisions—should be prevented.

God help Australian native wildlife if the Labor Party is ever elected to government, and God help Australia if Senator Carr is ever given the environment portfolio, because wedge-tailed eagles and orange-bellied parrots would have no future.

Senator CARR—On page 30, are the figures I have quoted not reported?

Senator Ian Campbell—I have just told you the background to the fallacious politically motivated figures that the Victorian government and your comrades therein have provided you. The report was asked to report on the cumulative impact on four bird species—the white-bellied sea eagle, the swift parrot, the wedge-tailed eagle and the orange-bellied parrot. That is what the report does.

Senator CARR—Does the report say that there is a 99 per cent avoidance rate on that site?

Mr Early—No.

Senator CARR—What does it say?

Mr Early—There is a table and there are some figures that are used in the report to come to a conclusion, but it does not say that in the report.

Senator CARR—Are you aware of a Mr Ashley Stephens? Have you dealt with Mr Ashley Stephens in the department?

Mr Early—I have not personally.

Senator CARR—Haven't you? I have here an email from Mr Ashley Stephens from the DSC in the Victorian government to Mr Smales, dated 13 April, wherein these calculations are canvassed. This is the author of the report:

For the purpose of the exercise, the process of finding a number of birds modelled as likely to be killed at any one wind farm within our model would be to multiply the annual mortality rate (inverse of survival rate in Table 4 of our report) for that site by the number of individual birds modelled as interacting with that wind farm per annum. However, the only really meaningful way to assess potential impacts of any one wind farm is to base it on real bird utilisation data—if that can be obtained—from the particular site in question.

Ashley writes back:

For Bald Hills, if I multiply $(1 - 0.999392)$ from table 4 by the number 15 from table 3, I get 0.000912. This means one mortality every 1,000 years. Is this right?

Regards

Ashley.

The author of the report writes back:

Yes you've calculated correctly.

Are you aware of those facts?

Mr Early—I am not aware. I have not seen that email. It does not tally with the Biosis report.

Senator Ian Campbell—Would you like to table the email? That would be useful.

Senator CARR—What I would ask is that—

Senator Ian Campbell—I would like to see the email, Mr Chairman. I think it is appropriate that—

Senator CARR—You see, what is happening here is that—

CHAIR—Are you prepared to table the email?

Senator CARR—No, I am not prepared to table the email.

Senator Ian Campbell—I see.

Senator CARR—But I am prepared to say that this minister has sought to impugn the reputation of Labor senators—

Senator RONALDSON—You are not prepared to table it, though?

Senator Ian Campbell—You are not prepared to table it?

Senator CARR—He has sought to impugn the reputation of—

Senator Ian Campbell—No. Answer the question. We have asked him to table the document on which he is—

Senator CARR—The author of the report himself has confirmed the data.

Senator Ian Campbell—Put up or shut up. Table the document.

Senator CARR—I would ask—

Senator RONALDSON—Why will you not table it?

Senator CARR—With regard to—

Senator Ian Campbell—Table the document, Senator.

Senator RONALDSON—You have asked him a question and you are not prepared to table it.

Senator Ian Campbell—Come on, you gutless wonder, table the document.

Senator CARR—I am more than happy. I will ask the supplier of this email—

Senator Ian Campbell—How could we believe a word you have said, when you will not even table the document? We have put on the table every single report, every bit of evidence, about orange-bellied parrots, and you read out one and you will not even table it. Put it on the table. Put up or shut up, you gutless wonder.

Senator CARR—I suppose you are going to say that is parliamentary, are you?

CHAIR—It is up to the minister how he—

Senator CARR—You are not saying that is parliamentary, are you?

Senator Ian Campbell—So saying ‘gutless’ is unparliamentary?

Senator CARR—More of your objective chairmanship, is it?

CHAIR—I would be very interested in you tabling your document.

Senator Ian Campbell—Just table the document. Go on, be a man; table it. We put every single document on the table and every single bit of information. You are prepared to criticise everyone and, when we put a bit a pressure back on to you, you go to water.

Senator CARR—There is no pressure on me at all, I can assure you.

Senator Ian Campbell—There is pressure on you right now to table that document. I hope you are searching for the document, because I would like to see it. Mr Chairman, is this senator going to table the document or not?

Senator CARR—I am just seeing what else is on the document.

Senator Ian Campbell—This is a farce, Mr Chairman. He either tables it or he does not.

Senator CARR—We will be back after tea—

Senator Ian Campbell—Oh, come on.

CHAIR—Do you wish to table the document or not?

Senator CARR—No, I will come back after tea, after I have consulted with the source of the document. Can I ask you this—

Senator Ian Campbell—So you are prepared to try to undermine the work of my department and my work, read it into the record, but not table it? You want to make a political point—

Senator CARR—You have heard what I have said.

Senator Ian Campbell—Put up the evidence.

Senator CARR—You have heard what I have said and I do not intend to say any more at this point.

Senator Ian Campbell—Give us the whole document. Do not just quote—

Senator RONALDSON—You are a disgrace.

Senator CARR—What is disgraceful about it?

Senator RONALDSON—You will not table the document.

Senator CARR—He might well have learnt these tactics from the Democrats.

Senator Ian Campbell—You are a disgrace.

Senator CARR—You are in the wrong place—

CHAIR—Order! Senator Carr!

Senator CARR—I want a private meeting right now.

Senator Ian Campbell—I took a point of order first, Mr Chairman.

Senator CARR—You want to carry on like this? Mr Chairman, I request a private meeting immediately.

CHAIR—Senator Carr, come to order!

Senator CARR—Under the standing orders I am entitled to it.

Senator Ian Campbell—You are a shocker.

Senator CARR—I would like a private meeting immediately.

Senator Ian Campbell—Why don't you table the document, then?

CHAIR—I am advised you have no entitlement to a private meeting. There is no need to have a private meeting.

Senator CARR—Why am I not entitled to a private meeting?

CHAIR—Because I am advised by the secretary of the committee that—

Senator Ian Campbell—Why do you not table your document?

Senator RONALDSON—Just table the document.

Senator Ian Campbell—Table the document—and get on with life.

CHAIR—Order! Senator Carr has said that he will consult with the writer and—

Senator Ian Campbell—He has told us who the writer is. He has quoted the document. Why will he not table it?

CHAIR—He is seeking permission—

Senator Ian Campbell—Or is he doing what he usually does?

Senator CARR—That is what I said to you.

CHAIR—Yes, I am repeating what you said, Senator Carr. You are seeking permission and you will undertake, if that permission is given, to table the document.

Senator CARR—Absolutely; I would be very keen to table that document—

CHAIR—Very good.

Senator Ian Campbell—Mr Chairman, I suggest—

Senator CARR—because I am sick of the lies this minister is peddling.

CHAIR—Senator Carr!

Senator Ian Campbell—I suggest we take a five-minute adjournment now.

Senator CARR—I have requested a private meeting.

Senator Ian Campbell—Mr Chairman, we can take a five-minute adjournment now and he can go and consult with the writer now and come back in five minutes.

CHAIR—Do you wish to do this, Senator Carr?

Senator CARR—I request a private meeting immediately.

CHAIR—What do you wish—

Senator Ian Campbell—I suggest we now adjourn for five minutes, so Senator Carr and go and consult.

Senator RONALDSON—Yes, good idea.

Senator Ian Campbell—Then we will table the document.

Senator ALLISON—Chair, I think we should have a meeting.

CHAIR—There is no obligation to have a meeting.

Senator ALLISON—Two people have requested a meeting and I think—

CHAIR—According to my secretary, any obligation to do that—

Senator RONALDSON—Go and make a phone call.

CHAIR—Senator Carr, however, has undertaken to table this document after he has consulted with the writer. He has been asked by the minister if he is prepared to call the writer now. Senator Carr has not responded to that.

Senator ALLISON—Chair, if I can make a—

Senator CARR—I have requested a private meeting.

Senator Ian Campbell—He wants to go and speak to his comrades in the Spring Street commissariat and find out what his next instructions are.

Senator ALLISON—Senator Carr indicated a course of action that he was prepared to take in terms of tabling the document.

CHAIR—I have acknowledged that

Senator ALLISON—The minister continued to abuse him, as did Senator Ronaldson, and this is why we need a private meeting to discuss the matter.

Senator RONALDSON—On the point of order, Mr Chairman—if Senator Carr had not made that inquiry beforehand when he knew he was going to be putting the proposition in that email to a witness then quite frankly he deserves what he gets. He should have made that phone call beforehand if he was going to put this matter to a witness. The fact that he has not I think is a very poor reflection on him.

Senator Ian Campbell—Mr Chairman, I do not know whether Senator Carr is opposed to my tabling this. No-one seems to be interested in knowing the facts. I would like to table this document, which goes through the endless projects that have been either stopped or relocated as a result of the Victorian government's decisions in relation to orange-bellied parrots, and also a significant compendium of research going back to 1978 in relation to the orange-bellied parrot. Can I have permission to have that tabled as a document of the committee?

Senator CARR—Mr Chairman, he does not need permission to table a document. He is the minister.

CHAIR—He is given permission to table it, so we will table the document. We will photocopy it and we will distribute it.

Senator Ian Campbell—I table my document.

Senator CARR—Are we having a private meeting or not?

CHAIR—If you wish to have a private meeting, could you please state the purpose of it.

Senator CARR—To discuss the conduct of this committee.

CHAIR—I think this committee is running perfectly well.

Senator CARR—Yes, you would.

CHAIR—If you wish to have a break to consult the writer of your email—

Senator CARR—I wish to have a private meeting, Mr Chairman.

CHAIR—I am sure you will advise us.

Senator CARR—I have requested it now half a dozen times.

CHAIR—You must tell me what you regard as—

Senator CARR—I would like to discuss your chairmanship of this committee.

CHAIR—I think my chairmanship is proceeding quite well.

Senator Ian Campbell—If you have got a problem with the chairmanship, you move and put it to a vote.

CHAIR—Senator Carr, please proceed.

Senator CARR—Minister, is it the case that in the *Great Southern Star*, a Leongatha publication, published on 12 October 2004, Mr Russell Broadbent indicated that with regard to the federal election campaign for the seat of McMillan:

When Ian Campbell arrived, the whole complexion of the campaign changed for me. What he said about wind farms was crucial.

That was a direct quote from the paper, which I am happy to table, which was referring to a speech on election night itself. It continued:

Senator Campbell gave a commitment to do everything within his power under the EPBC Act to veto the Bald Hills development if the coalition is re-elected.

So said *Guardian* spokesperson, Noreen Wills, from her notes from the day of her meeting with you. Is that an accurate statement of that report of 12 October in Leongatha's *Great Southern Star*?

Senator Ian Campbell—No, that is an inaccurate report. What I did do when I was at that meeting was make it very clear, as I did to anyone in that area, that this proponent will have to get approval under the EPBC Act and that, if they elected the Howard government and I was appointed environment minister, I would be the decision maker and I would ensure that the project got a proper scrutiny under the provisions of that act.

Furthermore, I pointed out—and I want to be accurate about this; I do not know the exact figure I used, but I ensured that I looked very closely at Mr Latham's policy, and I understand that in this area Mr Latham's policy is identical to Mr Beazley's policy—that for every wind turbine built under the existing renewable energy target for the coalition government there would be three or four wind turbines built under a Latham government. It would be Beazley, because the Latham policy is the Beazley policy in this area, as are most of Labor's policies; they have changed the guy at the helm but they have not changed the direction of the ship. That is what I pointed out to people in that electorate: under the Labor policy, the Latham plan or the Beazley plan—Latham at the time, of course—for every turbine built on the coast of Victoria under our renewable energy target program there would be multiples of that built under Labor. But I said that the provisions of the EPBC Act were likely to apply to this project and that, if we were re-elected and I was honoured to be asked to be environment minister again, I would ensure that it was given proper scrutiny under that law.

I chose my words very carefully, because I have in fact done an enormous amount to work with the wind industry to ensure that it is a friend of the community. I have worked very closely with them. I am rolling out a whole number of programs that are of assistance to the wind energy industry. I would not prejudge any environmental approval—and it would certainly be illegal to seek to do so—and seek to make a decision on a project without proper consideration. No-one, including the proponents, who are no doubt very disappointed by my decision, would regard that the consideration I have given this project has been anything other incredibly fair and detailed.

Senator CARR—Did you write a letter to the *Leongatha Star* correcting their report of your statements?

Senator Ian Campbell—That is the first time I have heard that quote read to me. It is inaccurate. If that had been given to me or read to me I would have corrected it, because it is not what I said. I recall the meeting quite well. They are very nice people.

Senator CARR—Do you recall a letter under your signature sent to the electors of McMillan during the federal election campaign starting with the words:

On 9th October your vote may well decide the future of South Gippsland's magnificent landscapes.

Senator Ian Campbell—Yes, I have the letter here. I am happy to table it if you would like me to.

Senator CARR—Again, you are entitled to table whatever you like, as I recall your responsibilities under the standing orders.

Senator Ian Campbell—Senator Evans reminded me that I probably should only speak or do things when I am asked to at this committee, and we hope that Senator Evans, when he goes back into the Senate chamber next month, will observe the standing orders as well as he wants me to observe them here.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—I certainly will.

Senator Ian Campbell—I am just trying to do the right thing by the committee, Senator Evans.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—I would appreciate it if you tabled the letter. I would like a copy.

Senator CARR—You said in that letter:

As minister for the environment I guarantee I will exercise my responsibilities to ensure that any development submission meets every requirement of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

Senator Ian Campbell—They are the very words I just paraphrased, and that was the set of words that I used whenever I was asked about—

Senator CARR—Was Mr Broadbent in his quoting you at his election night celebration inaccurate when he said of your intervention:

When Ian Campbell arrived the whole complexion of the campaign changed for me. What he said about wind farms was crucial.

Was that inaccurate?

Senator Ian Campbell—I was not at his election night function. I was actually down in the electorate of Canning celebrating a massive swing to Don Randall in the seat of Canning. But I did visit a number of marginal seats, as we call them in the business, or as you would call them in the business, and I watched them as they swung to the government across the country. I like to think that my visits to electorates during the election campaign would have done some good. I have set out to ensure that the people of Australia know that they have a Liberal Party that is committed to the environment, which actually brings in practical measures to improve the Australian environment, and I wanted them to know about it.

So I do hope that my campaigning in McMillan and every other seat did change the complexion of the election, because I tried very hard to show that you can have a government that delivers good economic management, border security, a strong defence and fairness for families and, on top of doing all of that, you can be the best partner that the environment in Australia has ever had by investing hundreds of millions of dollars and by bringing in the EPBC Act, which has brought in one of the most robust federal laws anywhere around the world. I am very proud to have gone to McMillan and very proud to have met with locals who were concerned about local bird life and the impact of this proposal on their local area.

Senator CARR—What was the cost of sending this letter out?

Senator Ian Campbell—I am not sure. It is certainly not an issue for the estimates of the environment department. The environment department, I do not think, would have sent this letter out.

Senator CARR—Who did send the letter out?

Senator Ian Campbell—It was not the environment department.

Senator CARR—It is under your letterhead—Minister for the Environment and Heritage, with the crown on top of it. It is signed ‘Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Parliament House, Canberra’. Who sent it out?

Senator Ian Campbell—I am happy to ask the environment department, but I do not think they would have funded the distribution of it.

Senator CARR—That is what I am asking. How much did it cost?

Senator Ian Campbell—I am happy to try and find out for you.

Senator CARR—Are you saying to me that it was not distributed by the department?

Senator Ian Campbell—It could not possibly be distributed by the department.

Senator CARR—It was signed off by you, as minister, on letterhead.

Senator Ian Campbell—As minister I sign letters out to constituents and residents around the country on my letterhead. That is entirely appropriate under the laws of the Commonwealth.

Senator CARR—Was this distributed by the department?

Senator Ian Campbell—No.

Senator CARR—And it was not paid for by the department?

Senator Ian Campbell—No. I can be absolutely certain of that. I am happy to see if that is right. I am happy to take that on notice. The question is: has the department contributed to the printing or distribution of this letter? It is a totally reasonable question and I will take that on notice.

Senator CARR—Was it funded out of the ministerial expenses account?

Senator Ian Campbell—I am happy to take that on notice.

Senator CARR—You were quite certain before. Are you a bit more careful now?

Senator Ian Campbell—I want to be careful. My recollection is no, it was not funded by the department—

Senator CARR—Or the government.

Senator Ian Campbell—I am virtually certain of that, but I am happy to take it on notice—

Senator CARR—Was it funded by public moneys?

Senator Ian Campbell—If I am wrong, I will correct the record.

Senator CARR—Was it funded by public moneys?

Senator Ian Campbell—I will have to look into it.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—It would have to be, would it not, Minister, because otherwise you would not be entitled to use the letterhead in that way.

Senator Ian Campbell—I am absolutely certain it complies with all of the relevant rules that relate to expenditure under all of the laws of the Commonwealth.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—It may well do, but of course that is the distinction. If it was signed by you as minister on ministerial letterhead it would have to have been paid for by the Commonwealth because it was part of your official functions.

Senator Ian Campbell—Not necessarily.

Senator RONALDSON—Mr Chair, I raise a point of order. This line of questioning is only relevant subject to the response that the minister gives, in that he has taken it on notice. If indeed it is not anything to do with the department of environment then this line of questioning is not relevant and therefore should wait until the minister's response comes back as to who paid for it.

CHAIR—I think that is a fair point of order. The minister has said that he will take—

Senator CHRIS EVANS—Can I speak to the point of order before you rule, Mr Chairman?

CHAIR—Go ahead, but he has said he will take it on notice.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—Can I respond before you rule, and have you rule and then invite a response?

CHAIR—You have not sought a separate—

Senator CHRIS EVANS—No. I want to speak to Senator Ronaldson's point of order if I could, please, consistent with the standing orders. I would like to make the point before you

rule, Mr Chairman, that Senator Campbell has been quite cooperative in answering the questions. The questions were directed to the minister in his capacity as minister for the environment about a letter that he has conceded he has signed that is on official ministerial letterhead. It is perfectly competent for us to ask questions about that. He did say he would take certain questions on notice. We have further questions to ask him about that and we are perfectly within our rights to ask them. If the minister decides not to answer some of them, or to take further ones on notice, that is his prerogative. We were having a perfectly reasonable discussion about the funding of the letter that the minister has in front of him, and I think that you ought to rule that we can continue. If the minister does not want to answer anything he can take it on notice—that is his prerogative.

CHAIR—Thank you for those comments. I agree with much of what you have said. I agree that you recognise the minister has said he will take these questions on notice. I also agree that you have the right to continue to ask questions, but how the minister responds is also in the minister's province.

Senator CARR—Is it the case, Minister, that you are only authorised to use the coat of arms and sign a letter as minister if you are in fact on Commonwealth business?

Senator RONALDSON—I raise a point of order again, Mr Chairman. On my understanding, anyone can ask questions of a minister in this committee as long as they are related to this portfolio. They are not entitled to ask questions about public funding of letters or anything else outside that. The minister has said that he is going to check on that and will come back. He has taken the matter on notice. You cannot therefore—

Senator CARR—I take it, Minister, that you were not signing it as the minister for health but as the Minister for the Environment and Heritage—

Senator RONALDSON—Mr Chairman, let me finish.

CHAIR—Yes.

Senator CARR—So I presume it has something to do with this estimates committee.

Senator Ian Campbell—You have got the letter before the committee. I have tabled that letter.

Senator CARR—You have tabled it?

Senator Ian Campbell—I am happy to table it. It is well known. It was sent out to a lot of people. I have tabled my letter; we now await Senator Carr tabling his document. We have read extensively from this document. Senator Carr read extensively from his email and we await him tabling that. I have tabled this.

CHAIR—Does the committee wish to accept the minister's offer to table the letter?

Senator CARR—That was 10 minutes ago.

CHAIR—I am advised by the secretary that the committee has to accept the offer. Do you wish to accept the offer?

Senator Ian Campbell—My understanding of the standing orders over 17 years—

Senator CARR—We would be delighted to have the minister's letter.

CHAIR—Good. Now table the letter and we will have it distributed.

Senator Ian Campbell—Has Senator Carr made a decision about tabling his document? That is the next question.

Senator CARR—Minister, how many copies of this letter were distributed?

Senator Ian Campbell—I do not have that knowledge before me.

Senator CARR—Will you take that on notice?

Senator Ian Campbell—Yes.

Senator CARR—On what date was the letter distributed?

Senator Ian Campbell—I will take that on notice.

Senator CARR—The date is not clear from this correspondence that I have before me. It refers to events that occurred. I can conclude from it roughly when the letter was sent. Was it sent during the caretaker period, Minister?

Senator Ian Campbell—I think the answer to that question was almost certainly yes. I think it was after the meeting I had there and most likely before the election.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—Could you show us a copy now?

Senator Ian Campbell—I have just lost it, so you can see it when you get it.

Senator CARR—If we could just get it back.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—I have not got a copy yet and I just wanted to check whether yours has got a date on it.

Senator Ian Campbell—If it has got a date on it, that is one less question on notice.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—That is what I thought. It might well be on your copy but not on Senator Carr's.

Senator CARR—I believe I have got the same copy as the minister is about to table, but we will establish that.

Senator RONALDSON—Is there a chance to read the letter before Senator Carr continues?

Senator CARR—There is no apparent date on that and it does appear to be the same document that I am—

Senator CHRIS EVANS—Senator Campbell, it is also clear to me by a couple of the phrases in here that you were the author. It says 'Victorian Labor mates'—who does that sound like?

Senator CARR—It would not be a departmental officer. It is not well enough written for a departmental officer.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—The observation is that some of your phrases are reflected in the letter.

Senator Ian Campbell—Very observant.

Senator CARR—Minister, the reason—

Senator RONALDSON—Let everybody finish reading the letter, Senator Carr.

Proceedings suspended from 6.00 pm to 7.03 pm

CHAIR—We will resume.

Senator CARR—I seek leave to table three emails from which I have quoted this afternoon. One is dated 7 April 2006, it was sent at 10.11 am and the third paragraph I have quoted from. It is from the author of the Biosis Research report. One is from Ashley Stephens, dated 7 April and sent at 10.28 am. Another is from, I understand, the author of the report and is dated 7 April at 10.52 am. There is a sequence.

CHAIR—Is the committee happy to have these documents tabled?

Senator RONALDSON—I have one question to Senator Carr. These were all matters you referred to?

Senator CARR—This was the cause of your outrageous behaviour and disorderly conduct.

CHAIR—We will take that as yes. We will accept them and we will have them photocopied for all the committee members.

Senator Ian Campbell—The document from Ashley Stephens supports my contention that this was conducted by Senator Carr's political comrades in Victoria. Senator Carr mischievously or misleadingly asked an officer of my department whether we know Ashley Stephens from the environment department. The department he refers to is in fact the Victorian department. He refers to correspondence, which he has just tabled. He could have easily tabled it before dinner without losing his temper and screaming and yelling and making an absolute fool of himself. It shows the allegation I made to be absolutely true—that is, that the Victorian government asked their department to manipulate the figures prepared in the report to achieve an end which the report was not designed to achieve. So an officer of the Victorian environment department rang up our consultant and asked: 'Would you mind if we get these numbers, add them together and divide them by the first number you thought of? Would that be all right?' Within a few minutes, that department went to Mr Thwaites or Mr Hulls. Of course, they came out and said, 'This says this.'

Of course, Senator Carr fell into the trap, He came to me and asked, 'Does the report not show that this would be the outcome for the Bald Hills wind farm?' My answer was, 'No, the report does not say that.' He was wrong then. He was misleading the committee. He was misleading the committee in relation to where Mr Ashley Stephens works. Mr Ashley Stephens works for the Victorian government and was working at the direction of the Victorian minister, the same minister who stopped a wind farm in Victoria because of a wedge-tailed eagle 10 and a half months ago. To attack this decision to stop a wind farm to save a threatened species is an act of gross hypocrisy. Senator Carr is acting as an agent of his comrades in Victoria to prosecute this case. He is doing a particularly poor and, I would say, embarrassing job of it for his comrades in Labor in Victoria.

Senator RONALDSON—Very disappointing.

Senator CARR—Thank you for your editorial comments. Obviously you learnt that sort of behaviour in the Australian Democrats. It is pity that the Australian Democrats were not

able to advise you more correctly about how you should prosecute your case. I made it perfectly clear before that this was emails between the Victorian office and the persons.

Senator BARTLETT—How bad are you!

Senator CARR—Senator Bartlett is upset with my accusation that he was a Democrat. He was a Democrat. He was a longstanding Democrat. He has led this very core behaviour, obviously in a different party from the one now.

Senator BARTLETT—Is this when the Liberals behaved badly?

Senator CARR—Perhaps he has picked up some bad behaviour from the Liberal Party in the meantime.

CHAIR—Senator Carr, we thank you for those comments. I think we might start with Senator Bartlett, since you have mentioned the Democrats.

Senator Ian Campbell—What was the old saying: ‘If you are not socialist when you are young, you have no heart. If you are still a socialist when you are old, you have no hope’.

Senator CARR—You are not saying the Democrats are socialists, are you?

Senator Ian Campbell—I rest my case.

Senator CARR—Where does it end?

Senator Ian Campbell—I was talking about you.

CHAIR—A very wise comment and well-known.

Senator Ian Campbell—I know Senator Carr is proud to be a socialist in his old age.

Senator CARR—I am quite proud to be a socialist, quite proud.

Senator Ian Campbell—I know you are.

Senator BARTLETT—I have further questions on wildlife.

Senator Ian Campbell—We had a whole range of allegations about who paid for the letter that got distributed under my name. I can assure the committee that no ministerial or departmental funds were involved in the distribution or production of that letter.

CHAIR—Thank you, Senator Campbell.

Senator CARR—So no government money was involved in the production of the letter?

Senator Ian Campbell—No ministerial or departmental resources were used.

Senator CARR—Was there any government money involved in the distribution of that letter?

Senator Ian Campbell—This committee is looking at the department of the environment. The specific question is about my ministerial letterhead and the use of my ministerial letterhead. I will need the permission of the committee, I am informed. I seek leave to table a letter from a similar date by the Leader of the Opposition. He used government letterhead to distribute a letter in Baulkham Hills, at a similar time, by Christian Zahra. He used government funded stationery on similar issues at a similar time in the same election. I also table a transcript of a doorstep by then opposition leader and Labor policy guru Mark Latham. Most of his policies are still intact, including their wind farm policy. He used Commonwealth

paid letterheads again around the same time during the election campaign. There are three documents.

CHAIR—Is it the wish of the committee that these documents be tabled and incorporated?

Senator Ian Campbell—No. I certainly would not want to incorporate a doorstep by Mark Latham. I do not think that would be fair to Hansard.

CHAIR—Just tabled. So be it. They are tabled. Senator Bartlett, would you like to proceed?

Senator BARTLETT—Yes, Mr Chair. Thank you for that. This approvals and wildlife division also handles approvals for wildlife imports and exports. Is that right?

Mr Early—Yes.

Senator BARTLETT—I have a few questions about a few different things in that area. I noticed a report, one amongst a few, in the *Sydney Morning Herald* or the *Age* last month about concerns regarding Australian native animals, including kangaroos and koalas, going to a safari park in Thailand. It has been suggested that a number of animals died in that zoo, including Australian animals. Are you aware of that general concern and that case?

Mr Early—Yes. The department has received applications from Taronga Zoo and Melbourne Zoo for the export of nine species of Australian native animals to the Chiang Mai Night Safari. Following those reports of deaths in the night safari, we have stopped the clock to get further information. The zoos themselves have called a halt pending their finding out exactly what happened and what the circumstances are. It is basically on hold while those matters are investigated.

Senator BARTLETT—What sort of things are you doing to follow up those claims?

Mr Early—In the first instance, it is the zoos that are providing further information for us. We will respond when they examine the issues and provide more information. But I think it is fair to say that the zoos are probably as concerned about the reports as we are.

Senator BARTLETT—There have been other reports about certainly imports of koalas to zoos in China, where there are similar sorts of issues. It seems to be something that comes up reasonably regularly. What sort of follow-up do we do once approval is given, whether it is disease or anything else, for that matter, for those sorts of imports?

Mr Early—I will take the export of koalas to China as an example. There were very extensive arrangements made for the training of the Chinese vets and keepers in Australia followed up by Australian experts going over for a period of three months. There are also checks on the facilities where the koalas are being held. There is actually a mission that is quite close to the zoo. We will be briefing them. They will be looking at the facilities and making inspections. So we do have a follow-up procedure.

Senator BARTLETT—Is there any scope for penalties on the importer, or the exporter, for that matter, if appropriate standards are not provided where animals are exported to?

Mr Early—I do not know that there is much scope for penalties on the receiving zoos overseas. Obviously we work very closely. Most of these transfers are zoo to zoo or wildlife park to zoo or whatever. We work through ARAZPA, which is the Australian and New

Zealand association. There are conditions, particularly in relation to koalas and some of the other animals, where we have what we call an ambassador agreement between the department and the zoos. This is part of the zoos' business, so it is certainly in their interests to make sure that everyone is trained properly, the facilities are right and there are not problems. I guess that is part of the reason why their export to the night safari in Thailand has in effect been halted while more information is obtained.

Senator BARTLETT—Do you put conditions on export permits?

Mr Early—Yes, we do. Generally they relate to things like training. Certainly the facilities have to be appropriate. There is a lot of assessment. There has to be, particularly for koalas, proper food available on an ongoing basis and all those kinds of things.

Senator BARTLETT—And they are normally made public?

Mr Early—Yes. There are in fact approval conditions for koalas, which are on our website.

Senator BARTLETT—I was reading a statement in your legislation and your report. It is page 41 if you want to reference it. It does not matter that much. It mentions wildlife trade management plans and wildlife trade operations approved under the EPBC Act to govern the sustainable harvest of wildlife and the humane treatment of animals. Have you got a specific group with expertise within your department, particularly on animal welfare and the humane treatment side of things?

Mr Early—We have expert people within the department, but we do not rely purely on departmental people. Obviously they do the main assessment work. But, as with other assessments, we will quite often get independent advice. A lot of the conditions in relation to the humane treatment are actually set out in the regulations of the act. So there are procedures that we have to go through to ensure that that occurs. They go to things like the method of transport, the facilities, the conditions and the training of keepers and all that sort of stuff.

Senator BARTLETT—So you do not have a specific animal welfare subunit?

Mr Early—We have a wildlife assessment team. Obviously animal welfare is part of the legislation, so they look at that as well.

Senator BARTLETT—There is a distinction, as I understand it, between wildlife or native animal trade and then—I am not specifically thinking of livestock—areas like dogs or deer and those sorts of things. You do not cover them normally in exports?

Mr Early—We look after native wildlife, basically.

Senator BARTLETT—So things like deer or puppies or whatever would be primary industries, I guess.

Mr Early—Yes.

Senator BARTLETT—I was wondering specifically about the pending decision that on bumblebees being imported. Where is that decision at?

Mr Early—That decision is still out for public comment.

Senator BARTLETT—That is all right. If it is still receiving public comment, it would be within the next month or so.

Mr Early—The public comment period I think closes on 16 June. So it is still in that process.

Senator BARTLETT—I was also wanting to just check where things are at with the eight Asian elephants coming into Taronga Zoo. I know there was an AAT appeal in which the government triumphed, for want of a better word. As I understand it, the elephants are still in Thailand. They have not yet got to the quarantine stopover in the Cocos Islands. Is that right?

Mr Early—That is right, although I understand that the transfer is imminent.

Senator BARTLETT—Some extra conditions attach to the import applications from the zoos. Are they public as well?

Mr Early—Yes. They are publicly available.

Senator BARTLETT—Once they are here and installed, as it were, what sorts of things can you do if those conditions are not met?

Mr Early—They are legally enforceable conditions. If they are breached, there are penalties under the legislation. I can take it on notice. I do not have them all with me. They are quite detailed in terms of what can and cannot happen with those elephants.

Senator BARTLETT—I understand one of the concerns was in regard to the male elephant at Sydney. I do not know if this is getting too detailed for you. I was wondering specifically whether there were measures to address the potential for that male being kept on his own at some stage down the track.

Mr Early—There are. The Administrative Appeals Tribunal actually added an additional condition. The proposal is to keep the male separate for most of the time at Taronga but to be with the females on a regular basis. The tribunal added an extra condition. If there are problems with that—we do not believe there will be—the male has to be transferred to the open plain zoo at Dubbo.

Senator Ian Campbell—These were very much the arrangements that were in prospect. These were things that had been discussed. In fact, when I looked deeply into this case, as I did, that was one of the issues I raised. The zoo had already said, ‘If that occurs, we would move the elephant to Western Plains Zoo.’

Senator BARTLETT—Thank you for that. I am not sure where this fits from time to time. It seems to fit across a few things in the invasive species areas. I am particularly interested, though, in the importing provisions for aquarium fish and some plants, which I presume would come through you in terms of approval.

Mr Early—Basically we do an importer risk analysis for the importation of live species. That is linked very closely to quarantine regulations as well. That is what in fact we are doing with the bumblebee. There is a proposal to introduce it, so we are going through the import risk analysis.

Senator BARTLETT—The broader area of invasive species, that is more in land division?

Mr Early—It is more land, water and coast division.

Senator BARTLETT—Thank you. I want to ask a question about kangaroo quotas. Does that come under you as well?

Mr Early—Yes.

Senator BARTLETT—What is the current level of approved quotas for kangaroos to be harvested, if I can use that euphemism?

Mr Early—The total quota across New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia for the four species in 2006 is roughly 3.8 million.

Senator BARTLETT—Does that figure include assessments of the death of joeys and those sorts of things, or is it split between male and female or anything like that?

Mr Early—It is an overall figure relating to kangaroos. They have to be at a certain maturity. Basically, it is based on population estimates and surveys and the sustainability of the industry.

Senator BARTLETT—I appreciate you build that into your quotas. But is there any way of assessing the percentage that is male, the percentage that is female and the age range of those killed?

Mr Early—I think that is essentially factored into the survey techniques at the beginning. We do not really monitor. The quotas are based on the sustainability of the industry whereas the industry itself is obviously based on the economics. Typically, the numbers taken are only 65 or 70 per cent of the quota.

Senator BARTLETT—One of the concerns that I am sure you have heard many times is not just about the total number but that there may be an overconcentration of males or females or dominant males that might disturb the balance. How do you assess after the fact how many of each type, whether it is male or female or age range, have been killed?

Mr Early—We do not really. Those issues are taken into the population modelling and survey methods. I suppose the answer for that is that this industry has been going for 20 years or more and through droughts and all sorts of situations. Basically, there has been no real problem with the species of kangaroos that have been taken.

Senator BARTLETT—Is there any estimate of the number of joeys that die either in pouch or at foot as part of this process?

Mr Early—I am not aware, but I could take that on notice for you and check.

Senator BARTLETT—Could you also see if there is any estimate or anything more solid than estimates about the percentage of adult females versus males?

Mr Early—Yes.

Senator BARTLETT—I understand there were some challenges in the AAT to the kangaroo quotas in a few states. I do not know if they were challenged at federal level or state level. I think you were involved in it.

Mr Early—There have been four challenges, all of which have been unsuccessful.

Senator BARTLETT—Are there any of those still under foot in terms of further appeals?

Senator Ian Campbell—It is the welfare groups or the shooters who challenge.

Senator BARTLETT—Have the shooters been challenging as well?

Senator Ian Campbell—No. You may have heard I went up to Queensland a couple of weeks ago with Senator Boswell. One of the issues out in western Queensland, where they have had five years of drought, is that they do not believe the quotas are big enough to handle the number of roos that are out there, even in drought conditions. I witnessed with my own eyes kangaroos literally on their last legs, dying of starvation. It struck me that no-one would want to see an animal die like that. The cockies out there basically said, ‘If we could just shoot some more, we could earn some more money.’ What I learnt from that is that these cull rates—which I think is a probably more appropriate word, Senator Bartlett—are generally done at a fairly broad level and possibly do not take into account regional variations in population or the conditions on the ground. I am trying to do some work on that as a result of that visit.

Senator BARTLETT—They are not reaching the quota in any case at the moment.

Senator Ian Campbell—That is the information I got back as a result of that inquiry. I think they are out in this area. What Mr Early is telling me privately is that in some sections they will reach the quota but for the whole state they are not. So obviously where I visited they had hit the quota.

Senator BARTLETT—You made a comment during some of the questioning on the orange-bellied parrot, which I am not revisiting.

Senator RONALDSON—Hallelujah.

Senator BARTLETT—You said there had been Commonwealth funds expended on habitat protection and Landcare and Envirofund stuff to help improve the habitat there. I know the answer you gave earlier to Senator Brown on the two proposed dams in Queensland. One of the issues that has already been raised with both of them is that there are sites there that have received various amounts of Commonwealth funds to help rebuild habitat for protected species and those sorts of things. If there is a project potentially hanging that will flood these areas, leaving aside EPBC approval, does that affect decision making about providing those funds down the track? If it is potentially going to be flooded anyway, does that affect the success or otherwise of a claim? It is probably not your area, now that I think of it, is it?

Senator Ian Campbell—I think it is an NRM thing. The answer would be that I think the NRM bodies in Queensland would obviously have to have a good look at it. The great thing about the NRM programs is that more and more they are being driven from the ground up. I think it is a very important question that you ask. But I imagine they would take that into account. The same applies to the road that goes through it. It is about nine or 11 kilometres of the Bruce Highway, which is a fairly expensive bit of kit, and that is going to go under as well.

Senator BARTLETT—Indeed, yes. I am sure you will be hearing from plenty of people over the next six to 12 months about that.

Senator Ian Campbell—You will need a whole new breed of hybrid cars if you are heading north.

Senator BARTLETT—Ones that can go through water as well. Nice, beautiful, clean, fresh double-lane black bitumen, too.

Senator Ian Campbell—The Lexus hybrid amphibian.

Senator BARTLETT—There is one other issue I want to raise. The project that is mentioned in this report is, again, an assessment in progress at 30 June last year. I thought it was still in progress. It is the Kuranda Range road upgrade.

Mr Early—That is still being assessed, although I think it is getting towards the end of the process. It is still in the assessment process.

Senator BARTLETT—Could you give me an idea of where that is up to, what has been done to date and what happens next?

Mr Early—It is a bit hard to tell because it is still in the process of being examined.

Senator BARTLETT—It is still being examined as to what form of assessment?

Mr Early—No. The assessment has been done. But the assessment report I do not think has yet been finalised. So it is in the process, basically. There is not a lot more I can say, really.

Senator BARTLETT—What is the level of assessment on that? You can take it on notice if you are not sure.

Mr Early—Yes, I will take it on notice. I am not sure.

Senator BARTLETT—I understood there were a few different variations on the potential upgrade that would go ahead. But I presume all the variations are being assessed.

Mr Early—Yes, that is right. We are looking at all the options and the impacts of the various options.

Senator BARTLETT—I saw a statement from the Wet Tropics Management Authority chair or somebody not too long ago saying that they were supportive of a particular approach or were satisfied that it would be not a problem overall. I am paraphrasing, obviously. Does that have any standing in terms of the assessment process, or is it more just a comment that they can make?

Mr Early—We are obviously liaising with the Wet Tropics Management Authority and the Queensland government agencies about the assessment. But at the end of the day it is the minister's decision under the act. It is a statutory decision for him to make. What other state agencies might think is obviously of interest to us, but we are not bound by any suggestions they may have to make.

Senator BARTLETT—That just prompted me to remember another question which I have asked before. I was under a slight misapprehension about where it is up to. Nathan Dam is now being reassessed for the flow-on consequences, or whatever the technical term is, or downstream impacts.

Mr Early—Basically, after the court case the minister decided that the dam was likely to have a significant impact on the World Heritage values and listed microspecies. The Queensland minister has advised that the proposal will not be assessed under the bilateral agreement, so we are currently waiting on the proponent to provide preliminary information, which will then enable the minister to determine the level of assessment.

Senator BARTLETT—Does that mean the Queensland government is saying, ‘You handle this one’?

Mr Early—That is right, yes.

Senator BARTLETT—They did not indicate that they were going to do that with these other two dams?

Mr Early—Not yet. We have not really got to that stage yet.

Senator SIEWERT—Is the koala being looked at for listing as a threatened species?

Mr Early—Yes. There is a nomination.

Senator SIEWERT—What is the time frame?

Senator Ian Campbell—Your colleague Senator Brown asked that question a few hours ago. We said it is very imminent. I am at the very last stages of a making decision. I am getting a lot of pressure from home on the koala decision.

Senator SIEWERT—Those ones in Yanchep?

Senator Ian Campbell—No, in my home: the kids.

Senator SIEWERT—I thought you meant WA in general, since we have such a large population.

Senator Ian Campbell—No. My children are very keen on koalas.

Senator SIEWERT—I am just following up a question I had last time, which included the orange roughy. I know you made a statement on that last week.

Senator Ian Campbell—The Threatened Species Scientific Committee has given me advice. The department has given me some further advice because they thought that the advice from the threatened species committee was—I am trying to find a very diplomatic word here. What would you say?

Mr Borthwick—There were some aspects that needed looking at more closely.

Senator Ian Campbell—So we looked at them more closely. I have now put out the scientific advice from the threatened species committee. It is clearly a decision that is going to affect the livelihoods of people and companies who are involved in that fishery at the moment. The report is there for you to read if you like. It goes into the detail. I made the point that my inclination is to list it. The industry are coming back and giving me a lot of arguments why I should not. But the species in most parts of Australia has been fished down to levels that are very dangerous and close to extinction. There are certainly some pockets where the species is above those levels but, even there, they are very close. I am going to listen to the industry and talk with them. But I have had no hesitation in saying that I think the likely outcome is that it will be listed.

Senator SIEWERT—And do you have a time line for that?

Senator Ian Campbell—I have indicated that I will leave it out there for four or five weeks. I do not want to leave it much longer than that.

Senator SIEWERT—At the last estimates, at question No. 12, I asked about the eastern gemfish, Harrissons deep sea dogfish, the southern dogfish and the endeavour dogfish. The

answer was that the committee was making substantial progress on its assessment. Have they also provided advice on the other ones?

Mr Early—Not yet. The statutory time frames for those is about August and October this year. The minister has not yet received advice on those matters.

Senator Ian Campbell—We are hoping, however, that the NPA design for the south-east will have a substantial effect on saving Harrissons dogfish—also known as the gulper shark. We looked very closely at that in the design.

Senator CARR—I will put the rest of my questions to the division on notice, given the hour and the pressure of business.

CHAIR—Thank you very much, Senator Carr. That is very kind of you. We now move on to the corporate strategies division.

[7.38 pm]

Senator CARR—I have a few questions. There is a reference in the environmental budget overview statement at paragraph 6. The minister's foreword states:

Our international focus is also reflected in the Government's environment aid budget, which now reaches \$316 million ...

Can the officers provide me with a breakdown of that \$316 million.

Mr Tucker—We would have to take that detail on notice. We receive those figures from AusAID.

Senator CARR—I am surprised, given it is in the minister's statement, that you are not aware of how it is going to be spent.

Mr Tucker—We certainly have the information. I am just checking through my papers as to whether I have actually brought it with me. But it will certainly be in the department.

Senator CARR—I would hope so.

Mr Tucker—It is not in the papers that I have brought with me, but we can certainly take it on notice. We have the information in the department.

Senator CARR—What role does the department play in determining the allocation of that \$316 million?

Mr Tucker—We participate in the process that AusAID has each year in terms of looking at its priorities across its international interests. They come to us for advice on environmental matters. We also work with our DFAT colleagues throughout the year. I should also say that AusAID and DFAT sit on a committee we have in the department that talks about our own international activities. We work fairly closely with them throughout the year on things that we also have an interest in.

Senator CARR—So does the \$316 million include the department's own activities, or is it all external?

Mr Tucker—Yes, it is all external money. It does not count in the internal department funds that we use for international purposes.

Senator CARR—So how much of it is aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions?

Mr Tucker—I would have to take that detail on notice. I do not have it with me.

Senator CARR—Are you in a position to tell us, even in the broadest of terms, where the money is allocated? What are the areas of activity?

Mr Tucker—I would mislead you if I attempted to do that. I do not have the information, even in broad form, in my papers or in my head. I would have to go back and check.

Senator CARR—The minister wrote the statement and signed it. Minister, \$316 million is referred to in the sixth paragraph of your message on the environmental budget overview. What does that refer to?

Senator Ian Campbell—This is a budget overview of expenditures across the government which assist the environment. A very important part of our environmental budget in a whole-of-government context is doing work within the region. For example, we do work across the Pacific Islands and through programs in the near Asia region. We work closely with AusAID to guide them in expenditures in the developing world to ensure that the projects and the programs that they invest in do provide not only good social, economic and sustainability outcomes but also good environmental outcomes. That is the \$316 million. We no doubt would have asked AusAID to provide to us an accurate figure for the level of funding they invest internationally that creates environmental outcomes. I think Mr Tucker said he would give you a breakdown of the \$316 million.

Senator CARR—I just want to know how much of it was going to greenhouse gas emissions.

Senator Ian Campbell—That would be described. A substantial amount of our international work does go towards those sort of projects. We have an involvement in an international collaboration called the Methane to Markets Partnership. A number of the partners in that are developing countries. We are developing, in cooperation with those countries, for example, the capture of methane from landfill to create energy. This creates a sustainable energy outcome for the developing countries and is a better use of what would otherwise be a waste product. That is a typical example of an AusAID project which has a greenhouse bent.

We also work on the creation of solar energy projects in the region and distributed energy generally. A range of those projects helps our neighbours and helps developing countries partner in greenhouse reduction projects. I will be announcing in the next day or two a collaborative project with the Nature Conservancy, a US based organisation, and the World Bank to fund a research project to demonstrate the benefits of marine protected areas in particularly the Pacific region to sustainable economies. In other words, it will try to demonstrate the benefits of declaring marine protected areas and creating a sustainable economy. I have just agreed to make the Australian government a partner in that sort of work. It is tremendous. We are working through the APEC process and the Bali plan of action to seek outcomes for world oceans conservation. A lot of these developing countries see the short-term benefit of using the resource to try and meet day-to-day needs. Obviously because they are trying to survive and feed their people, they cannot see the long-term benefit of sustaining the ecosystems and fisheries. This sort of project can bring enormous returns for the global ecology.

Senator SIEWERT—Are you doing one of them in Indonesia?

Senator Ian Campbell—I think we have been doing a project in Indonesia on similar terms. I am not sure whether it relates to oceans. We are doing some work on oceans and sustainability. I think the project I signed off on today was actually to do with the Pacific Islands.

Senator SIEWERT—Are there any being done around reefs, like a selection of habitats?

Senator Ian Campbell—I am certain there are. But I can get you some information. I will get you a run-down of all those different sorts of projects.

Senator SIEWERT—That would be appreciated.

Senator Ian Campbell—We did, for example, do a lot of work on the impact of the tsunami on reef systems in the Indian Ocean and Indonesian areas.

Senator CARR—Switch to pause.

Senator Ian Campbell—I am just trying to be helpful, Senator Carr.

Senator CARR—I can tell. I have the answer I want. The officers will take it on notice and come back. Thank you very much. Is sustainability in your division?

Mr Anderson—It probably cuts across. It depends what the nature of the question is.

Senator CARR—It is about government responses. Is that in your area?

Mr Anderson—No, it is Mr Tucker again, I think.

Senator CARR—You are very fortunate tonight. I may wish to come back to that matter.

Senator Ian Campbell—Mr Anderson is the chief financial officer of the department.

Senator CARR—Yes. If Senator McLucas wishes to return to a matter, I am more than happy to agree to her doing that.

CHAIR—Senator McLucas wishes to return to approvals.

Senator McLUCAS—I want to ask some questions about the approval at False Cape and the final management plans. Where is that up to?

Mr Early—The final management plans have been submitted. We engaged GHD Pty Ltd to review the plans and to give us some advice on them. They have just finished that. We got the advice only in the last few days, so we will be working through that advice and looking at the plans before they are approved, obviously.

Senator McLUCAS—So GHD has given you an assessment of those plans and how they comply with the draft public environment report. Is that what they compared them with?

Mr Early—They are just making sure that they meet all the requirements of the assessment and the approval conditions.

Senator McLUCAS—As they exist?

Mr Early—That is right. The department is also assessing them. We are getting some extra advice, given the importance of the project.

Senator McLUCAS—Are you using GHD Cairns?

Mr Early—To be honest, I am not sure. I have just got GHD Pty Ltd.

Senator McLUCAS—They have a Cairns office. Have there been requests for amendment to the plan to date?

Mr Early—To the plan?

Senator McLUCAS—Sorry, not to the plan but to the conditions that were stipulated in the decision to approve the taking of an action.

Mr Early—The proponent has raised some issues with us which they have categorised as anomalies. We are still having a look at that to see whether there is any validity in their representations.

Senator McLUCAS—Can you give us an understanding of the nature of those representations?

Mr Early—Basically they believe there are some inconsistencies in the documentation on the site cover allowed for building works.

Senator McLUCAS—That is 40 per cent, as I recall.

Mr Early—Yes. So the question of 40 per cent of the net area or 40 per cent of the gross area, I think, is an issue that they have raised. We will be closely scrutinising those requirements and basically dealing with that. It is not unusual for proponents to seek variations to the conditions. Quite often we do not agree.

Senator McLUCAS—Are there other issues that they have queried regarding the variance on the conditions?

Mr Early—No.

Senator McLUCAS—Just the site cover issue?

Mr Early—Yes.

Senator McLUCAS—What is the difference between a net area of land and a gross area of land? Surely 800 square metres is 800 square metres.

Mr Early—Yes. I am not entirely sure.

Senator McLUCAS—If you find out, I wonder whether you could share that with the committee.

Mr Early—Yes, sure.

Senator McLUCAS—Thank you. Are you aware that there has been real estate advertising of these properties for sale occurring on the internet in particular but also in North Queensland?

Mr Early—Yes. I only found out about it today, in fact.

Senator McLUCAS—Is it true that the advertising includes lots 907, 908 and 909, which under condition 4 of the approval cannot be developed for sale?

Mr Early—I have only got a photocopied version of the advertisement. It certainly does not mention lot numbers, but it has been put to us by the Environmental Defenders Office that

that is the case. And there are several other issues they have raised, so we will be looking at them quite closely.

Senator McLUCAS—What action can you take when there has been seemingly false and misleading advertising by a proponent or a company which is engaged by the developer? What action can you take to remedy the situation?

Senator Ian Campbell—If you are advertising something that cannot be sold, you may have serious problems with the Trade Practices Act, I suggest.

Senator McLUCAS—I agree. But I am wondering what the department of the environment is going to do.

Senator Ian Campbell—We will investigate that.

Senator McLUCAS—The question was not whether you will investigate it. The question is—

Senator Ian Campbell—Yes, I know—what the penalties are for doing that under the act.

Senator McLUCAS—Yes. What powers do you have?

Mr Early—Obviously I have not had a chance to look at this in any detail because I only got it a few hours ago. But on the face of it, there is no breach of the EPBC Act in claiming that you are going to do certain things. Clearly, if they attempted to do any of that, they would be in breach of the act and there would be serious breaches and penalties involved. But as the minister said, what we will be doing is certainly advising the company that this is not really a very good thing to be doing. We will be looking with other Commonwealth agencies at consumer protection legislation and so forth.

Senator Ian Campbell—From a potential purchaser's point of view, if you were to buy a block of land that did not have its approvals, then you would not have title.

Senator McLUCAS—No. It is just a no development condition. You can buy it, you can own it but you cannot develop it. But that is what happened in the Daintree, Minister.

Senator Ian Campbell—Yes, I know.

Senator McLUCAS—Are you aware the advertisement says—

Senator Ian Campbell—It happened in Moreton Bay a lot in the 1960s and 1970s as well.

Senator McLUCAS—We are living with the legacy of that in North Queensland. I have always harboured concerns about this development because of exactly that—that real estate agents will get out there and promote something that does not and cannot, but will eventually, exist. Are you aware that the advertising says that it is 12 minutes to Cairns and that there is a ferry service planned?

Mr Early—Yes.

Senator McLUCAS—Do you agree that that does not fit with the approval that your minister has given?

Mr Early—Yes.

Senator McLUCAS—Are you aware that this is the sort of thing that George Quaid did in the Daintree? Once properties are sold, pressure is brought to bear on approval agencies such as you to deliver something that was ostensibly never promised or allowed?

Mr Early—I hope that we nip this in the bud fairly quickly in terms of the advertising. Quite clearly, it would appear that there is some advertising which is suggesting things might happen which are actually in breach of the EPBC Act. We will get on to this straightaway. The EDO letter is dated 25 May so we have only just become aware of it.

Senator McLUCAS—How does that fit with section 142 of the EPBC Act?

Mr Early—I am sorry?

Senator McLUCAS—How does this advertising fit with section 142 of the EPBC Act?

Mr Early—I would have to go and get my act, unfortunately. I left it behind.

Senator McLUCAS—I will tell you what it says. Section 142 of the EPBC Act states:

(1) A person whose taking of an action has been approved under this Part must not contravene any condition attached to the approval.

Mr Early—That is as I said. If the proponent were to actually go ahead and attempt to implement some of this stuff that is in the advertisement, they would be in breach of the act and we would prosecute them. As I say, we are not going to wait until that stage. We will take action in terms of getting in touch with them, and possibly other Commonwealth agencies that do have jurisdiction in terms of advertising, to make sure that everything that has appeared in the advertisement is accurate.

Senator McLUCAS—I understand what you are saying, Mr Early, about this being an issue of potentially false and misleading advertising. But I suggest to you that there is a broader question, and that is the expectation of purchasers of properties. I refer you again to the Daintree. We have had this experience before. Surely, rather than just asking people to take something out of an ad, we should do something a bit more proactive so that this does not happen again.

Mr Early—We will not be just asking them to consider taking the ad. We will be making more forceful representations than that. The situation is a bit different to the Daintree in the sense that some of the things that are in the advertisement are actually precluded by law. If necessary, we will make that well known within the area ourselves.

Senator McLUCAS—The difference between False Cape and the Daintree is that these are precluded by law. Power was not approved by law. We could spend a lot of time and a lot of money in a court trying to work out the difference.

Mr Early—All I am saying is that I think we can take some action quickly to make sure this does not develop into the situation you are concerned about.

Senator McLUCAS—The geotechnical survey work I understand has been completed. Is that right?

Mr Early—I understand yes.

Senator McLUCAS—Will it be made public? I understand the report is provided to you.

Mr Early—I would have to take that on notice. I do not see any reason why not, but I am not quite sure what the situation is there.

Senator McLUCAS—Can I ask you, then, on notice that if you do receive it, can it be made public? Can you also provide me with the start date and the finish date of the geotech survey work and what equipment was involved in that work?

Mr Early—Yes.

Senator McLUCAS—And what was the nature of the work? This goes back to the earlier discussion we had in February about whether we are building a road or trying to work out what the geotech circumstances are.

Mr Early—We can provide that.

Senator McLUCAS—Is there any information you have?

Mr Early—I do not actually have anything more than the information we provided on notice last time. I can get some more information following the completion to give to you.

Senator McLUCAS—Thank you. Can you confirm that roadworks were still being carried out 12 days after the geotechnical equipment was removed from the site?

Mr Early—I would have to take that on notice.

Senator McLUCAS—Was there any monitoring of run-off, drainage capacity or erosion following Cyclone Larry and Cyclone Monica on the site?

Mr Early—Yes, there was. We have been liaising with the Queensland EPA and the Cairns City Council. They monitored the onsite mitigation measures after Cyclone Larry. In fact, it was actually one of the best development sites in terms of weathering the cyclone well. In addition, as you recall from last time, two officers from the department had a site visit in December. We had another site visit on 10 April this year.

Senator McLUCAS—When you say it was monitored by the Queensland EPA and Cairns City Council, how did they monitor it?

Mr Early—By site visits.

Senator McLUCAS—Through site visits?

Mr Early—Yes.

Senator McLUCAS—I wonder if you could provide us with a list of the dates of those site visits from officers of both authorities.

Mr Early—Yes.

Senator McLUCAS—Have there been any requests from either your department, Queensland EPA or other authorities for any remedial action to be taken as a consequence of any work that has been undertaken on the site?

Mr Early—Not yet. As far as I know, all the conditions have been met. As I say, the monitoring will continue.

Senator McLUCAS—I thought EPA asked for certain actions to occur in December last year, including battering of cuts.

Mr Early—That has all been done and satisfactorily—I meant subsequent to that.

Senator McLUCAS—Subsequent to the December request, no remedial action has been asked to occur?

Mr Early—As I understand it, yes, that is right.

Senator McLUCAS—In that 23 December letter from your department to the EDO in Queensland, it states:

Works to date are broadly consistent with the preliminary works approval issued by Cairns City Council.

What does ‘broadly consistent’ mean?

Mr Early—Broadly consistent. It basically means consistent. But there may have been some minor variations at the margins which did not have any impact.

Senator McLUCAS—What would be the nature of those minor variations?

Mr Early—I would have to take that on notice.

Senator McLUCAS—I would appreciate that.

Mr Early—But nothing that concerned the department.

Senator McLUCAS—If you could take that on notice, that would be useful. How, then, does that compare with the minister’s statement when he says that there will be strict conditions applied? The minister, when he approved Reef Cove Resort, said strict conditions would apply. Now we know that it is broadly consistent with the approvals to date. I am just trying to understand. What are the bits that are not strict anymore?

Mr Early—There are five pages of conditions or whatever. Some of them are open to interpretation. I suppose the principal condition in terms of the construction of the facility is the environment management plan, which we are examining at the moment. The broad conditions will be strictly adhered to, but they do not go to every single element of how the facility is to be developed.

Senator McLUCAS—We have to wait until the management plan has been approved.

Mr Early—They cannot start until the management plan has been approved by the minister. Basically, we have to get that right.

Senator McLUCAS—We cannot start building, but we can build right. We can disagree about that. The road is in my view. I turn to the question of monitoring. How have you monitored compliance with the conditions to date?

Mr Early—As I said, we have arrangements with the Queensland EPA and the Cairns City Council to be advised of their monitoring activities. We have had two site visits. Basically, this project will be one of the projects that will form part of our departmental compliance monitoring program. There will be at least one other visit before the end of this year. As I say, we have also contracted GHD to advise us on the environment management plan. So I think we are fairly closely monitoring the project.

Senator McLUCAS—Three visits is closely monitoring?

Mr Early—Three visits before construction started in conjunction with the ongoing monitoring from the Queensland EPA and Cairns City Council. I do not think that is a very poor effort.

Senator McLUCAS—Are you still expecting the community to monitor the activities at False Cape?

Mr Early—One of the elements of our compliance program is responding to community comments. It was the Queensland Environmental Defenders Office who drew our attention to the advertisement. So that is part of it, but it is only a part. We have site visits and arrangements with state agencies that are also part of the process.

Senator McLUCAS—So you are not expecting the community to monitor the on-site activity any more?

Mr Early—We are not expecting the community to do the work for us. But one assumes that if the community becomes aware of a situation, they will let us know, as they have done on a number of occasions.

Senator McLUCAS—And faced potential prosecution as a result?

Mr Early—Who is that?

Senator McLUCAS—Community members who have attempted to monitor what is happening on the site.

Mr Early—I do not know about that. Certainly not from us.

Senator McLUCAS—No, not from you. You made the point—I think in November last year—that the community would monitor what was happening. There has been potentially illegal action taken against various community members for doing just that.

Mr Early—I am not suggesting that we should trespass or break the law.

Senator McLUCAS—You have been to the site, I imagine.

Mr Early—Some time ago, yes.

Senator McLUCAS—It is very remote.

Mr Early—Yes, I know.

Senator McLUCAS—And guard dogs have been known to be deployed on site.

Mr Early—Actually, the company has advised us that one of the employees brought their dogs onto the site for company. When the issue was raised, the employee was told that that was not to be allowed. As far as I am aware, that has not happened since.

Senator McLUCAS—Did you ask the company in that case whether those dogs were left there overnight?

Mr Early—As I understand it, they stayed overnight with the employee. But that was not appropriate and has since been stopped.

Senator McLUCAS—But they were there also during the day.

Mr Early—While the employee was there. That is right, yes.

Senator McLUCAS—So this person works 24 hours a day? Come on, what is going on?

Mr Early—That is the advice I have had, and they are not there now.

Senator McLUCAS—They were there and they were left there overnight in a potential cassowary habitat unleashed. Is that correct?

Mr Early—Some time ago. Yes, that is right. But you raised it with the department and the department raised it with the proponent and it stopped.

Senator McLUCAS—It does go to the question of what monitoring the department can have if it is up to me to tell someone at estimates that there are dogs left there overnight for something to happen.

Mr Early—As I have said, we respond to people's comments because that is an appropriate thing to do. But it is not the whole picture. Would you prefer me not to do anything when you tell me something?

Senator McLUCAS—Quite the reverse. But I am asking a question about what potential monitoring can occur.

Senator Ian Campbell—The point of this is that we put on the ground an officer of the department at every single location. We have in place a very robust law. We have huge penalties. If someone contravenes it, they can potentially go to jail.

Senator McLUCAS—But if you do not monitor it, if you do not look at what is happening, your strict conditions are worth nothing.

Senator Ian Campbell—Obviously under the Labor Party's environment policy you will put in a line item for a few hundred million dollars to employ Commonwealth officers to go and stand by the gates in all these areas.

Senator McLUCAS—Minister, how are you going to ensure compliance with—your words—the 'strict conditions' that you apply to Reef Cove if you have nothing in place that can ensure those conditions are met? It comes down to me turning up here at estimates—

Senator Ian Campbell—But it does not come down to you.

Senator McLUCAS—and talking about dogs being left overnight in a potential cassowary habitat. That is the fact.

Mr Early—They will have a compliance program. We have already had two site visits. We have another one planned some time this year, which will be a random audit. We also have arrangements with the Queensland Environment Protection Agency and with the Cairns City Council. I am not quite sure what more we can do other than, as the minister said, camping out on site 12 months of the year. That is a fairly significant compliance and monitoring regime.

Senator McLUCAS—Can you tell me about the nature of the arrangements with Cairns City Council?

Mr Early—Essentially they keep us informed in terms of the monitoring and auditing that they do.

Senator McLUCAS—How do you test that the council is in fact keeping you informed?

Mr Early—We keep in fairly constant contact with them.

Senator McLUCAS—Do you test that in any way? How do you know that? How can you trust that?

Mr Early—I suppose if they are telling us lies we probably do not know.

Senator McLUCAS—What is the nature of arrangements with Queensland EPA?

Mr Early—The same arrangement. We have formal arrangements through our compliance networks with state and territory agencies. It is not as though this is the only dealing we have with the Queensland EPA. We have fairly constant consultation and liaison with them on a whole range of projects. This is intergovernmental cooperation, if you like. I have no reason to believe that they would not keep us fully informed and let us know what was going on, aside from the site visits that we ourselves make.

Senator McLUCAS—I understand I have taken a bit of time. Finally, the potential cassowary habitat means we think there are probably cassowaries there. But during the audit we did not find them. That is a reasonable layperson's discussion.

Mr Early—Yes.

Senator Ian Campbell—It happens with orange-bellied parrots too.

Senator McLUCAS—I was actually going to draw that correlation.

Senator Ian Campbell—Yes, it is a great correlation.

Senator McLUCAS—So how many cassowaries do we expect to lose because of the development at False Cape? Some analysis must have been done, I imagine.

Mr Early—I think the answer is probably none at all. But I can take that on notice and let you know.

Senator McLUCAS—But using the same modelling that the department clearly has, I wonder if that could be applied to the cassowary at False Cape.

Mr Early—I am not sure the modelling will be the same.

Senator McLUCAS—No, I am sure it will not. One is flightless and the other can fly.

Mr Early—We can take that on notice.

Senator Ian Campbell—It is good to know someone in the Labor Party cares about Australian birds. Well done, Senator McLucas.

Senator McLUCAS—I do not need your praise, Minister.

Senator Ian Campbell—Well, it is true. Your party—and I do not blame you for this—is saying, 'Because someone did not spot an orange-bellied parrot on a particular day and a place, they do not occur there. Therefore, they don't matter.'

Senator CARR—I have a lot of questions to put on notice. When we get around to Abbott's booby, I look forward to your explanation on Abbott's booby as well.

Senator Ian Campbell—Mr Chairman, it is very good that Senator McLucas at least knows that just because you do not spot a cassowary at a particular place one day it is very good habitat for the cassowary.

Senator CARR—You are fascinated with one parrot. In the period since William the Conqueror, there has been one parrot in 1,000 years. We look forward to your assessment.

Senator Ian Campbell—I hope you have the same anger directed to your comrades in Victoria—

Senator CARR—One in 1,000 years. Well done.

Senator Ian Campbell—Who chose to stop a wind farm in Victoria less than 11 months ago because of a wedge-tailed eagle that is on no threatened species list anywhere in the world. Gross hypocrisy.

Senator CARR—Maybe we could go out and collect all these dead parrots.

CHAIR—Let's move on. Have you finished, Senator McLucas?

Senator McLUCAS—I just want to know how many cassowaries we are going to lose out of a total number of about 40.

Senator Ian Campbell—I would like Senator Carr to table in this place any letter he has written to John Thwaites or Rob Hulls or any other of his comrades asking why they stopped a wind farm because of a wedge-tailed eagle that was not on a threatened species list. Has he done so, or is he a gross hypocrite? He can plead guilty to that.

CHAIR—Do you have any more questions, Senator McLucas?

Senator McLUCAS—No. But I want to thank Mr Early for waiting for me.

CHAIR—Thank you all.

Senator Ian Campbell—It is okay to stop a wind farm because of a wedge-tailed eagle.

CHAIR—We will go to corporate strategies.

Senator CARR—Going to the *Sustainable cities* report—

Senator Ian Campbell—It is okay to shift marinas. It is okay to shift ports and shift entire oil refineries.

Senator CARR—This is Campbell's booby here. I can see it coming.

CHAIR—So are we finished with corporate strategies?

Senator CARR—Is the *Sustainable cities* report a matter for corporate strategies or is it a matter for the environment quality division? Who handles this matter?

Mr Borthwick—It is the environment quality division.

Senator CARR—All I am looking for is advice on which officer to ask the questions of.

CHAIR—We have to follow the agenda.

Senator CARR—Is it in this division or is it the next one? That is the question. Mr Chairman, even you should be able to follow that.

CHAIR—That is right. Is corporate strategies the appropriate program?

Mr Borthwick—No, it is the environment quality division.

Senator CARR—Thank you. Ms Harwood, are you the branch that actually handles drafting the government's response to the House of Representatives *Sustainable cities* report?

Ms Harwood—Yes, that is right.

Senator CARR—I understand that the department has written to all relevant Australian government agencies seeking an interdepartmental committee on matters raised within this report. Is that correct?

Ms Harwood—Yes. There has been an interdepartmental committee looking at pulling together the government's response.

Senator CARR—When was the letter establishing this IDC?

Ms Harwood—I would have to take that on notice. I do not have the date with me.

Senator CARR—Was it October?

Ms Harwood—It may have been.

Senator CARR—Are you able to give me an explanation why it took so long to get the committee up and running?

Ms Harwood—The committee has met. There has been ongoing work pulling together a response to the report.

Senator CARR—Who was present at the meeting?

Ms Harwood—I would have to take that on notice.

Senator CARR—Who is on the committee?

Ms Harwood—A range of departments. I can list those I can remember: Industry, Tourism and Resources; Transport and Regional Services; Health; Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Senator CARR—Did you say Transport?

Ms Harwood—Yes, Transport. And I would have to list the others for you when I have the papers handy.

Senator CARR—Was there also correspondence to local government authorities, or is it just associations?

Ms Harwood—At the Commonwealth level, the response involves relevant Commonwealth agencies. We can provide you with a list of them. The matters in the report cover a wide range of levels of government in terms of their sphere of activity.

Senator CARR—But has the department written to the Australian Local Government Association?

Ms Harwood—I would have to check that. I do not believe so, but I will check it and get back to you.

Senator CARR—I have an answer here—No. 12. It appears that the secretary of the department wrote in October to each state and territory and the Australian Local Government Association seeking their comments on the report. Are you able to advise me whether or not there have been any responses to this correspondence from the secretary?

Ms Harwood—There were responses from some states. Again, I would have to take that on notice and tell you who came back and who did not.

Senator CARR—Has a draft response been provided to the minister?

Ms Harwood—I believe a working draft has been, yes.

Senator CARR—Sorry, I did not hear the reply to that. When was the report draft provided to government?

Ms Harwood—I do not think it is at that stage of preparations.

Senator CARR—It is normal process for governments to respond to committee reports within three months. Is it likely that we will see a response soon? Given that you have not yet drafted it, I am a bit concerned we might be a little way off.

Ms Harwood—Yes, I believe that is the case. It embraces a very wide range of matters and portfolios. It requires significant consultation to pull together a whole of government position.

Senator CARR—Dr Washer, who was the chair of the committee, and I attended a planning institute conference in April. He stated that he would be following up the failure of the government to respond on this report. Have you had any correspondence from Dr Washer on this matter?

Ms Harwood—I will take that on notice and come back to you.

Senator CARR—When do you think there will be a response?

Ms Harwood—I do not think I can give a precise timing on that.

Senator CARR—I got that impression.

Senator Ian Campbell—Ms Harwood would have to read my mind. That is very hard to do.

Senator CARR—Thank you, Ms Harwood, that concludes my questions.

Senator SIEWERT—Have you finished? I still have questions on that. I think it is for this division. I want to ask about fuel standards.

Ms Harwood—Yes.

Senator SIEWERT—I want to ask a few questions about biodiesel and the standards for biodiesel. As I understand it at the moment, there are 20 criteria that biodiesel needs to meet. Is that correct?

Ms Harwood—I could not give you a precise technical description of what the parameters are that comprise the standard for biodiesel, but I could give you a technical description of the standard on notice.

Senator SIEWERT—It would be very much appreciated if you could. I have heard some concern expressed in the industry that they do not think that the standards—this is coming from the industry—are quite tough enough. If I understand it correctly, the industry is concerned there may be people making backyard biodiesel that does not actually meet criteria and they may sell it into the market and then lower the quality of biodiesel and give the product a bad name. Have you had those concerns presented to you?

Ms Harwood—Not personally, no. I would be happy to follow up. I am not aware of those concerns.

Senator SIEWERT—If you could.

Senator Ian Campbell—The concerns were expressed to me at the time BP made their announcement about putting tallow into basically an existing diesel plant. It was called biodiesel. Putting a certain amount of tallow into the feedstock in a normal diesel production would not, as I am briefed—and I have advised BP of this; there is no argument—be called biodiesel. It is still environmentally advantageous to use tallow as opposed to pure fossil fuel. That is one of the issues that is out there.

Senator SIEWERT—The concern that has been expressed goes beyond that. It is about where it can be used, the heat of the engine, which temperatures it can be used at and all those sorts of things. There is some concern that if there are not adequate standards, people will start using biodiesel and, because the engine will be too hot or too cold or whatever, it will give the product a bad name. They are saying they would like to see an ISO process undertaken for biodiesel so that there is consistency across the country.

Senator JOYCE—Stronger regulations.

Mr Borthwick—I know even less about biodiesel in terms of the technicalities. As I understand it—and we can check this out—there is a standard for B100, which is pure biodiesel. I think there is a standard for B5.

Ms Harwood—Yes.

Mr Borthwick—Which is five per cent biodiesel. But there are a number of producers providing blends of different types. This is leading to some alleged confusion in the market about what it is. One of the measures the government announced in the budget context was to see if we can standardise biodiesel blends between B5 and B100—say, B20 or B49 or whatever they are—to try and build some greater consumer and industry confidence in this product.

Senator SIEWERT—I think what the industry is asking for, though, is going beyond just that.

Mr Borthwick—I only just recently met with members of the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries. This was only a week or two ago.

Senator SIEWERT—Did you say the automotive industry?

Mr Borthwick—Yes.

Senator SIEWERT—This is actually the biodiesel industry, or some elements of it anyway, that want stricter criteria.

Mr Borthwick—Our door is open to questions about it.

Senator Ian Campbell—I have met with them on a number of occasions in recent months. I do not think as an industry they have a view exactly about where they want to go. Basically in the budget we have massively increased the funding in that area. But, as you know, the government has a biofuels taskforce. Certainly we have an input into it.

Mr Borthwick—There are also issues about how different blends of biodiesel might interact with various parts of motor vehicles—this is mainly parts originating out of Europe. I think that is one of the issues that will be looked at in this context. So there is a range of issues. But the precise one you are raising we might have to pursue a little further.

Ms Harwood—Where there is a standard set, we can include that in our compliance program to see that fuel supplied which is stated to meet that standard meets that standard. But as the secretary said, there are standards for B100 and B5. There will now be some work on getting a standard for B20. So there is work underway to develop a standard for B20.

Senator JOYCE—I want to ask a question specifically on that issue now that we have got to it. I can understand why the oil industry would want greater regulation; they want to force out the new entrants that are coming into the market at the moment. That would be a good reason to get more regulation into it. With biodiesel, you have 38c that is an investment grant—help me out here—and then you have a 38c per litre excise that the farmer who buys biodiesel can claim. Is it envisaged, now that they are changing that, that you will get the 38c investment allowance but you will not be allowed, if you buy it off someone who creates or sells B50, to claim the excise. What will be the effect on the emerging biodiesel producers, especially in states such as Western Australia?

Ms Harwood—I would have to start by saying that changes to the excise regime are not my special subject. Yes, there are changes. When the new excise regime comes in on 1 July, the arrangements will affect all sorts of fuel, including biodiesel. Some categories of biodiesel have a greater change in the net tax treatment than others. That is, their relative commercial positions will change.

Senator JOYCE—As a departmental official, what do you think will happen to that emerging biodiesel industry in places such as Western Australia? We have lots of cooperative farmers creating a biodiesel industry. The only way you can get a 38c excise is to buy it off the fuel companies as B5 as opposed to buying B49, which has a greater biorenewable component, off the farming cooperatives.

Senator Ian Campbell—It is a live issue. The changes phase in over the next 11 years. I think they phase in until about 2016. It is an issue I have been dealing with with the biodiesel industry in Western Australia and around Australia. It is a live issue. But it is an issue that falls entirely within the Treasury portfolio. I am not trying to send you to another committee, Senator Joyce, but it is entirely a Treasury issue. We obviously have a significant interest in it because personally—and the department holds this view—I believe that biodiesel, of all the alternative fuels, has very beneficial greenhouse and particulate outcomes compared with a range of other alternative fuels. This is an issue that I have a concern about because I do not want to see biodiesel disadvantaged for those exact end consumers you are talking about. It is an issue for Treasury. It is an issue that I am discussing with Treasury.

Senator JOYCE—It is good because this industry has got up on one knee. It will get up and get running. It will be a great alternative industry for Australia. But this could put the lights out on it.

Senator Ian Campbell—Just so you know, Senator Minchin opened a new biodiesel plant in Adelaide a few weeks ago, which was funded by a massive Commonwealth grant. I will be opening another one in Bunbury in Western Australia as soon as we can find a time in my diary that coincides with the company's. So we have put in a lot of support, as you know, to building up a biodiesel industry in Australia. We certainly do not want to see that compromised by the perverse effects of tax treatment. But it is a live issue and it is a Treasury issue and it is one we are dealing with.

Senator JOYCE—And the oil companies are pushing to get greater regulation as a means of controlling the market again.

Senator SIEWERT—The mob that have been talking to me are actually the biodiesel producers, not the oil companies.

Senator Ian Campbell—We are talking to the same people.

Senator SIEWERT—Probably, yes. If you could get me that information, that would be appreciated.

Mr Borthwick—The biodiesel producers in part are concerned with different biodiesel blends in the marketplace which will inhibit their development of the market.

Senator Ian Campbell—The point that Senator Joyce—

Mr Borthwick—It is a separate point.

Senator Ian Campbell—It is a separate issue. The concern is that after the phase-in in 10 years, biodiesel could be disadvantaged if we do not address the issue. The consumer will not get the same rebate on biodiesel that they would be able to get from potentially B5, for example.

Senator JOYCE—As of 1 July this year, they will not get it for the B49 but they will get it for B5. If they invest 38c, the farmer who buys it is unable to claim the diesel fuel rebate.

Senator Ian Campbell—The producer is getting the producer rebate. There is a producer rebate that the biodiesel manufacturer gets.

Senator JOYCE—The net government assistance will be halved.

Senator Ian Campbell—But what counts is the price when you put it into your tank, basically, be it a tractor or a truck.

Senator JOYCE—That will go.

Senator Ian Campbell—We are on the same wavelength, Senator Joyce. It just does not sound like it.

[8.34 pm]

CHAIR—As there are no further questions on this matter, we now go to the Heritage Division.

Senator CARR—I have some questions. Mr Tom Harley is a fellow I asked some questions about at the last estimates.

Mr Burnett—That is correct. He is the chair of the Australian Heritage Council.

Senator CARR—Is he still the chair?

Mr Burnett—That is correct.

Senator CARR—Has he missed any meetings of the council lately?

Mr Burnett—He may have. The meetings of the council are fairly frequent. Some of them are short teleconferences. It is possible that he may have missed one. But he is overall a regular attendee.

Senator CARR—You would expect that as the chair. He appeared as a witness at the Cole inquiry in the wheat for weapons scandal, did he not?

Mr Burnett—I understand that is the case.

Senator CARR—Has the department been keeping an eye on the evidence that was put to the inquiry by Mr Harley?

Mr Burnett—No.

Senator CARR—Did anyone ask him to stand aside, given his involvement in this scandal?

Mr Burnett—No.

Senator CARR—He did not offer to stand aside, then?

Senator Ian Campbell—I think he indicated that if there was any chance that his role may cause any embarrassment, he would be very happy to. I think I said words to the effect, ‘Don’t be silly.’

Senator CARR—So you rejected his offer?

Senator Ian Campbell—Yes.

Senator CARR—What was that for? What was your reasoning there, Minister?

Senator Ian Campbell—I think the issues are absolutely unrelated, although you made a scurrilous attempt to try to link engagement by Mr Harley in relation to a very sensible scheme to look at the ways of protecting incredibly important cultural heritage in Iraq. I thought it was a rather pathetic and scurrilous attempt to sully Mr Harley’s name under the protection of parliamentary privilege. There is absolutely nothing that would make anyone want Mr Harley to stand aside from this position.

Senator CARR—In fact, when I raised some questions about the cultural heritage reference group, neither you as minister nor anyone in the department was able to answer those questions, even though the matters related to events that occurred less than three years ago. I take it, Mr Burnett, you have been briefed since then?

Mr Burnett—Yes. We answered your questions on notice.

Senator CARR—The last time we were here, you were not able to tell me anything about it.

Mr Burnett—That is right. When I was last here, I had no personal knowledge of the matters because they had occurred before my time. We went away and made some inquiries and subsequently answered your questions on notice.

Senator Ian Campbell—I take it from the question that you did not read the answer to the question on notice.

Senator CARR—The question I went to was whether or not Mr Burnett was able to answer questions now.

Senator Ian Campbell—We have answered the questions on notice. If you have some further questions why don’t you ask them?

Senator CARR—With regard to the former environment minister's description of Iraq and the cultural heritage reference group report, can you tell me why it was not published?

Mr Burnett—I am not aware of what the consideration was at the time. Perhaps the thinking was that there was no particular reason to publish it. It was a process within government to make sure that we were well-positioned in Australia to provide assistance to Iraq should any stolen or misappropriated Iraqi antiquities surface in Australia. There was no particular reason that I can think of why that report should be published.

Senator CARR—I see. The report concludes:

The current problems in Iraq will not be solved in the short term even if all the artefacts, manuscripts and books are recovered. The devastation of cultural property and associated records will take years to rebuild. Australia needs to implement a long-term program that will assist Iraq not only to rebuild its cultural heritage management but also assist it in capacity building for the future.

What action has the government taken to implement the findings of that report with regard to cultural heritage?

Mr Burnett—The action taken was to ready the government and other authorities in Australia to cooperate in the return of Iraqi cultural heritage should such heritage turn up in Australia. To my knowledge, that has not occurred.

Senator Ian Campbell—I think it would be useful for the committee—tonight may not be the time; it may well be a matter for a reference committee—to ensure that the integrity of cultural heritage for a country like Iraq is protected. Australia can play a part in it if we set up very high level cooperation. The examples that have occurred recently have been with Egypt and China. It requires a range of cooperation at the level of customs, police and the relevant heritage bodies in both jurisdictions. Establishing that sort of cooperation, which does take a period of time, is vital. This report creates the framework and the foundation for that sort of arrangement with Iraq when they, of course, get their own governmental systems into place. So it is a very useful piece of work. The cooperation that we have established with both Egypt and China has paid huge dividends in protecting the cultural heritage of those two incredibly important and ancient civilisations. We hope that the work Mr Harley and this committee have done will create a similar foundation for that sort of cooperation going forward.

Senator CARR—Given the current problems and the quote I just read out to you, the minister stated at the time the cultural heritage group was announced in May 2003:

The loss and damage to Iraq's cultural heritage following the fall of the Hussein regime has been a tragedy for not only the people of Iraq but also for the global community.

What action has this government actually taken to recover any of those artefacts?

Mr Burnett—I can address that in perhaps three aspects. The first is that, as you know, from the response to the question on notice, the report was transmitted to the relevant authorities, including international authorities. Secondly, we have an established regime to administer the Moveable Cultural Heritage Act, which enables us to respond to requests from countries to recover moveable cultural heritage that turns up in Australia illegally. We remain ready and willing to do that. The third thing I can say is, as I mentioned, there has been no request from Iraq. As far as I know, no Iraqi misappropriated cultural heritage has surfaced in Australia. So I suppose you could sum it up by saying we remain ready to assist.

Senator CARR—Ready to assist. Minister, Mr Harley is the manager of BHP's government relations, is he not? And that is the basis on which he was called to the inquiry with regard to the Tigris affair—is that right?

Senator Ian Campbell—I think that may have been his position at that time. He has been promoted to a broader role in BHP, as I recall it. Virtually all of my interactions with Mr Harley are in his capacity as chairman of the AHC. I am not sure that I—

Senator CARR—So you never had any discussions with him with regard to BHP and wheat and transportation in Iraq?

Senator Ian Campbell—No.

Senator CARR—Including the transportation of artefacts?

Senator Ian Campbell—No. Mr Harley actually tries to ensure—in fact does ensure—

Senator CARR—I assume they were wheat trucks. Were wheat trucks ever used for the transportation of artefacts?

Senator Ian Campbell—Again, Mr Chairman, we have the senator wanting to use parliamentary privilege and the processes of the estimates to sully the reputation of a great Australian who makes a great contribution to not just commerce in Australia but also to—

Senator CARR—I did not realise. Are you thinking he was involved in the transportation of artefacts?

Senator Ian Campbell—You want to mention Mr Harley, heritage and then the AWB affair and mix it all up and stir it up. It is a fun game for you, Senator, to sit here and sort of smooth up and polish the leather under your rear end and throw abuse at citizens who are out there trying to progress Australia.

Senator CARR—Mr Chairman, would you assist the minister to return to the subject?

Senator Ian Campbell—The point I was making before I was so rudely and disgustingly interrupted by this leather-warming senator is that Mr Harley makes a point of ensuring that our discussions focus on issues of protecting Australia's heritage and building a greater Australian knowledge of Australia's heritage.

Senator CARR—When did the Australian Heritage Commission recommend to the government the expenditure of the moneys announced for the three cathedrals mentioned in the minister's media release of 9 May 2006?

Mr Burnett—Well, there is no Heritage Commission any more. There is the Heritage Council.

Senator CARR—The Heritage Council—I apologise. When did they recommend—

Mr Burnett—I am not aware of any recommendations they made in relation to that matter.

Senator CARR—What was the process by which the decision was made to fund those particular heritage projects?

Senator Ian Campbell—They are budget decisions similar to the budget decision to provide money to St Mary's Cathedral in Perth last year. Many organisations, particularly churches, write to the government and seek amounts in the order of \$1 million or thereabouts

for major capital works programs. I think there is a reference in the budget to a grant to St Patrick's Basilica in Fremantle. Senator Eggleston, I was pleased that at the airport the other night Carmen Lawrence MP, the member for Fremantle, came up and enthusiastically thanked me for delivering that to the cathedral. There is an issue in Australia. We have a lot of very large and magnificent cathedral type properties. We have in many parts of Australia congregations that are diminishing. You have a lot of depreciation of these very large assets, with a very small funding base to try to repair and maintain them. It is an issue that has come before the government on a number of occasions. We do not have a specific program that deals with that issue, so it is dealt with through the budget process.

Senator CARR—So it is a political decision, essentially?

Senator Ian Campbell—It is a decision taken by the cabinet. Mrs Lawrence, your colleague from Fremantle, would regard it as a very good decision-making process.

Senator CARR—I did not say whether it was a bad political decision or a good political decision; I just wanted to establish the process by which it is made. It is a political decision made by government without recommendation from the department or the Heritage Council—would that be a fair description of it?

Senator Ian Campbell—It does not have input from the AHC; that is correct.

Senator CARR—Are there criteria established by government as to which churches should be funded and which are not?

Senator Ian Campbell—No.

Senator CARR—I take it there is no application process, is there? There is no program.

Senator Ian Campbell—Generally, you find the head of the particular church—the archbishop or the dean of the relevant congregation—in that place will write and bring forward a submission. We generally make an assessment of the need and make the grants. I have looked at formalising a program to do it. I investigated the potential for developing a specific program for it. But the reality is that it is working relatively well as a relatively ad hoc program at the moment. The churches ask for what I think are entirely reasonable amounts of money. The way it is working at the moment is that you find that the Commonwealth puts in roughly \$1 million. You find that the state governments put in usually nowhere near that amount. I think for St Patrick's in Fremantle, the state is putting in about \$600,000 and the St Patrick's congregation and the committee and the fundraising committee are putting in many more millions. So it is actually working in the way that you would want that sort of program to work but in a relatively flexible and practical way.

Senator CARR—The question is: how do the various church authorities know about such a program and if there is money?

Senator Ian Campbell—There is not a program.

Senator CARR—That is my point. So it is the question of whether you can get the ear of the minister. Is that how it works?

Senator Ian Campbell—No. They generally write letters. For example, with St Patrick's, letters were written to me by Kim Beazley, Carmen Lawrence, Jim McGinty, the state member for Fremantle, Alan Eggleston and Liberal senators.

Senator CARR—So it is a combined lobbying effort, then, is it?

Senator Ian Campbell—It is a fairly natural process. You have these great iconic religious institutions and buildings in the major capital cities. Sooner or later they realise that they need to do usually long-overdue maintenance of a major physical asset that is depreciating and degenerating at a rate where the congregation simply cannot fund it. They tend to turn to those organisations that have some financial capacity to assist them. It generally turns out to be the Commonwealth government and the state government. What do they do? They go to their local members of parliament. They go to Mr McGinty in Fremantle and Carmen Lawrence in Fremantle and Mr Beazley, who used to reside in Perth. He has moved to Sydney now, but he does get back to Perth every now and then. They go to people like Senator Eggleston, who are broadly available to the community and active in the community. They will write me a letter saying, ‘This is what we’re proposing to do.’ I will often, if I can possibly find the time, go and inspect the churches and have a look.

Senator CARR—You personally inspect the churches, do you?

Senator Ian Campbell—I do sometimes, yes.

Senator CARR—Do you call upon any expert architectural advice?

Senator Ian Campbell—No, not necessarily. Usually when you do these inspections you have expert heritage architects with you.

Senator CARR—From the department?

Senator Ian Campbell—Sometimes the department will come along.

Senator CARR—Mr Burnett, who in the department accompanied the minister to these cathedrals?

Senator Ian Campbell—I said sometimes the department may attend. More often they would not. In relation to St Patrick’s Basilica in Fremantle, a heritage architect employed by the committee that was seeking to raise the money to stop St Patrick’s Basilica falling into a heap came along. He talked me through what was occurring—the constant bombardment of that quite magnificent convict era building down in Fremantle. I am sure Senator Siewert has driven past it a hundred times. The fact that the sea breeze has a lot of salt in it—

Senator CARR—Did you think to lobby for this cathedral, or did you not know about it?

Senator SIEWERT—Not this one.

Senator CARR—You did not know about it?

Senator Ian Campbell—I am sure Senator Siewert would if she were approached.

Senator CARR—You would if you know about it. That is the point, though, isn’t it?

Senator Ian Campbell—No.

Senator RONALDSON—Mr Beazley was very keen on it.

Senator Ian Campbell—Mr Beazley was very keen on it.

Senator CARR—I am sure he would be.

Senator Ian Campbell—Carmen Lawrence was very keen on it.

Senator CARR—Minister, I have been approached by a number of different religious organisations. There is a synagogue in St Kilda. It is a great building. It is an historically important building. What program could I apply for?

Senator Ian Campbell—No, you would not. You would do what a diligent senator would do and get out a piece of paper and a pen and you would write a letter saying, ‘We have this magnificent—

Senator CARR—So you are now soliciting letters?

Senator Ian Campbell—You are saying, ‘What would I do? What program would I apply?’ I said there is not a program.

Senator CARR—I am pleased to hear this.

Senator Ian Campbell—There is a history under this government of supporting major cathedrals and religious places of worship that have importance in terms of heritage and the community.

Senator CARR—Yes. I am pleased to hear this.

Senator Ian Campbell—We have given a select number of grants through the budget process over a period of time.

Senator CARR—So you will look fondly on a letter that I write to you about the synagogue in St Kilda, will you?

Senator Ian Campbell—I would welcome a letter from you, Senator Carr.

Senator CARR—What about the Melbourne Trades Hall?

Senator Ian Campbell—I will not hold my breath waiting. I know it is a lot easier to sit on a bit of leather and shine up the leather and blow some hot air around—

Senator CARR—You have invited one now. You will certainly get one now. I would like to know about other great iconic historic buildings, like the Melbourne Trades Hall. How much money will be available for heritage work on the Melbourne Trades Hall?

Senator Ian Campbell—Well, it was looking pretty rundown last time I drove past.

Senator CARR—That is the point. That is a very good reason for you to—

Senator Ian Campbell—It is probably a very good example of an institution that has a diminishing congregation and no resources to help do repairs or do maintenance. There is significant depreciation of the asset.

Senator CARR—It obviously fits all your criteria. So you would agree I have a strong case for heritage support for the Melbourne Trades Hall?

Senator Ian Campbell—I would want to help you out.

Senator CARR—So you would like to help me out.

Senator Ian Campbell—I am prepared to bowl it up to the budget cabinet next year, give it a big push.

Senator CARR—Obviously it is an objective program. You have indicated that to me. It is highly objective. Melbourne Trades Hall would do well out of the heritage program.

Senator Ian Campbell—Every time I drive past it, it seems to be just getting worse and worse and crumbling. To use the analogy of the diminishing congregation, I think it would fit that category.

Senator CARR—I will cite this in my letter to you.

Senator RONALDSON—You have learnt something tonight, Senator Carr, in doing your job.

Senator CARR—I have certainly learnt something tonight—that this is how the government funds these heritage projects. The minister would welcome correspondence from me for assistance to the Melbourne Trades Hall and a synagogue in St Kilda.

Senator Ian Campbell—If you put Trades Hall on the same—

Senator CARR—There is a very famous church in Elizabeth Street, one of the oldest Catholic churches in Australia. Have they been approached about whether or not they would like some money?

Senator Ian Campbell—St Patrick's Basilica in Fremantle is a Catholic church.

Senator CARR—No, the one in Melbourne I am interested in. How do they get access to money?

Senator Ian Campbell—I think St Mary's by the Sea actually did get some funding out of this sort of grant in Melbourne recently.

Senator CARR—What about the Catholic church, one of the oldest churches—from 1840, if I recall rightly?

Senator Ian Campbell—We are not secular in these grants.

Senator CARR—You are not secular. So you are ecumenical; you will provide money to all denominations, will you?

Senator Ian Campbell—We look at the buildings and we look at the need.

Senator CARR—So there is an objective assessment process. Is that the case, Minister?

Senator Ian Campbell—I told you the process very accurately. I note that the Labor Party want to attack grants to places like St Patrick's in Fremantle.

Senator CARR—On the contrary. I have just asked you whether or not you would welcome correspondence from me on this topic. You have said you would.

Senator Ian Campbell—I would, yes.

Senator CARR—I am looking forward to your favourable treatment and recommendation in support of such grants.

Senator Ian Campbell—I said that I will take forward to the budget cabinet next year a request for \$1 million for Melbourne Trades Hall. We will see how we go.

Senator CARR—The Melbourne Trades Hall and the synagogue in St Kilda. I think we are doing quite well tonight. What about these smaller cathedrals in the country regions of Victoria and New South Wales?

Senator Ian Campbell—I am looking forward to seeing the Labor Party policy on heritage. We have been waiting for 10 years to see one. We could see one. We could see a program on it.

Senator CARR—You are being very generous tonight. Minister, since you have such a keen interest in these—

Senator Ian Campbell—Are we going to heritage list the backyard barbecue? We know that Kim Carr's only—we are not allowed to call them policies—discussion paper was to not allow people to have backyards and therefore get rid of barbecues. So I think we will heritage list the backyard barbie because it is under emergency threat from Labor.

CHAIR—It is a cultural icon.

Senator CARR—Is there a heritage barbecue you want to now support?

Senator Ian Campbell—I will list the backyard barbecue, because the only discussion paper that you have put out in the last few years has said we are not allowed to have backyards any more.

Senator CARR—Have you made a decision with regard to Old Parliament House's placement on the National Heritage List?

Senator Ian Campbell—I expect to be announcing a decision fairly shortly on that.

Senator CARR—Is that right?

Senator Ian Campbell—Yes.

Senator CARR—Did you not make the decision in October?

Senator Ian Campbell—I make announcements of my decisions at a time when it maximises the benefit of building the public awareness of Australia's heritage.

Senator CARR—You mean political advantage for the government. Under section 324J of the EPBC Act, are there circumstances where you are required to announce such decisions, including the timelines for those announcements?

Mr Burnett—There are statutory timelines.

Senator CARR—Have those statutory timelines been complied with in regard to the national heritage listing of Old Parliament House, a decision about which I understand was made in October 2005?

Senator Ian Campbell—Well, I have answered in relation to when I make announcements of listings. I think anyone who cares about promoting Australia's cultural heritage—and I know the leading bodies and advisory bodies would support me fully in this—would do it in a way that can maximise the public awareness of heritage. I do not think we have been particularly good at it in the past. I think governments of both persuasions have sought to. Since Malcolm Fraser established the Australian Heritage Commission back in 1975, there have been genuine efforts to fund, promote and build interest in the lists. I have decided that we should really put some significant effort into trying to promote that.

It is relatively hard to get the media interested in a story that you are putting something on the list. It is hard to make it newsworthy. I have tried to find a way to do that. For example,

with the listing of the MCG, we sought to announce the listing on the day of the Boxing Day Test, as I recall. It was something I hoped to do. Because I was not able to travel to Melbourne, sadly, on that day—it would have been wonderful if I could—I asked Peter Costello, as I recall, to make the announcement. And it got a very good run. They went on to the centre of the MCG I think during the tea break. I think they had Ron Barassi and Bill Lawrie. It got national TV coverage and a good run in all the papers. It was one of the first heritage listing stories that really got some good coverage. You can call it political if you want—

Senator CARR—I am about to.

Senator Ian Campbell—But I am doing this with the *Duyfken* circumnavigation of Australia, where we are sending a replica of the Dutch ship to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the first mapping of the coast of Australia. We are sending her on a circumnavigation around Australia at the moment. She is in Adelaide today. I think she leaves port tomorrow to head down to Victor Harbour and then across Melbourne. I invite you, Senator, to visit the ship, the ‘Little Dove’, in Melbourne. That, for example, has received blanket coverage—

Senator CARR—Is there a limit on how long this drivel goes on for?

Senator Ian Campbell—Well, are you interested in promoting Australian heritage?

Senator CARR—I have asked you a straight question: have you breached your statutory obligations under the act? What you have announced is that yes, you have and yes, you are prepared to politicise those announcements. That is the thrust of what you have just said. When will you get back to answering some questions?

Senator Ian Campbell—I seriously suggest that Senator Carr gets some anger management training. Every time you try to give him an answer to a question that does not fit his question, he loses his cool and blows up and starts screaming at people.

CHAIR—Have you got any further questions, Senator Carr?

Senator RONALDSON—He is like that in faction meetings.

Senator Ian Campbell—I do not know what he had for dinner, whether he had a couple too many red wines for dinner or something.

Senator JOYCE—He loses it.

Senator Ian Campbell—I know. He just loses it. He is very frustrated.

CHAIR—Do you have any questions, Senator Bartlett?

Senator CARR—Minister, have you broken or breached your statutory obligations under the act with regard to those announcements?

Senator Ian Campbell—A number of decisions have not met those timelines. That is right.

Senator CARR—Yes.

Senator Ian Campbell—I do not know whether that one is one of them. It would depend on when I make a decision. I am not announcing a decision until I announce it.

Senator CARR—I put to you that section 324J of the EPBC Act requires the minister, within 20 business days after receiving advice from the Australian Heritage Council, to list or not list a place on the National Heritage List. Are you required under that timeline to meet those statutory timelines?

Senator Ian Campbell—I am very keen, when we announce a decision to either list or not list Old Parliament House, to do something really good to promote the importance of the heritage of that building.

Senator CARR—You are waiting for a convenient political time to announce that?

Senator Ian Campbell—One of the ideas I had, Senator Carr, should I choose to make an announcement along those lines, is to do it at a time when you could get some of Australia's great political icons who are still alive to come along—people like Gough Whitlam, Jim Killen, Malcolm Fraser and Frank Crean and those sort of people. You call that a political advantage, but I would just call it doing the right thing by Australian heritage. But you cannot look at anything through any other prism than the prism you have been trained to look at things through—your radical, left-wing socialist Labor view of the world, sitting in your old crumbling-down Trades Hall in Melbourne.

Senator CARR—Which you have just agreed to fund, I thought you were saying. You thought it was such a terrific idea that it should be funded.

Senator JOYCE—Will there be any moves for the Aboriginal Tent Embassy?

Senator Ian Campbell—Wrong portfolio. But it has been nominated for listing.

Senator JOYCE—The Aboriginal Tent Embassy?

Senator Ian Campbell—Yes, it has. Again, I do not want to pre-empt the announcement of the decision, Barnaby. I will invite Senator Carr to that one. Are there any further questions?

CHAIR—Senator Siewert has the call now.

Senator CARR—Isn't it your intention to announce the heritage listing along with the establishment of the Australian Centre for Democracy because there was a \$30 million announcement in the budget for it?

Senator Ian Campbell—It is not my intention, no.

Senator CARR—It is not your decision?

Senator Ian Campbell—It is not my intention, no.

Senator CARR—But that is what is actually going on, isn't it?

Senator Ian Campbell—Senator, you seem to know a lot more about this. You have these conspiracy theories. You are kicking and screaming, 'Table a document from a departmental official.'

Senator CARR—Here we go. This is your one in a thousand year parrot. You are still on about the one in a thousand year parrot. This is your dead parrot. Have you found a dead parrot yet? That is what I want to know.

Senator Ian Campbell—This is why he did not want to table the email.

Senator CARR—This is the William the Conqueror parrot. He has been obsessed with this all night.

Senator Ian Campbell—We know why Senator Carr did not want to—

Senator CARR—This is Campbell's booby. That is what it is. Maybe that should get heritage listing as well.

CHAIR—Order! Let's go through the chair. Senator Campbell.

Senator Ian Campbell—Mr Chairman, the reason that Senator Carr did not want to table that email is that in that email it says absolutely explicitly what I said. From the person who prepared the consultant's report, it said those statistics—

Senator CARR—One in a thousand years were confirmed. One in a thousand years.

Senator Ian Campbell—should not be used in that way. No wonder he was embarrassed.

Senator CARR—It is rigorous science.

CHAIR—Senator Siewert has a one in a thousand year question.

Senator Ian Campbell—I invite anyone who has an interest in how seriously you can ever take Senator Carr to read all of that email, which proves that he has once again abused this place by misleading it and providing misleading information. When you cannot give him the answer that he wants, he either continues to mislead or bluster or creates enormous amounts of noise or totally loses his temper and has what is generally called a hissy fit.

CHAIR—Senator Siewert. Let's get back on track.

Senator SIEWERT—I have a number of questions. Where are we at with the Burrup?

Mr Burnett—I will ask Mr Bailey to answer that question.

Mr Bailey—As you may be aware, there have been three public nominations for the Burrup Peninsula to the National Heritage List. The Australian Heritage Council is currently undertaking its assessment. The assessment advice for the minister is due on 4 September 2006.

Senator SIEWERT—The Heritage Council is still undertaking the assessments?

Mr Bailey—The three nominations are being assessed concurrently. The advice is due to the minister on 4 September.

Senator SIEWERT—Have you spoken to the Western Australian government yet? Has the council?

Mr Bailey—Just to clarify, under section 324R of the act, the council is not permitted to discuss the assessment with any other parties. But we have kept the Western Australian government informed of the assessment process, as we do under a protocol between governments.

Senator SIEWERT—Sorry, I had forgotten that. Can I ask another question?

CHAIR—Go ahead.

Senator Ian Campbell—The position of the ALP I think it is pretty well known. They have an interesting view on not listing the Burrup but listing Ningaloo and not listing

Fremantle Harbour. So they send interesting signals to the federal environment minister on heritage issues.

Senator SIEWERT—I will get back to Fremantle Harbour in a second.

Senator Ian Campbell—I would love to get back there right now.

Senator SIEWERT—You will be getting an invitation to a forum we are having here on the Burrup on 21 June.

Senator Ian Campbell—Me?

Senator SIEWERT—You have already had one. But the department will be getting one. Senator Eggleston and I are hosting it to inform people of the values of the Burrup from people with expertise in rock art. I want to move on to the Aboriginal Heritage Act. Minister, you would be aware that I have had some concerns about the consultation over the Evatt report and the commitment that Senator Hill made when he was minister to consultation and a thorough review of the act. Is that still a live commitment?

Senator Ian Campbell—I think I will let Mr Burnett respond.

Mr Burnett—You are aware that there are some amendments before the parliament at the moment.

Senator SIEWERT—Yes, I am very aware. I have spoken to those amendments. I have put some amendments up of my own.

Mr Burnett—The government is still intending to do the larger exercise that has been foreshadowed for some time. I will read to you from page 25 of the environment budget overview:

The Australian Government will engage in further consultation with indigenous groups on reforming this legislation to provide a new national scheme that will ensure the protection of indigenous areas and objects to the best contemporary standards.

Senator SIEWERT—Have we got a timetable for that?

Mr Burnett—The timetable is to commence this coming budget year, but it is no more specific than that as yet. We are just starting to go into the planning stages of it.

Senator SIEWERT—You can guarantee that I will have it on the list for next estimates.

Senator BARTLETT—What are we up to now in terms of the number of decisions that have been made on listings? What is the total number of listings?

Senator Ian Campbell—It is 28.

Mr Burnett—It is 29.

Senator Ian Campbell—It is 29.

Senator BARTLETT—You have announced one you have forgotten about already. And how many nominations on top of that have you got that are still under assessment?

Mr Bailey—The number under assessment is 70.

Senator BARTLETT—So 70 have been nominated and are being assessed and 29 have been finalised. Are there other assessments completed and awaiting decision?

Mr Bailey—Since the commencement of the act, we have had 138 public nominations. Of those assessments, 68 have been completed. We have 70 currently under assessment. Some assessments have been completed but have not yet been announced.

Senator BARTLETT—I do not want to revisit this if we have covered it before. Is there a difference between being announced and decided?

Mr Bailey—Section 324J says the actual declaration of the gazettal is the point at which it becomes on the list.

Senator BARTLETT—I probably should ask the minister, if hypothetically he is considering political icons for any hypothetical announcement, I can check my own diary, if you give me a bit of advance notice. You might want to add Don Chipp, given you listed all those other iconic people.

Senator Ian Campbell—I think he has made an outstanding contribution to Australian politics.

Senator BARTLETT—There you go. Spoken like a true ex Democrat.

Senator CARR—That is why you were with the Democrats, wasn't it.

Senator Ian Campbell—I mean that quite sincerely. I think he has made an outstanding contribution.

Senator CARR—He recruited you. It is a well-known fact.

Senator Ian Campbell—He did not, actually, but he inspired me. He inspired a lot of people.

Senator CARR—He recruited you to the Democrats. Come on! You got disillusioned. You gave it up and joined the Western Australian Liberals.

Senator Ian Campbell—He got very disillusioned with the Fraser government's industrial relations policy, which stood by the big unions and the industrial relations club. He genuinely wanted to reform industrial relations, and he got very frustrated.

Senator PATTERSON—They have changed.

Senator BARTLETT—Oh, come on!

Senator Ian Campbell—Some of them have changed.

Senator BARTLETT—One could look at the industrial relations record over the last 10 years, but let's not get distracted.

Senator Ian Campbell—I would say Senator Bartlett is more of a Chippocrat than many other Democrats who have come through the place.

Senator BARTLETT—Oh, hear, hear.

Senator Ian Campbell—I agree with that.

Senator BARTLETT—Finally, has there been any—

Senator Ian Campbell—I commend Senator Bartlett's first speech in the Senate to people who do not understand him.

Senator BARTLETT—Give me advance notice. I will check my diary and I will get there as well. Finally, have there been any controlled actions declared to date using the heritage provisions with places on the list? I did not think there were any up until the end of the last financial year. I just wonder.

Mr Burnett—Not that we are aware.

Senator BARTLETT—Thank you.

CHAIR—Is that all on heritage? If it is, we will move on to industry, communities and energy.

[9.16 pm]

Senator CARR—I have some questions.

CHAIR—Do other people have questions on this subportfolio?

Senator CARR—Minister, can you inform the committee what new policies came out of your discussions with Australian industry with regard to renewable energy?

Senator Ian Campbell—Which discussion is that? Is there a particular one?

Senator CARR—I refer, for instance, to your famous appearance on *Four Corners* on these issues. You said:

I am writing policy now on greenhouse environmental issues and I have industry working closely with me on that.

It was the program earlier this year about the greenhouse gas programs.

Senator Ian Campbell—We have developed policy in the area of renewables and greenhouse gas emissions. We develop programs and finetune them on a regular basis. We do not do what the Labor Party does, which is come up with something 10 years ago and then put it away in a drawer and forget it. The extension of the PVRP scheme is an example of that. We are ensuring that programs like the low emissions technology fund are developed.

Senator CARR—So in this budget cycle—

Senator Ian Campbell—There is the establishment, for example, of a new \$100 million fund within the framework of the Asia-Pacific clean development and climate pact. There is the corralling of a minimum of 25 per cent of that for the renewables industry. We are working with industry organisations on education initiatives to encourage people from our region to come to Australia and learn and share information on renewable energy technologies. There is the trade mission I am leading to China in October. We believe it will be the largest ever renewable energy trade delegation to China in Australian history. We are developing more policies and programs and frameworks for greater cooperation with one of the fastest growing economies in the world. I regard that as a collaboration that is continuing.

Senator CARR—So what correspondence have you received from industry on any of these future policy directions since that *Four Corners* program? Have you had any?

Senator Ian Campbell—I do not particularly recall that *Four Corners* program as a milestone in my life.

Senator CARR—You don't?

Senator Ian Campbell—No. Was this the *Four Corners* program that made accusations that we were in bed with the coal industry and we had covered up all this scientific research?

Senator CARR—Basically, yes.

Senator Ian Campbell—That program was a total beat-up. I have not watched that program, in fact, because I saw what came out of it and I thought it was an outrageous piece of journalism. *Four Corners* has traditionally been well-respected in Australia. They had an extraordinarily good program about whale conservation nearly a year ago. That was an extraordinary piece of journalism, I thought. But we showed at estimates committees last time that every allegation they made was totally baseless.

Senator CARR—You have not actually watched the program?

Senator Ian Campbell—No. But I had the department investigate the claims they made. I read bits of the transcript. They accused me and my office and other ministers of covering up research that I had actually launched nine or 10 weeks before the program went to air. I had a press conference and said, 'Here is a book that has all this information in it.' I released it publicly and they said I was covering it up. A great cover-up. You launch a book with all this research in it and *Four Corners* says you have covered it up.

Senator CARR—Were there any new announcements in the budget with regard to renewable energy or greenhouse programs?

Senator Ian Campbell—Yes. We announced a new \$100 million commitment to funding for renewable energies and greenhouse through the AP6. There were also significant announcements about alternative fuels. I think it was of the order—I am happy to be corrected here—of \$37 million. I might have slightly exaggerated there.

Senator CARR—I am surprised you did not refer to the IDC that has been established, the global nuclear energy partnership. Are you aware of that, Minister? I take it you are.

Senator Ian Campbell—I do not know if that is a budget initiative. You are asking about budget initiatives.

Senator CARR—At the PM&C estimates on Monday, it was revealed there was a new interdepartmental committee which is headed up by DFAT. It has other departments on it. I take it your department is on it.

Mr Borthwick—I would have to take that on notice. I know it came up in PM&C estimates. Mr Early's division might know something about it, but Mr Early has left for the evening.

Senator CARR—You would be aware what IDCs the department is on.

Mr Borthwick—I am not, no. There are lots of IDCs. I do not track all of them.

Senator CARR—I see. It is a major initiative by the Prime Minister. Surely you would be aware of the department's involvement in that.

Mr Borthwick—No.

Senator CARR—The announcements you referred to, Minister, weren't they the announcements actually made in January for the Australia-Pacific partnership?

Senator Ian Campbell—Yes.

Senator CARR—They were not in the budget, though, were they?

Senator Ian Campbell—Well, they were in the budget, yes. When you appropriate money, you have this thing usually in May that is called the budget. You have a budget bill and you put into that the money for the measures. We put in \$100 million, which is \$100 million more than the Labor Party has ever even thought about for greenhouse. All you do is talk about the Kyoto thing. You have the two-word policy. You do not have any money. You do not have any programs. You have no initiatives. You have Kyoto.

Senator CARR—Mr Borthwick, is there anyone here who can tell me about this IDC?

Mr Borthwick—No, there is not. I am aware—

Senator Ian Campbell—It is for Prime Minister and Cabinet estimates. I presume you have been there. If they have established that, you ask them questions about it.

Senator CARR—I see.

Senator Ian Campbell—This department is very strongly behind ensuring that we include all possible low emissions and zero emissions energy options in the debate on how we have a secure energy future with a substantially lower greenhouse signature for Australia and for the globe. We are very strongly behind the PM's initiatives to ensure we have a serious and science based debate in relation to Australia's role in the nuclear fuel cycle. We know that the Labor Party is very confused, divided and upset about this.

Senator CARR—The department has cut staff by 37 in the budget, hasn't it? No, it is not true?

Mr Borthwick—No. That is not true. I think 37 has been reported in a finance department document. The figure that is actually in our portfolio budget statement, from memory, is about 25.

Senator CARR—So it has been reduced by 25?

Mr Borthwick—Actual staff numbers have not been reduced, no. My expectation is that staff numbers in the department will actually go up.

Senator CARR—Is that an effective full-time reduction of 25?

Mr Borthwick—No, it is not. Let me explain that seeming conundrum. The estimates that are in the budget papers—and I refer to the 25 estimate—is the potential staff ceiling. In fact, at this time, we are probably about 90 or so below that staff ceiling. We will be recruiting up. But the 25 reduction is from that potential staff ceiling if we are able to fill every position. My expectation is that we will increase numbers over the financial year on those actually currently employed in the department. But it is a reduction in a hypothetical number.

Senator CARR—That is the establishment?

Mr Borthwick—Yes.

Senator CARR—So the establishment has been reduced by 25?

Mr Borthwick—That is right.

Senator CARR—So the forward estimates funding for managed climate change programs, which I understand is essentially the old Australian Greenhouse Office, has dropped from \$40 million in 2006-07 and 2007-08 to \$8 million in 2008-09 and \$8.3 million in 2009-2010. Is that correct? Have I read those tables correctly? I am referring to Appendix 1, Environment Budget Overview.

Mr Sterland—You are looking at page 39 of the overview?

Senator CARR—It looks that way, yes.

Mr Sterland—The climate change forward strategy was funded in the 2004-05 budget. It was a four-year strategy of funding. It is simply reflected in the estimates here.

Senator CARR—So what happens to the Australian Greenhouse Office staff when the program ends on 30 June 2008?

Mr Sterland—I imagine the government will consider its climate change strategy essentially in tranches and will come to that as the time approaches. That is a common issue with lots of forward estimates.

Senator CARR—It is standard operating procedure. So you would have to actually secure additional funding in that budget cycle—

Mr Sterland—Yes.

Senator CARR—before the program ends?

Mr Sterland—Yes.

Senator CARR—And you cannot predict what that is because no decision has been made on that yet.

Mr Sterland—It is two full financial years away.

Senator CARR—That is the answer I would expect. At page 40, I see there is support for the Asia-Pacific climate pact. The greenhouse policy seems to have shifted quite dramatically in terms of its funding allocations. Would that be a fair conclusion to reach, if I look down here, where it says the department of industry now manages to secure most of the funding?

Mr Sterland—You are talking about the funding for the Asia-Pacific partnership?

Senator CARR—Yes.

Mr Sterland—I do not think there is any shift implicit in that. We manage a number of programs jointly with the industry department whereby funding is appropriated to this portfolio. Ministers make joint decisions. The assessment processes are fully joint processes. The Asia-Pacific partnership will be operating in the same way. In this case, the appropriation goes to the industry department. My minister and Minister Macfarlane will be making decisions jointly with respect to that partnership in consultation with the Minister for Foreign Affairs. That is outlined on page 15 in the description of the initiative.

Senator CARR—I want to be clear about this. When you say these are jointly funded projects, the staff are actually located in which department?

Mr Sterland—Well, the staff are located in both departments. One of the reasons, I imagine, that that appropriation decision was taken is that six out of the eight task forces have natural primary carriage in the industry department.

Senator CARR—Six of the eight?

Mr Sterland—Six of the eight, because they are industry based, sectorally based initiatives. There is the cement task force, the steel task force and that sort of thing. We have a member on most of those task forces. The renewables task force and the building and appliances one are in my division. Industry officials sit on those task forces as well. The central secretariat will be jointly staffed and located in the industry department.

Senator CARR—So officers from your division will be on secondment?

Mr Sterland—That is what we are intending to do.

Senator CARR—They will be on secondment?

Mr Sterland—An officer from DEH will be.

Senator CARR—One. How many officers are involved in the project?

CHAIR—Senator Carr, we are scheduled to break now for 15 minutes.

Senator CARR—If you let allow me to conclude this matter, I might let the officers go.

CHAIR—I must say I have had a request from other senators to have a break.

Senator CARR—Well, I do not mind. I am just having fun here.

CHAIR—We will have a 15-minute break.

Proceedings suspended from 9.32 pm to 9.48 pm

CHAIR—We will resume with questions for officers from the Industry, Communities and Energy Division.

Senator CARR—I wanted to get through this before the break, but I have now had a resurgence of interest, so it will probably take me a little bit longer. We were looking at the breakdown in staffing arrangements between the department of industry and the department of the environment. How many officers in each of the departments are dealing with these programs funded under the eight task forces that you referred to? I am talking here about the support staff here as well, not just the officers on the task force. I mean the program personnel as well. Can you give me a total on that?

Mr Sterland—In terms of the number of officers that are working on these issues from time to time, there would be quite a range. I will step back and explain how it works. We have eight task forces on a range of sectors and technology work. The Australian government is chairing some of those task forces. For those, we would tend to devote more effort across both departments. I can only talk for the renewable and distributed generation task force, which Australia is co-chairing with Korea. One of my branch heads is the co-chair on that task force. He would have a number of staff working on the development of the action plans and that sort of thing. I cannot speak for the industry department, but they would have a number of staff working—a few full time and some part time—on the various task forces across the industry sectors. I am on the policy and implementation committee along with colleagues from the

foreign affairs and industry departments. So it takes up a portion of my time as well. Then there is a small secretariat which is coordinating and doing some of that overarching work.

Senator CARR—When I look at the breakdown in the funding between the two departments as listed on pages 39 and 40 of the environment budget overview statements, I see the bulk of the money is actually in the industry department.

Mr Sterland—Across 39 and 40 in total, I do not think that would be—

Senator CARR—But with regard to the renewable energy programs, is it not the case that effective responsibility has now shifted to the department of industry? Isn't it true that climate change is now being managed out of Industry, not out of your department?

Mr Sterland—I do not believe that is true.

Senator CARR—Well, explain to me why that is the case. Effectively the programs, particularly from 2007, switch to Industry. There might be sound policy reasons for that. I would just like to know what they are. What is the government's thinking on that? Why has so much money that used to be handled by the Australian Greenhouse Office now moved into the industry department?

Mr Sterland—I think the only measure that would fit into that category is the most recently announced Asia-Pacific partnership. As I mentioned, on an earlier page, it describes that those initiatives will be implemented in a joint way. That is the way many of the energy white paper initiatives that are appropriated either to us or the industry department are. They are managed jointly in a day-to-day sense by both departments.

Senator CARR—I want to get this from you because it will obviously help me clarify my thinking on this matter. Could I get the staff numbers, the levels of staff and the support functions for the AP6 program across the two departments? Would you be able to provide me with a description of what the programs do for each of those units?

Mr Sterland—This is simply—

Senator CARR—AP6 is the one I am particularly interested in. Could you provide me with the travel budgets? I want to know what the appropriations are for each of the departments in this joint program that you speak of.

Senator Ian Campbell—I am going to ask Howard Bamsey to comment. He is the head of the Australian Greenhouse Office, which the Labor Party said we have abolished. Howard is still in the Australian Greenhouse Office. Mr Sterland has described, I think very accurately, how we address greenhouse issues in the Commonwealth. In virtually all of the areas of endeavour—domestically it is a partnership between the industry portfolio and the environment portfolio—the programs are either administered or delivered jointly. Generally, the appropriation is given to one department or the other but they are administered jointly. On the international programs, you have the industry department, the environment department and the foreign affairs department, who work collaboratively on literally everything we do and on a daily basis, either in Australia or wherever in the world our team is at the time. Most of the time, we have officers from the environment, industry and foreign affairs departments somewhere on the globe working collaboratively with other nations or multilaterally or plurilaterally on climate change issues.

Senator CARR—But the secretary of the department was not able to help me with an IDC on nuclear energy. I am wondering how collaborative this is.

Mr Bamsey—In a word, highly. We are building very detailed work plans in these task forces with the industry department, with the foreign affairs department and with the other countries concerned. The amount of funding available for administration of the \$100 million is, as I recall, \$5 million. That is the amount that really relates to the sorts of activities I understand you have been inquiring about. The remainder of the money is going to be for projects and capacity building. Those projects and capacity building ideas are still being developed. When they are implemented, they will be implemented in a collaborative fashion and managed by a working group that will be, we expect, chaired by both departments—the industry department and our department. All of the activity undertaken by Commonwealth agencies relating to the AP6 will report to that jointly chaired committee. We will manage them as the projects emerge and are implemented in a collaborative fashion, as we do already, as Mr Sterland and the minister have said, in relation to the other activities which require input from both departments.

Senator CARR—Mr Bamsey, is it possible to get a table of the breakdown of the funding allocations?

Mr Bamsey—Well, the problem, as Mr Sterland indicated, is that in many cases staff working on AP6 related activities are also doing other things. The AP6 activity would be a portion of their time and a portion that is still changing. So it would not be possible to give you with great precision a list of the people working on AP6 at present.

Senator CARR—I see. When will you be able to provide that information?

Mr Bamsey—As the projects develop, it will be clearer who is doing what and for what time. But at the moment we are still in the early stages of implementing and drawing up the detailed work plans.

Senator CARR—It just seems to me that the industry department has taken over your job.

Mr Bamsey—That is not the way it seems to us.

Senator CARR—I have not heard anything that convinces me otherwise. Again, is there a sound policy reason for that?

Senator Ian Campbell—Once again, we have the senator who asks questions, does not get the answers that he wants and so writes his own answers. We have had it yet again. It really is an insult to this team up here, who dedicate their lives to actually building one of the best climate change policies and implementation programs anywhere in the world, to have these idiotic rhetorical flourishes at the end of very detailed, very genuine answers that provide good information. This senator just ignores the answer and comes up with an inane, inept political one-liner. It really is an insult to the Australian Public Service, which does such a great job in this area and is recognised internationally for doing so.

Senator McLucas interjecting—

Senator Ian Campbell—Well, you do, Senator McLucas. You should really take over. This is an insult. It is an absolute insult, and you should see through that.

CHAIR—The minister can make whatever comments he chooses to.

Senator CARR—No, you are the chair.

CHAIR—It is the minister's prerogative.

Senator Ian Campbell—I am now going to seek leave to table Senator Carr's email that he referred to, because this is a classic example of it.

Senator CARR—I have already tabled it.

Senator Ian Campbell—I am going to table the underlining so that anyone who wants to read this can read how grossly you misled this committee when you misused those statistics and that method. It says, for example: 'The only really meaningful way to assess the potential impacts is to do on-the-ground surveys to look at a particular site in question.' I quote:

To find the number of birds that might be killed at any one wind farm such as Bald Hills, was not the intent of our work—

I repeat: 'not the intent of our work'—

and thus the scenario for a particular site—although it contributes to the cumulative impact assessment—is simply a scenario for the purposes of modelling.

Senator CARR—I think you would do well to read the *Hansard*.

Senator Ian Campbell—Let me reiterate, Mr Chairman: it should not be construed as anything other than a possibility within the context of the overall cumulative modelling project.

Senator CARR—I suggest you read the *Hansard*.

Senator Ian Campbell—I want that incorporated in the *Hansard*. I request that. I want it incorporated in the *Hansard* and understood, because it is absolute testament to the way this senator consistently and grossly misleads and abuses this process and abuses information. It is an insult to this parliament. He does not deserve to sit in it. Can I please have that incorporated, Mr Chairman.

CHAIR—We will table it.

Senator Ian Campbell—No, I want it incorporated, please. It has my underlining.

CHAIR—It will have to be voted on, though.

Senator Ian Campbell—Thank you. If it needs to be voted on, so be it.

CHAIR—Is that the feeling of the committee?

Senator CARR—Is there another requirement for a private meeting?

Senator Ian Campbell—I have asked leave that this be incorporated in the *Hansard*.

Senator CARR—So there is another requirement for a private meeting?

Senator Ian Campbell—Is leave granted? That is the question.

CHAIR—Leave is granted.

Senator CARR—What leave?

Senator Ian Campbell—Are you refusing leave, Senator?

Senator CARR—I have quoted directly from it.

Senator Ian Campbell—No, you have quoted selectively from it.

Senator CARR—Minister, I asked the chairman, ‘Are you requesting a private meeting?’

CHAIR—I have sought the advice of the secretary. I am not.

Senator CARR—You are not?

CHAIR—No.

Senator CARR—You can do what you like, then.

Senator Ian Campbell—Are you refusing leave, Senator?

Senator RONALDSON—The leave has been granted.

Senator CARR—No, leave is not granted.

Senator Ian Campbell—It is not granted.

Senator CARR—It is not granted. On the behaviour of this minister, leave is not granted.

Senator Ian Campbell—Right.

CHAIR—I do not think this committee quite works the way the Senate does.

Senator Ian Campbell—I am not putting up with selective quoting by a senator who consistently seeks to mislead this parliament. I am asking that this be incorporated in the *Hansard*. I have underlined the relevant passages so that the people of Australia know that this senator seeks to mislead by selectively quoting from emails. That is why I wanted this email tabled.

Senator CARR—I have tabled it. It has been tabled. I have quoted from it.

Senator Ian Campbell—And I want it incorporated.

Senator RONALDSON—Quite rightly so.

CHAIR—I am seeking the advice of the secretary, because, as you say, it has been tabled. This can be tabled if the committee so desires, I am advised.

Senator CARR—It has been tabled.

Senator RONALDSON—Incorporated.

Senator CARR—It has already been tabled.

Senator Ian Campbell—It has been tabled. I want it incorporated in the *Hansard* at the appropriate place with underlining. I am once and for all going to show that this senator consistently misleads, selectively quotes and verbals officers when it does not suit his political outcomes.

Senator PATTERSON—Look, we do not have the information here—after all these years, I should know—as to whether it can be incorporated or not. I think we should leave the incorporation pending. If it can be incorporated then of the voting members of the committee could make a decision on the basis that, if it is able to be incorporated, that it be done so. If not, then it will not be incorporated. Rather than spend all night doing—

Senator Ian Campbell—Could we have a vote of the committee?

Senator McLUCAS—I think Senator Patterson makes a good point.

Senator PATTERSON—We could vote. I am prepared for it to be incorporated if it can be with a majority of the voting members of the committee doing that. But we do not have the information here. We could sit here all night.

Senator Ian Campbell—Mr Chairman, we have caught this guy out now—

Senator PATTERSON—Let me finish.

Senator Ian Campbell—and I want it recorded in the record.

Senator PATTERSON—Just let me finish.

Senator Ian Campbell—I am sorry. I thought you had.

Senator PATTERSON—I had not. I do not think we should put the secretary in this position. It is a very unusual request. I have not heard it before. We cannot make a decision now, so I think we should make a decision pending. If it is able to be incorporated, we will ask whether the members of the committee are prepared to incorporate it. That is, if we find that it is able to be incorporated.

CHAIR—I am advised by the secretary that we can only incorporate by vote of the committee in private. We do have a quorum of the committee here in the sense that a majority of the full members of the committee are here, including Senator Siewert.

Senator RONALDSON—Well, let's do that.

CHAIR—So we will suspend and have a private meeting of the full members of the committee.

Proceedings suspended from 10.04 pm to 10.05 pm

CHAIR—I report to this estimates hearing that a meeting of a quorum, being a majority of members of the legislation committee, have voted to incorporate this document. It is so incorporated.

The document read as follows—

Hi Ashley,

The process used to determine *cumulative* annual mortality from all wind farms we modelled, entailed calculating a *mean* annual mortality rate of wind turbine collisions for the entire population of 150 birds. That rate was calculated from the mean annual survivorship/mortality calculated for each of the four geographic regions we subdivided the population into. So for cumulative effects on the species the annual number of predicted mortalities is the product of the mean mortality rate multiplied by the annual average population of 150 OBPs.

Note that the intent of our work was to assess possible cumulative effects of collisions across the species' range and the known mean population size of 150 birds in that range is an accurate reflection of real knowledge about the bird (demographic information was provided by the OBP Recovery Team). To find the number of birds that might be killed at any one wind farm such as Bald Hills, was not the intent of our work and thus the scenario for a particular site - although it contributes to the cumulative impact assessment - is simply a scenario for the purposes of modelling. It should not be construed as being anything other than a possibility within the context of the overall cumulative modelling project.

For the purpose of the exercise, the process of finding a number of birds modelled as likely to be killed at any one wind farm within our model would be to multiply the annual mortality rate (inverse of survivorship rate in Table 4 of our report) for that site by the number of individual birds modelled as

interacting with that wind farm per annum. However, the only really meaningful way to assess potential impacts of any one wind farm is to base it on real bird utilisation data – if that can be obtained – from the particular site in question.

Hope that clarifies things.

Cheers,

Ian

Senator CARR—Mr Chairman, would you also note that there were no Labor Party voting members present. For you to call that—

Senator PATTERSON—We will note that!

CHAIR—We can record that, but it is a sad reflection on the ALP that their senators have sought—

Senator CARR—No Labor Party members.

Senator Ian Campbell—Where are they? Where are the Labor members—out on the town, as usual?

CHAIR—It is a sad reflection that they are not here. But I do have a feeling that we need to bring this committee back on track. It is five past 10 and we still have agencies to go through. So out of respect to the members of the government's civil service who are here, let us proceed through the remainder of the agencies and conclude this agenda.

Senator RONALDSON—For the sake of completeness, I think it is appropriate to note that Senators Wortley and Lundy, who are permanent members of this committee and members of the Labor Party, are not present.

Senator CARR—Were they advised of the private meeting? Were they advised that the meeting was due to be held?

Senator RONALDSON—They are acutely aware that we are in estimates and they are permanent members.

CHAIR—They are supposed to be here.

Senator RONALDSON—Thank you, Mr Chairman. I thought it was important to note that.

Senator CARR—Mr Chairman, were they advised?

CHAIR—Of course they were not advised, Senator Carr. With respect, Senator Carr, these members of the committee were not present.

Senator Ian Campbell—Did Senator Carr advise his comrades? Did you advise your comrades?

Senator CARR—You call a meeting without notice and you do not advise the Labor Party.

CHAIR—There was a quorum.

Senator Ian Campbell—Why didn't you advise them, comrade?

Senator JOYCE—They should be here.

CHAIR—Let's just have some order and proceed, if we could, please.

Senator CARR—Have you pulled yet another rort? People should be made fully aware of that.

CHAIR—Senator Bartlett, do you have any questions?

Senator BARTLETT—Not in international land. I have some in land and water.

CHAIR—Senator Joyce.

Senator BARTLETT—Land, water and coasts.

Senator CARR—I have not finished my questions.

CHAIR—Please proceed, because I had the impression that you were not doing so.

Senator CARR—On the contrary. If you had been chairing this meeting with a bit more decorum, you might have been able to follow proceedings.

CHAIR—Just proceed, Senator Carr. It is now six or seven minutes past 10.

Senator Ian Campbell—If Senator Carr is going to ask a question, I suggest he allows the officers or me to answer it and not answer it himself, because this is where he keeps getting into trouble. He will not accept the answers. He always has to create his own answer at the end.

CHAIR—Let us proceed.

Senator CARR—What is the allocation for the \$400 million Greenhouse Gas Abatement Program? How much has been spent to date and how much is intended to be committed for the forward estimates period?

Mr Sterland—The allocations for GGAP have been covered reasonably comprehensively in previous questions on notice that are on the record. It is also a matter of record that some of the GGAP program has been drawn on to fund other climate change programs. It is a complex issue. I could set it out on notice, if you like.

Senator CARR—I would appreciate that.

Mr Sterland—I will perhaps draw on previous questions on notice to assist in that. That is probably the best way of doing it, if that is acceptable to you.

Senator CARR—Yes, it is. I return to this document you have sought to incorporate. It quotes what I have quoted to this committee already tonight.

CHAIR—It has been incorporated. I ask you to move on to a new subject as we have a long agenda to complete. This is just revisiting an issue that has already been dealt with.

Senator McLUCAS—Has the department since February estimates undertaken any specific research or policy work on the impact of rising sea levels in the Torres Strait?

Mr Carruthers—No.

Senator McLUCAS—Thank you for your answer to the question on notice, where you indicated that no work was being undertaken on the impact of potentially rising sea levels. I understand that there are no tide measuring instruments in the Torres Strait.

Mr Carruthers—I believe that is the case. Dr Love from the Bureau of Meteorology spoke this morning on the subject of sea level rise. The Bureau of Meteorology has responsibility for the network of stations under the National Tidal Facility.

Senator McLUCAS—Has there been any discussion in the department since February that it may be appropriate to at least measure the water level in the Torres Strait?

Mr Carruthers—Australia has a coastline of 30,000-odd kilometres. These high-precision sea level rise monitoring stations have essentially been selected on scientific criteria as to where to locate them around various parts of the Australian mainland coast, Tasmania and the Cocos Islands. It is clearly not feasible to have stations at every place. The purpose of these stations is to provide scientific information from which interpretations can be made on a national basis.

Senator McLUCAS—So where is the closest monitoring station to the Torres Strait?

Mr Carruthers—I could not answer that off the cuff. Dr Love this morning referred to the material on their web site. I would be happy to work with Dr Love in providing anything more specific than was asked this morning.

Senator McLUCAS—So the location of monitoring equipment is purely based on scientific reasons?

Mr Carruthers—Yes.

Senator McLUCAS—I imagine there is one in Sydney Harbour.

Mr Carruthers—I do not believe so, not of this kind. There is one at Wollongong.

Senator McLUCAS—Why would that be there?

Mr Carruthers—I am not a scientist. I could not comment on the decision making process for these stations. They all went in about 10 years ago.

Senator McLUCAS—Could you provide me with a list of places where there is sea level monitoring equipment.

Mr Carruthers—Yes. I would be happy to take that up with Dr Love in that capacity.

Senator McLUCAS—Thank you. Can you outline on what basis they were decided to be important and provide an analysis of why it is not important in a scientific sense for there to be any monitoring of sea level rises in the Torres Strait, given that it is the point where the Pacific Ocean eventually meets the Indian Ocean? What action has the government taken to address reported increased erosion in the Torres Strait Islands?

Mr Carruthers—I am not aware of specific action in that regard.

Senator McLUCAS—It is an issue I raised in February. Has been any discussion or thinking about it?

Mr Carruthers—Not with the Australian Greenhouse Office.

Senator McLUCAS—Has the government, through the AGO, investigated the potential need to relocate people from the Torres Strait with sea level rising?

Mr Carruthers—No.

Senator McLUCAS—There has been no consideration at all?

Mr Carruthers—No.

Senator McLUCAS—Is it an issue that has been discussed?

Mr Carruthers—Only in the context of answering the question on notice from the earlier session.

Senator McLUCAS—Thank you for that.

Senator Ian Campbell—I would like to put on the record that we are in the process of approving a multimillion-dollar plan for funding Torres Strait Island natural resource management, natural heritage protection and environmental protection. Coincidentally, I read the plan while we were at estimates today and signed off on it today. An officer is about to tell us the quantum of the investments that will be made.

Senator RONALDSON—Congratulations.

Senator Ian Campbell—It is in excess of \$2 million up until April this year. We have just signed a plan for the future. It specifically addresses the erosion issue you raise, Senator McLucas. I will make sure you get a copy of the plan, as a Queensland senator, as soon as it is sent to Mr Palaszczuk et al.

Senator McLUCAS—So you can announce the Torres Strait NRM funding at estimates but you cannot announce a wind farm.

Senator Ian Campbell—Only because the wind farm proponent is a publicly listed company and it could unfairly prejudice investors in the marketplace. We have in place a protocol for making market-sensitive announcements, but I do not think anyone who reads the plan for the protection of environmental assets in the Torres Strait would have any public listing issues or market sensitivity issues.

Senator McLUCAS—I just hope the TSRA and the Queensland government have done the final tick-off.

Senator Ian Campbell—They have. They have been involved in the whole process.

Senator McLUCAS—Fabulous.

CHAIR—That is industry, communities and energy finished. We will go to the international land and analysis division. Are there any questions? If not, we will move to land, water and coasts. I welcome the officers.

Senator BARTLETT—Is the invasive species issue covered here?

Mr Slatyer—Yes, it is.

Senator BARTLETT—I am glad to hear it. The references version of this very committee did an inquiry and produced a report, which was tabled in the Senate in December 2004. The annual report stated that an advance draft of the government's response had been prepared. In the document tabled in the Senate at the end of last year, the government said that consultations were nearing completion. That was on 7 December last year. I was just wondering where the government response is on that.

Mr Slatyer—I will have to take on notice a proper answer to that question. To my knowledge, the response has not yet been tabled.

Senator BARTLETT—I think you are right on that. I hope the response is not as long as the response to the committee's report. I know there has been a range of initiatives in this area, so I am not suggesting nothing has been done since then. But it was a unanimous report. It crossed party lines. There were 27 recommendations. It does make it a bit hard for Senate committees to enthuse about doing future reports if there is that big a delay, even on ones where we are being nice and cooperative.

CHAIR—Minister, would you like to comment on this?

Senator Ian Campbell—I accept the point. There is an enormous amount of work going on in that zone. I will, at your urging, find out what seems to be stalling the outcome. It is a very fair point.

Senator BARTLETT—Thank you. As I said, the annual report said an advance draft response had already been prepared. I am not sure on what date that would have been. Obviously it would have been at some stage after 30 June. I know some things are happening. I am not suggesting nothing has happened since the report has been tabled. Could I just get an indication of the progress. As I understand it, there have been consultations across the states and the Commonwealth about trying to develop more consistent practices in terms of the control of sale of potentially invasive species and those sorts of things. Are you able to give me any idea of what sort of progress has been made on that?

Mr Slatyer—You are probably referring to an initiative that was announced out of the last Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council meeting, which goes by the name of AusBIOSEC. The long-hand description, I think, is the Australian Biosecurity System for Primary Production and the Environment. This is a Commonwealth-state collaborative work to essentially try to fill the gaps that now exist where we have very sophisticated procedures in place for emergency response management and cost sharing of invasive threats to primary production of various kinds. There are less developed procedures for invasives that do not pose a direct threat to the primary production sector but do pose threats to the natural environment or the built environment. The purpose of this initiative, as announced by the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council in its last communique, is to try to address that problem and do it in a fairly comprehensive manner. So the council has directed that officials develop some procedures that can be further considered by the Commonwealth and state governments. So that is the kind of work now in train.

Senator BARTLETT—This is an issue that is coming up quite frequently in another inquiry that the references committee currently has under way. It is the issue of the impact of invasives on national parks and plenty of other areas as well. There is the problem of spending a lot of money trying to contain weeds when those same weeds are still being sold in nurseries and the like. I know there have been a lot of attempts to improve codes of practice and labelling and those sorts of things. But is any consideration being given to just banning the sale of plants on all these various lists that we are developing?

Mr Slatyer—I will not answer the question specifically because it does not admit to a simple answer. But there is a review currently of the national weed strategy, which will be

addressing a range of issues of that sort. That is now occurring. It is one of a number of initiatives.

Senator BARTLETT—What is the time line on that?

Mr Slatyer—I think it is due to be completed during the course of this year.

Senator BARTLETT—Calendar year or financial year?

Mr Slatyer—This calendar year.

Senator BARTLETT—And that is reporting to the minister?

Mr Slatyer—Again, it is a Commonwealth-state collaborative process which will report ultimately to the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, which Minister Campbell co-chairs.

Senator BARTLETT—Thank you.

Senator JOYCE—Is this the place where I ask questions on rivers?

Mr Slatyer—Yes.

Senator JOYCE—There has obviously been a lot of conjecture lately about Cubby Station. To your knowledge, what percentage of the Murray-Darling Basin do they use? Do you have any sort of figure that comes to mind?

Mr Slatyer—No. Earlier in the day I might have been able to answer that. I just cannot remember the specific numbers. But I could take it on notice.

Senator JOYCE—Luckily I do.

Mr Slatyer—I won't take it on notice if you know the answer, Senator.

Senator Ian Campbell—I assure you that Tony would know at most times of the day. He could probably tell you the figures for just about every river in Australia.

Senator JOYCE—The evaporation of the Menindee storage lakes has come up as an issue of concern. What is your knowledge of it? How much in an average year evaporates from the Menindee storage lakes?

Mr Slatyer—I do not know the answer to that in megalitre terms either.

Senator JOYCE—I think it is about 450,000 megalitres a year.

Senator Ian Campbell—Why don't you come over here, Senator Joyce, and we will go over there!

Senator JOYCE—More evaporates from the Menindee storage lakes each year than actually is ever used on Cubby Station in its best year. Is there any plan in mind, if you want to get water back into the river, to actually get a more effective cell mechanism working for the Menindee storage lakes and getting away from this proposition we use? There is about 400,000 megalitres or something in the Menindee storage lakes.

Mr Slatyer—We are aware of proposals that are under consideration by the New South Wales government for reducing evaporation losses in the Menindee lakes system.

Senator JOYCE—Would it be fair to say that with a better structured Menindee storage lakes you will have a lot better chance of getting water into the lower end of the river, such as

in South Australia and in the lower end of New South Wales, than you ever would out of any basically minor manipulation of the river in Queensland?

Mr Slatyer—That would be a hydrological fact. To the extent that water saved from the Menindee system would be closer to the areas of interest in the Murray River, that would have a more direct impact than savings up in the Cubby. It would depend on just what objective you were trying to serve. If you were trying to move water—

Senator JOYCE—They only use about 10,000 megalitres at Broken Hill. For that, it is about 400,000 megalitres of water they need to store, which is kind of ridiculous because it is a shallow-level storage. Are there any moves planned to get a better mechanism for getting the structure that is there at the moment to work better?

Mr Slatyer—As I said, we are aware of proposals that are under consideration in New South Wales for improving the operation of the Menindee Lakes system. There are a couple of different proposals that we are aware exist. But they are decisions in the first instance for the New South Wales government.

Senator JOYCE—Would it be fair to say that in any sort of flood, depending on variance in the condition of the land prior to it, the capacity of a floodplain to absorb water changes, whether it is wet or dry? Does the absorption rate of floodplains change?

Mr Slatyer—I am not a scientist, but that would seem logical.

Senator JOYCE—So statements that might be made in some quarters comparing one flood to another flood are like those comparing apples with pears. They are completely different. It depends entirely on the rainfall and the conditions prior to it. If we are dealing with the health of a river, you have to look at a whole variety of factors rather than say that this flood will be exactly the same as the next flood. That is all I wanted to get onto the record. I think it is worthy of debate that there is a lot that can be done with the Murray-Darling Basin. Who owns the Menindee storage lakes?

Mr Slatyer—The Menindee storage lakes are New South Wales property, though there are arrangements whereby some of those lakes, of course, are being used for private purposes. I am not sure. I cannot answer the details of the ownership question.

Senator JOYCE—So the New South Wales government is possibly one of the most inefficient users of water in the whole system?

Mr Slatyer—I can take that on notice if you do not know the answer.

Senator JOYCE—Thanks.

Senator SIEWERT—I have a couple of questions. One I want to follow up is a question I asked last time, and it is on the water implementation improvement plans. You provided me with a list of the ones that have been finalised and the ones that have not been. I am just wondering what the next step is in terms of the implementation of the ones that have actually been finalised. Hang on, all these are the ones that have not been.

Mr Slatyer—Yes, that is right.

Senator SIEWERT—Sorry.

Mr Slatyer—Without looking at it—although I do have it here—I can recall that we advised you that none had been finalised—

Senator SIEWERT—Yes, that is right.

Mr Slatyer—and that we listed the status of all of the ones that were in train.

Senator SIEWERT—I will come back to it later and ask how they have been implemented. However, in terms of the Murray-Darling and the climate change work that is being done, is it in fine enough detail to be able to determine the impacts on environmental flows?

Mr Slatyer—The report that was tabled at the last Murray-Darling Basin council meeting and is now publicly available—

Senator SIEWERT—That is the CSIRO one?

Mr Slatyer—Yes. I assume that is the report you are alluding to. It references a range of threats to flows in the basin. Each has a range of possibilities attached to it. The report arrives at some very general conclusions about the range of risks that are posed. So it would be wrong to take too specific a conclusion from those reports. The CSIRO report itself is carefully caveated to make that very clear.

Senator SIEWERT—I must admit I have only had time to briefly look at it. It is raising issues. It did not go into the detail specifically enough to be able to give accurate predictions. What I am particularly concerned about is that, as I understand it, the water held for environmental flows is held in a different manner in storage. Climate change could have a potentially larger impact on the environment and environmental flows. That has just been generally floated. Are you proposing to do more specific work? I realise water is across your agency, the National Water Commission and DAFF. Is that work being done? Where do I go to find out?

Mr Slatyer—The Murray-Darling Basin council did agree to undertake follow-up work after being provided this initial information. We would expect that they are the sorts of questions that will be pursued in that follow-up work.

Mr Borthwick—My recollection is that the ministerial council, in the light of that CSIRO report, asked the Murray-Darling Basin Commission to come back with a program of work to investigate some of those issues further. Furthermore, they asked for a particular study on so-called surplus water, which I think is what you are calling environmental water.

Senator SIEWERT—Do they call it surface water because—

Mr Borthwick—No, surplus water.

Senator SIEWERT—Sorry, that is what I meant. It is getting late!

Mr Borthwick—It is water in the system that is not allocated for consumptive use or part of the 500 gigalitres which is under the Living Murray initiative. That surplus water or unallocated water can be used for environmental purposes. In some jurisdictions, it is also used for consumptive purposes. So the marriage of the CSIRO's tentative conclusions in terms of the risks of the water supply in the system will be looked at further by the commission, as is the surplus water in the system and how those things might interact. There

is a complex interaction there. There is a considerable program of work. But the ministers have only just authorised that the commission have a good look at that.

Senator SIEWERT—If I understand correctly what you just said, the commission is preparing a proposed program to go back to the council?

Mr Borthwick—Exactly.

Senator SIEWERT—And will there be funding already available, or is that included in all the different funding pots? I know there is a complex variety. Or will they have to seek further funding?

Mr Borthwick—No. The commission has more than adequate funding to do that apropos the Commonwealth's \$500 million injection over and above its existing budget.

Senator SIEWERT—I am aware of the \$500 million injection. That can be funded out of that pot?

Mr Borthwick—I do not know how the commission is planning on doing it because it has been allocated to them. But I am saying that, between their existing budget and that money, I think they will have more than adequate resources to do the work.

Senator SIEWERT—You may not be able to clarify this. I was not able to ask this question on Tuesday night at PM&C, where the National Water Commission is housed for asking estimates questions, because we ran out of time—surprise, surprise! Does the commission itself, as in the body, have policy providing advice as well as implementation? It has responsibility for implementation of the National Water Initiative. Does it provide policy advice as well?

Mr Borthwick—I think that is best directed to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Senator SIEWERT—Yes, I wanted to.

Mr Borthwick—But my understanding is that it is the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet that provides policy advice on water issues. The National Water Commission has been given a specific remit in terms of the particular water programs under the \$1.6 billion to \$1.8 billion programs and in terms of the National Water Initiative. But the policy carriage rests with the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Senator SIEWERT—That is how I thought it was. The budget documents are a bit unclear. I will put a question on notice. I thought you might be able to clarify it for me.

Mr Slatyer—To get a formal response, it would be appropriate to put it on notice to the Prime Minister and cabinet portfolio.

Senator SIEWERT—Thanks. I have some coastal questions.

CHAIR—Would you like to ask them? We are running out of time. I think we went over a little bit last time. But, if you try and expedite what you have, we will see where we are.

Senator SIEWERT—I also have marine questions.

CHAIR—Senator McLucas has questions on the natural resource management programs. There are some people with policy questions. We will ask some and put them on notice as well, and we will get there.

Senator SIEWERT—The new coastal protection plan was officially launched on Tuesday the 23rd. Is that correct?

Mr Slatyer—Yes.

Senator SIEWERT—Does that bring with it a new way of doing business with the states? I have not had a chance to read it. I have a copy but I have not had a chance to read it because it was only released the day before yesterday.

Mr Slatyer—What was announced a few days ago was an implementation plan for a policy framework that was agreed with the states a couple of years ago. It continues the practice that we have adopted since that framework was issued of working these policy projects up jointly with the states. When you read the implementation plan, you will see that it describes particular activities that need to be done to deliver on the policy framework that was announced earlier. It specifies who will do what by when, so it is that kind of document. It does not break any new policy ground but it delivers, I guess, on the undertaking that the Commonwealth and state governments made back in 2003 to work together to improve how we manage coastal zone environments. So that is the purpose of the document. Hopefully, you will find that it is practically oriented and that real and good things will flow from it.

CHAIR—Do you have any other questions to put on notice in that area?

Senator SIEWERT—Not in that one.

CHAIR—We will go to marine now. Senator McLucas, do you have any marine questions?

Senator McLUCAS—No.

CHAIR—Senator Siewert?

Senator SIEWERT—I do have quite a few. One is on deep sea trawling. I want to follow up specifically a motion that was passed by the Senate a couple of months ago on the implementation of the UN resolution about taking urgent action. I am wondering how the Australian government is progressing that. I am happy, if you cannot answer that straightaway, for you to take it on notice.

Ms Petrachenko—The question of bottom trawling is being progressed at the United Nations, as you are aware. Australia was one of the countries that spoke recently—last June—on that topic. It was then debated in the UN General Assembly last October, I believe. The results of that have led to a review by regional fisheries management organisations of how well they are implementing measures against destructive fishing practices such as bottom trawling. All regional fisheries management organisations will have to report back to the United Nations at the upcoming UNGA. That deals with areas that are covered by regional fisheries management organisations. But throughout the oceans and high seas there are areas that are not covered by regional fisheries management organisations. We believe that countries need to take appropriate measures for their nationals using flag state and other measures to ensure that appropriate fishing methods are taking place.

Domestically—and the minister may wish to speak about this—for example, in the south-east, in the MPAs that were recently announced, bottom trawling is not allowed in those marine protected areas, which are key habitats. So the idea very much is to look at what the key habitats are. The same thing would be on the high seas. We identify those areas. If a regional fisheries management organisation is not in place, it is to make best efforts to put one in place that can regulate the fishing. That is what we are doing as well in discussions with New Zealand, Chile and other countries, for potentially the South Pacific.

Senator SIEWERT—I asked about the national plan of action for the conservation of sharks. I asked whether there was concern about the numbers. The answer was yes. I asked whether the national action plan for the conservation of sharks had been reviewed. The answer was no. I am just wondering why not. I will also put on the record that when I was over at fisheries I asked about sharks. They said they thought it was a constantly evolving plan. I was not aware of that. What is the status of the plan? I will ask the next question after you answer that.

Ms Petrachenko—My colleagues at fisheries would have said, hopefully, that recently there have been some discussions with state fisheries managers about the national plan of action. There is obviously concern about shark fishing in northern Australia. We are quite concerned about a shark called the snaggleteeth shark and a number of others, particularly in northern Australia waters, due to shark thinning and IUU fishing. So there will be further discussion with state officials. That might have been when they said they are constantly looking at it and updating it. One difficulty with national plans of action is that most countries—most shark species are migratory; there are 375 of them worldwide—have not adopted plans of action as requested by the UN. It is something that is of concern, obviously. We need to work internationally to make that happen.

Senator SIEWERT—I know there are ongoing discussions with Indonesia about IUU et cetera. How is this issue being progressed through that process?

Ms Petrachenko—I can speak from what our department is doing in that regard. We are concerned, obviously, about the status of a number of shark populations in northern waters. We are working with the Australian Fisheries Management Authority to get estimates of impacts. We need that information in order to really look at the status of the stocks and what is happening in terms of our responsibilities under the EPBC Act. Our department is also working with what is called an alternative livelihoods program. A lot of shark thinning is done by traditional fishers, obviously for poverty and reasons like that. So we are looking at alternative livelihood projects with them and using some of our expertise with things like seaweed and mariculture, which can be relatively lucrative for Indonesian fishermen. So we are working on projects specifically that go indirectly to the issue of why they are doing it in the first place. We are trying to increase our knowledge of the status of those populations, what it means and what it will mean. Potentially we are working with our colleagues in fisheries for fisheries management measures that may have to be taken domestically.

Senator SIEWERT—I will put the rest of my questions on notice because I have a number of other marine questions. Are there specific programs looking at the status of different species?

Ms Petrachenko—Sorry, I did not hear that.

Senator SIEWERT—Are there specific programs and is there funding allocated to look at the status of the various species?

Ms Petrachenko—No, not specifically. We are looking at it holistically in terms of the impact on all species. Sharks are one of the key target species, but we are also concerned, for example, about marine turtles, dugongs and other populations that are considered threatened.

Senator SIEWERT—I have other questions, but I will put them on notice.

CHAIR—Thank you. We go to the natural resource management programs division.

Senator McLUCAS—I want to ask some questions about the process of appointment of the Cape York Natural Resource Advisory Group. Mr Forbes, I understand that a selection panel was established some time ago to advise on the membership of the advisory group. Is that right? It is a straightforward question.

Senator Ian Campbell—Without wishing to blur things, the issue is similar to the one that you just accused me of in relation to the Torres Strait. We are at the stage where it is very close to agreement. I think it is just at a sensitive stage. You would not want to announce something at the budget estimates without our Queensland colleagues.

Senator McLUCAS—I want to know the history. When was the selection panel established?

Senator Ian Campbell—Which selection panel? This is the Mary Woods one?

Senator McLUCAS—Yes. That one.

Senator Ian Campbell—I am happy to go into that. We had a process of creating a strategy first, which I read and found to be entirely inadequate and inappropriate for the process. I rang up Desley Boyle and said, ‘I think we should get together and have a talk through this.’ I think it was both Desley and Steve Robertson, who at the time was the minister. We went up and had an incredibly constructive meeting in the Queensland cabinet rooms or thereabouts. We agreed that you simply were not going to get a consensus on the Cape between the pastoralists, the Aboriginal interests, the environmental interests and a range of other stakeholders. We agreed that we would have a very simplified, focused strategy leading to an investment plan that delivered real on-the-ground results for the environment and sustainable agriculture and got rid of a lot of the ideological agendas that had permeated the strategy.

Senator McLUCAS—Minister, you can spend the next 10 minutes talking about something that I have not asked about. When was the selection panel established?

Senator Ian Campbell—I never sought to make a selection panel. I then agreed with the Queensland ministers that we would—

Senator McLUCAS—You as a minister of the Commonwealth agreed to establish a selection panel. When was it established?

Senator Ian Campbell—If you know the answer—

Senator McLUCAS—I do not know. That is why I am asking you. Unlike Senator Joyce, I do not know the answer to this one. When was it established?

Senator Ian Campbell—I then appointed, with the agreement of the Queensland ministers, Mrs Mary Woods, someone who is independent, out of the Cape and not influenced by the politics. I said, ‘Could you please go around and consult with all of the stakeholders on Cape York about how to develop a strategy and a delivery mechanism that everyone will be happy with.’ I had a very clear parameter that I wanted to keep out ideological agendas of land rights and World Heritage listings for the Cape and a range of other deeply ideological commitments that people no doubt hold very dearly but would get in the way of getting pastoralists and other landholders and Aboriginal interests and a range of other interests together to deliver some action on the Cape.

Senator McLUCAS—So when was it established?

Senator Ian Campbell—Mrs Woods then came back with a proposal for some form of committee, which I had not been consulted about. I did not give her a reference to do that. On that list of potential members of the committee, there are a whole bunch of people who I know from my personal experience had very deeply ideological agendas for the Cape. I said to Mrs Woods, ‘Look, this is exactly where we don’t want to end up. We’re going to end exactly where we were two years ago. If there’s one thing this government wants to do on Cape York, it is to stop talking about fixing the problems of the Cape and actually deliver some results for an incredibly important part of the environment.’

Senator McLUCAS—What did you ask Mrs Woods to do?

Senator Ian Campbell—I then entered into a range of further discussions with Mrs Boyle and probably whoever has become the minister for resources. There have been a couple since then. There has been Henry, who we get on particularly well with. We have been pushing and pushing and pushing to find a delivery mechanism for NRM on the Cape. I think we are on the cusp of having achieved that. I think we will be making announcements about it very shortly. If you want to go back into the politics of who said what and why that person was not acceptable and all that sort of stuff—

Senator McLUCAS—That is exactly what I want to understand.

Senator Ian Campbell—I am happy to go right into it. But I too want to deliver results on the Cape. I want to get some investment moneys flowing. We want to get some projects going, some river repair projects, some biodiversity projects, some water care projects. I am absolutely sick and tired of the pathetic politics that is played in that region. It will be last out of 56 regions in Australia—

Senator McLUCAS—Chair, I just want an answer to my question. That is all I want.

Senator Ian Campbell—We put the 55th region in place in the Rangelands in Western Australia last week.

Senator McLUCAS—You have no control over this, Chair, do you?

Senator Ian Campbell—This will be the 56th because of the political wrangling—

CHAIR—Senator, you can ask the question. The minister can answer in whatever way—

Senator McLUCAS—But if the minister is not answering my question, Chair, don’t you have any role in that?

Senator Ian Campbell—I just gave you the whole history of it.

CHAIR—He is entitled to answer it in the way he sees fit.

Senator Ian Campbell—I am happy to take the next question.

Senator McLUCAS—What did you ask Mrs Woods to do then?

Senator Ian Campbell—I just told you.

Senator McLUCAS—You have said that what she gave you, you did not want. But you did not tell me what you asked her to do.

Senator Ian Campbell—To review the plan.

Senator McLUCAS—I understood that Mrs Woods was asked to chair a group of people—there were five people—and to recommend to you the membership of the advisory committee for the NRM for Cape York.

Senator Ian Campbell—No, she was not.

Senator McLUCAS—She was not. Have you read the letter to the *Cooktown Local News* of 26 April this year? I am sure you would have.

Senator Ian Campbell—No.

Senator McLUCAS—In that letter, she accuses Mr Entsch of ‘impugning the integrity of all of us’. In that letter, she says:

As chair of the panel, I was called to Canberra to meet with both Mr Entsch and Minister Campbell.

Was that correct?

Senator Ian Campbell—Absolutely correct, yes.

Senator McLUCAS—Why was Mr Entsch invited to that meeting?

Senator Ian Campbell—Mr Entsch has a very deep interest in the Cape. At that time, he was on a ministerial council that had interests in that area.

Senator McLUCAS—So you are suggesting that Mrs Woods was not requested—

Senator Ian Campbell—Mr Entsch was at the meeting we had with Desley Boyle and Steve Robertson to design this way forward. He had ministerial responsibility.

Senator McLUCAS—So you are suggesting that Mrs Woods was not requested to come up with a set of names of people who would sit on the advisory committee?

Senator Ian Campbell—Certainly not by me.

Senator McLUCAS—Where would she have got that idea from?

Senator RONALDSON—Where is Mr Entsch’s electorate?

Senator Ian Campbell—North Queensland, I think.

CHAIR—Capricornia. It is this electorate.

Senator McLUCAS—So why would Mrs Woods have the view that she was tasked and then go about doing that? In the correspondence that I have seen, it has been indicated that she took 41 applications to be a member of the advisory board. She and a number of other people

reviewed them and came up with a list of 12 people. Is that correct? She gave you a list of 12 people?

Senator Ian Campbell—I just think there was a breakdown in communications. I had a very clear view of what I wanted Mrs Woods to do. I had a very clear view about why we selected her to do it. She did a terrific job. But one of the jobs—

Senator McLUCAS—Of what?

Senator Ian Campbell—Of reviewing the plan. I asked her to review the plan. That was her job. She did a great job at that.

Senator McLUCAS—Did you write to Mrs Woods?

Senator Ian Campbell—I would be very surprised if I did not.

Senator McLUCAS—Could we have a copy of that letter that was basically requesting her to do the task and outlined the task?

Senator Ian Campbell—I will certainly have a look at it and see if we can provide it to the committee.

Senator McLUCAS—You will have a look at it and see if you can.

Senator Ian Campbell—I have not seen it for a long time. You are talking about something that happened a long time ago. We have come a long way since then. We are making great progress.

Senator McLUCAS—I do not know when that was because you will not tell me.

Senator Ian Campbell—You have not asked me. When did we appoint Mary Woods? It was April 2005.

Senator McLUCAS—Thank you. That is the first question.

Senator Ian Campbell—That is the first time you have asked it.

Senator McLUCAS—Let the record stand. April of?

Senator Ian Campbell—2005. Over a year ago. We have come a long way since then.

Senator McLUCAS—When did she give you—

Senator Ian Campbell—Because I stuck a bomb under the process and said, ‘Let’s get real about this thing.’

Senator McLUCAS—When did she give you her recommendation of the 12 people that she suggested should sit on the advisory committee?

Senator Ian Campbell—I asked her to do the job very quickly because I was absolutely exasperated by the waste of time and political positioning up there.

Senator McLUCAS—I am exasperated too, Minister, but I am not carrying on.

Senator Ian Campbell—Well, you should be too. What has occurred on Cape York is a national disgrace. I got sick and tired of it. I said, ‘I’m going to stick a bomb under it and start spending some money on the environment up there.’

Senator McLUCAS—When did she give you her recommendation?

Senator Ian Campbell—And the money started flowing because I stuck a bomb under it.

Senator McLUCAS—When did she give you her recommendation?

Senator Ian Campbell—I will tell you the exact date. I think I said, ‘Could you please report within six weeks.’ I probably said within four weeks, but it probably went up to six weeks or eight weeks, as these things do. It was very soon thereafter.

Senator McLUCAS—And then when did Mrs Woods get called to Canberra to meet you and Mr Entsch?

Senator Ian Campbell—About the same time. I was very determined to move the process along very quickly. When I saw the selection panel, I first said to Malcolm, ‘Where did this idea come from? I didn’t ask for a selection panel.’ We then tried to—

Senator McLUCAS—Not a selection panel. Recommendations of members of the advisory group. That is what she gave you—12 names. You changed four of them.

Senator Ian Campbell—In the end, I do not have an advisory panel. We did not go for a panel at all.

Senator McLUCAS—Well, the description of the group is the Cape York natural resource management advisory group. We are talking about the same thing. She recommended 12 names to you. You changed four of them. Can you tell me why.

Senator Ian Campbell—I sought to find an advisory board that would be happy to all the stakeholders on Cape York, knowing that the panel that was presented by Mrs Woods would not be acceptable to the stakeholders on Cape York. I did not want to go right back around and start where we started a few years ago and end up with an ideological battle on the Cape. I want some people who have one interest in mind, and that is to deliver the millions of dollars that should be going into environmental repair projects on Cape York that have been talked about by successive governments for over a decade now without having to play into the hands of everyone who has an ideological agenda on the Cape, be it Aboriginal rights, land rights, sea rights or—

Senator McLUCAS—Grazing rights, mining rights or fishing rights.

Senator Ian Campbell—All of those things.

Senator McLUCAS—All of those. I was a member of the Cape York regional advisory group in 1995.

Senator Ian Campbell—Well, you would share my frustration.

Senator McLUCAS—I share your frustration and I know where to sheet it home.

Senator Ian Campbell—Yes?

Senator RONALDSON—On a point of order, Mr Chairman: I draw to your attention the hour, which is now our closing hour.

CHAIR—It is our closing hour. The last time we did these estimates, we went a little over time. Technically, we should close now.

Senator Ian Campbell—I am happy to go on.

Senator RONALDSON—To be quite honest, the Chair has had 56 hours in this room during the week. I have probably had about 50. It is 11 o'clock. That was the hour. If the Labor Party cannot manage its own affairs to—

Senator Ian Campbell—I am not closing it down.

Senator RONALDSON—It is not the committee's problem.

Senator Ian Campbell—We have just spent half an hour on a political goose chase.

Senator RONALDSON—If the Labor Party cannot organise themselves to get their colleagues on, that is not the committee's problem.

Senator McLUCAS—Are you going to let that go ahead too, just let it go on?

Senator RONALDSON—Well, it is 11 o'clock.

Senator Ian Campbell—It is a political goose chase. Let's call it for what it is.

Senator McLUCAS—On notice, then, can you tell me why you removed those four people off the list and why you replaced them?

Senator Ian Campbell—I did not remove four. I have removed 12. I do not have an advisory panel. We have a new arrangement that the Queensland government is happy with and I am happy with. We are going to start seeing money flow into the Cape. You are going to see some environmental work done. I know that is of no interest to the Labor Party.

Senator McLUCAS—What is the arrangement?

Senator Ian Campbell—I know there is no interest in the Labor Party. You guys want to get rid of the Natural Heritage Trust. The hypocrisy, Mr Chairman. You have the shadow minister for finance saying they will dump the Natural Heritage Trust and you have this senator here asking how we are organising the Natural Heritage Trust. The hypocrisy knows no bounds, Mr Chairman.

Senator McLUCAS—You are rorting it. That is why.

Senator Ian Campbell—Rorting the NHT, are we now?

Senator McLUCAS—You are rorting the names of the people on this committee. You set up a panel—

Senator Ian Campbell—There isn't a committee.

Senator McLUCAS—You set up a panel and you asked for a process to happen and then you have thrown that out.

Senator Ian Campbell—You have no idea what you are talking about.

CHAIR—The only other remaining area is policy coordination division.

Senator McLUCAS—I look forward to the letter.

CHAIR—Do you have any questions to put on notice, Senator Siewert or Senator McLucas?

Senator McLUCAS—Yes. I have lots of questions to put on notice.

CHAIR—Would you like to do that, thank you. There being no further questions, the committee has now concluded today's program and its examination of budget estimates for the Communications, Information Technology and the Arts and the Environment and Heritage portfolios. I thank the minister and officers for their attendance and Hansard and Broadcasting for their efficient services. I hereby declare this hearing closed.

Senator RONALDSON—I congratulate you, Mr Chairman, on a very difficult meeting.

Committee adjourned at 11.03 pm