

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities portfolio
Budget Estimates, May 2013

Program: Agency:	PARKS	Question No:	198
Topic:	PARKS – Commonwealth Marine Reserves management		
Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question:	62 (28/05/13)		

Senator Boswell asked:

Senator BOSWELL: Will the federal government be funding state governments to manage the marine parks?

Mr Clark: The process that we have used to date, Senator, is through annual business agreements with state agencies. We look to fund certain activities which provide the most cost effective way to do that jointly with states. For example, where there is a state marine reserve abutting a Commonwealth marine reserve, the activities are complementary and it makes sense to do so, we enter into annual business agreements where funding is provided from the Commonwealth to the states to undertake work on our behalf.

Senator BOSWELL: How many of those are there?

Mr Clark: I will have a look for you. I might have to take that on notice. We have annual business agreements in place with a number of states.

Answer:

The Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities currently administers ten Annual Business Agreements with various state agencies to provide management services in Commonwealth Marine Reserves. These include agreements with the Western Australian Department of Fisheries and Department of Environment and Conservation, the South Australian Departments of Environment, Water and Natural Resources, and of Primary Industries and Resources South Australia, the Tasmanian Police and the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries.

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Budget Estimates, May 2013

Program: Agency:	PARKS	Question No:	199
Topic:	PARKS - Monitoring and surveillance of the Coral Sea marine park		
Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question:	63 (28/05/13)		

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD: Can I ask you, on notice, to give me a list of the actual surveillance flights or boat patrols that there have been in this area that Senator Boswell is talking about in the last 12 months, please?

Mr Clark: I will take that on notice.

Answer:

In the 2012/2013 financial year there have been a total of 140 aerial and vessel patrols that have included parts of the Coral Sea Commonwealth Marine Reserve.

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Program: Agency:	PARKS	Question No:	200
Topic:	PARKS – Helicopter costs		
Proof Hansard Page and Date	38		
or Written Question:	(28/05/13)		

Senator Heffernan asked:

Senator HEFFERNAN: Could you take a question on notice? In your helicopter shoots, what is the type of helicopter and what is the charge per hour? You can take it on notice.

Answer:

Kakadu National Park uses Robinson R44 and Bell 206 JetRanger helicopters for shoots. The choice of helicopter depends on a range of factors, including the purpose of the shoot, timing, capacity, and weather conditions.

The standard rate for Robinson R44 helicopters, including pilot, is \$780 per hour in the dry and \$880 per hour in the wet. The standard rate for B206 JetRanger helicopters, including pilot, is \$1200 per hour in the dry and \$1400 per hour in the wet.

Director of National Parks pays a discounted rate that we would prefer not to disclose due to the commercial sensitivity of that information.

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Program: Agency:	PARKS	Question No:	201
Topic:	PARKS – Uluru climb statistics		
Proof Hansard Page and Date	40		
or Written Question:	(28/05/13)		

Senator Birmingham asked:

Senator BIRMINGHAM: Do you have data that you are able to share? You said the highest number are Australians. I imagine Australians are also still the highest number of visitors to the park.

Mr Cochrane: I would have to take that on notice because I do not have the results of that research here. It has certainly been published in a number of places by researchers from ANU that we commissioned.

Answer:

Results of 2012 research undertaken by Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park in conjunction with the University of South Australia showed that 54 per cent of visitors were domestic and 46 per cent were international (the sample size was 636 visitors).

2012 surveys showed that 22 per cent of domestic visitors surveyed had climbed or intended to climb. 17 per cent of international visitors have climbed or intend to climb.

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Program: Agency:	PARKS	Question No:	202
Topic:	PARKS – Christmas Island staff rental assistance costs		
Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question:	41 (28/05/13)		

Senator Birmingham asked:

Senator BIRMINGHAM: Are there any other impacts in relation to Christmas Island being felt as a result of the increased level of human traffic across the island?

Mr Cochrane: The predominant impact on us is actually the increase in cost of accommodation on the island because accommodation is incredibly tight. Through the department's enterprise agreement, we provide rental subsidies for staff on the island. That has been an increasing cost for us.

Senator BIRMINGHAM: How many staff do you have on the island?

Mr Cochrane: I can answer that very shortly. Our average staffing for the year has been 25. About half of those are externally funded through the Christmas Island mine site rehabilitation program, which is funded via a levy on the mine.

Senator BIRMINGHAM: Are you able to estimate what the additional cost of accommodation is associated with those 25?

Mr Cochrane : I would have to take that on notice. It certainly has gone up by several hundred dollars a week, at least.

Senator BIRMINGHAM: Several hundred dollars a week for the total 25?

Mr Cochrane : No— per residence. We have single employees, we have married couples, we have families. They all would attract different rates of support.

Senator BIRMINGHAM: So several hundred dollars a week for each of the 25.

Mr Cochrane : A significant number of our staff—probably at least half of them—are locals; local residents.

Senator BIRMINGHAM: So there is not a short-term rental issue there, but there are still about a dozen—

Mr Cochrane : Probably close to a dozen would be, if you like, ex-pats.

Senator BIRMINGHAM: for whom you are facing increased costs—

Mr Cochrane : Rental subsidies.

Senator BIRMINGHAM: Costs that run into tens of thousands of dollars or more annually.

Mr Cochrane : Yes.

Answer:

Housing availability has significantly decreased and rents significantly increased since 2008. The additional costs for rental accommodation are variable. For example, a house rented in 2009 for \$250 per week was rented in 2010 for \$500 per week. The most likely reason for the rental increase is the increase in demand for accommodation on Christmas Island.

I have corrected my answer to this question through a letter to the Committee (see Attachment A). The cost to our agency increases by the number of staff we are supporting. Currently we are providing assistance to one staff member at a rate of \$52 per week.



Australian Government
Director of National Parks

Senator Doug Cameron
Chair
Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator Cameron

On 28 May 2013 I appeared as a witness before the Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee Estimates Hearing.

During the hearing Senator Birmingham asked

“Are there any other impacts in relation to Christmas Island being felt as a result of the increased level of human traffic across the island?”

In response I said:

“Through the department's enterprise agreement, we provide rental subsidies for staff on the island. That has been an increasing cost for us.”

I wish to correct this answer. Through the department's enterprise agreement we are able provide rental subsidies for staff on the island. There has been a small increase in the rental subsidy costs for my agency.

During the hearing the following exchange occurred:

Senator BIRMINGHAM: *So several hundred dollars a week for each of the 25.*

Mr Cochrane: *A significant number of our staff—probably at least half of them—are locals; local residents.*

Senator BIRMINGHAM: *So there is not a short-term rental issue there, but there are still about a dozen—*

Mr Cochrane: *Probably close to a dozen would be, if you like, ex-pats.*

Senator BIRMINGHAM: *for whom you are facing increased costs—*

Mr Cochrane: *Rental subsidies.*

Senator BIRMINGHAM: *Costs that run into tens of thousands of dollars or more annually.*

Mr Cochrane: *Yes*

I wish to correct these answers. The cost to our agency increases by the number of staff we are supporting. Currently we are providing assistance to one staff member at a rate of \$52 per week.

I apologise for the errors in my answers and trust this further information will be of assistance to the Committee.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Cochrane". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P'.

Peter Cochrane
Director of National Parks
26 June 2013

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
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Budget Estimates, May 2013

Program: Agency: PARKS **Question No:** 203

Topic: PARKS - Marine Bioregions –
Management Issues

Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Siewert asked:

What does the current level of marine park funding across most of Australia provide for, in terms of basic management? Please provide a detailed breakdown of expenditure on marine park management, by reserve or reserve network.

Answer:

The 2012-13 Portfolio Budget Statement includes funding of \$58.2 million over six years for the ongoing Regional Marine Planning Program, with the vast majority aimed at the management of marine reserves. During the 2012-13 financial year allocation of funds was as follows:

- \$4,657,352 was allocated to finalisation of the new marine reserves, including the proclamation process and the development of management plans
- \$2,632,046 was allocated to the management of pre-existing Commonwealth marine reserves.

Allocation of management funding to each of the five marine reserves networks and the Coral Sea marine reserves for the 2013-14 financial year has not yet been finalised.

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Program: Agency:	PARKS	Question No:	204
Topic:	PARKS - Marine Bioregions – Management Issues		
Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question:	Written		

Senator Siewert asked:

How much funding would be required to extend this basic standard of management across the new marine reserve network?

Answer:

The 2012-13 Portfolio Budget Statement includes funding of \$58.2 million over six years for the ongoing Regional Marine Planning Program, with the vast majority aimed at the management of marine reserves. The need for and quantum of additional funding required will be assessed as part of program activities during this time.

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