

**Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology & the Arts**

**Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Environment and Heritage**

**Environment Australia**

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2000-2001, (23/11/00)

**Outcome: 1**

**Question: 39**

**Group/Division: Natural Resource Management Branch/Natural Heritage Division**

Senator Mark Bishop (*Hansard page number ECITA 37*) asked in connection with Commonwealth funding to date for stages one and two of the Upper South East of South Australia Dryland Salinity and Flood Management Plan:

Do you have the disaggregated figures for stages 1 and 2 ?

**Mr Kitchell**—No. I will take that on notice.

**Answer:**

Please see the attached schedule.

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**COMMONWEALTH PAYMENTS TO THE UPPER SOUTH EAST DRYLAND SALINITY AND FLOOD MANAGEMENT PLAN (As at 24 November 2000)**

<b>COMPONENT PROJECTS</b>	<b>AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES &amp; FORESTRY TOTAL PAYMENTS</b>	<b>ENVIRONMENT AUSTRALIA TOTAL PAYMENTS</b>
<b><u>Principal Components</u></b>		
Upper South East Integrated Catchment Management Program (drain design and construction)	\$5,443,000	
Salt to Success (compensatory revegetation)	\$1,182,000	\$575,000
Wetlands Waterlink (wetlands rehabilitation and management)		\$290,000
Sub Total :	\$6,625,000	\$865,000
<b>Sub Total (AFFA + EA) :</b>	<b>\$7,490,000</b>	
<b><u>Other Components</u></b>		
Reclaiming the Productive Potential of the Upper South East	\$181,000	
Farm Wetland management in the Upper South East	\$26,000	
Sustainable Agriculture for Upper South East Farms	\$38,000	
Sub Total :	\$245,000	
<b>TOTALS :</b>	<b>\$6,870,000</b>	<b>\$865,000</b>
<b>TOTAL (AFFA + EA) : \$7,735,000</b>		

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**Outcome 1,**

**Question: 41-44**

**Division: Natural Heritage Division**

**Topic: NRM Action Plan**

**Written Question on Notice: 41-44**

Q41. Senator Bishop asked:

- To what extent are Australia's obligations to biodiversity conservation under international and multilateral agreements being accommodated and progressed through the design of the government's salinity and water quality strategy?

Answer:

The Commonwealth Government's response to its international obligations is wide ranging and includes:

- The National Strategy for the Conservation of Australia's Biological Diversity
- The Natural Heritage Trust; and
- The *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

The National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality makes a significant additional contribution to the conservation of Australia's biological diversity by:

- protecting environmental assets such as biological diversity that is directly affected by salinity and water quality;
- maintaining environmental assets so as to avoid further salinity and water quality problems arising; and
- taking opportunities for multiple benefits in dealing with salinity and water quality issues through an integrated catchment management approach

Q42. Senator Bishop asked:

- Does Environment Australia believe that biodiversity conservation will not be compromised by any action undertaken in the implementation of the salinity and water quality strategy?

Answer:

Compromising biodiversity conservation would be contrary to the Action Plan. The goal of the Action Plan is to *inter alia*:

- prevent, stabilise and reverse trends in dryland salinity affecting the sustainability of production, the conservation of biological diversity and the viability of our infrastructure.

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A major strategy to achieve this goal is through integrated catchment/regional management plans. Targets and standards for catchment management, based on good science and economics, will be developed for salinity, water quality and associated water flows, and stream and terrestrial biodiversity.

Q43. Senator Bishop asked:

- Can the Biodiversity Group of Environment Australia outline what programs might be set in place to progress biodiversity conservation in Australia in a rigorous and accountable fashion?

Answer:

The Natural Heritage Trust currently deals with a range of issues including a major focus on the conservation of biological diversity. The Trust still has a year and a half to run. The Government is considering what arrangements will be in place once the current funding the Trust finishes. The Prime Minister has indicated that a decision in relation to further programs will be made at the appropriate time.

Q44. Senator Bishop asked:

- Do/will these programs and accountability measures go beyond those outlined in the salinity and water quality package, and as outlined in the National Vegetation Framework which does not contain adequate targets for biodiversity conservation and has no legislative basis and is not strictly binding on parties?

Answer:

The Prime Minister has indicated that a decision in relation to further programs will be made at the appropriate time.

**Outcome 1, Environment Australia**  
**Division: Natural Heritage Division**

**Question: 47**

**Topic: Natural Heritage Trust mid term reviews**

**Written Question on Notice: tabled**

Senator Bishop asked:

Recommendations made under the Mid-Term Reviews have now been considered by the Ministerial Board and a general report tabled in parliament. However, there was no specific response provided. What specific recommendations from the reviews have been adopted?

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Answer:

The mid-term review comprised twenty nine separate consultancies and produced 620 recommendations. The large volume of material has made it necessary to provide summary information.

The Ministerial Board considered 439 recommendations relating to overarching issues. Program specific recommendations were considered by the relevant Minister. Of the recommendations 60 were not adopted, 346 have been or are in the process of implementation and 153 will be considered as part of the natural resource management policy development.

See answers to questions 48-55 for more information.

**Outcome 1, Environment Australia**

**Question: 48**

**Division: Natural Heritage Division**

**Topic: Natural Heritage Trust mid term reviews**

**Written Question on Notice: tabled**

Senator Bishop asked:

What specific changes have consequently been made to the NHT?

Answer:

Changes to the Trust flowing from the review include:

- increasing the proportion of funding provided for integrated regional projects,
- simplifying administrative processes with the aim to shorten the application form for small projects funded by the one-stop-shop,
- improved information for ongoing management of remnant native vegetation and to support continuous management of projects,
- community capacity building,
- promoting incentive based schemes that will have long lasting effects on conservation of native vegetation,
- improving monitoring and evaluating Trust performance and communication activities
- more efficient information management across Trust programs,
- increased consistency in delivery across the elements of Coasts and Clean Seas and other programs in the Trust and streamlined risk-management based handling of project applications.
- improved transparency and efficiency of the application assessment process for the advertised components of Coasts and Clean.

Numerous small changes have been made within Trust programs.

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**Outcome 1, Environment Australia** **Question: 49**

**Division: Natural Heritage Division**

**Topic: Natural Heritage Trust mid term review**

**Written Question on Notice: tabled**

Senator Bishop asked:

Did the department prepare a response to each recommendation?

Answer:

Yes, Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Australia and Environment Australia prepared joint responses where appropriate and individual responses to program specific recommendations.

**Outcome 1 Environment Australia** **Question: 50**

**Division: Natural Heritage Division**

**Topic: Natural Heritage Trust mid term review**

**Written Question on Notice: tabled**

Senator Bishop asked:

Was this provided to the Minister?

Answer:

Recommendations were categorised as either overarching recommendations which applied to the Trust as a whole, or program specific.

The Board was provided with draft responses to overarching recommendations. Each Minister was provided with draft responses to program specific recommendations for programs within their respective portfolios.

**Outcome 1 Environment Australia** **Question: 51**

**Division: Natural Heritage Division**

**Topic: Natural Heritage Trust mid term review**

**Written Question on Notice: tabled**

Senator Bishop asked:

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Can I get a table of each recommendation of the reviews and the government's response to each of these?

Answer:

As Senator Bishop is aware the Government tabled its response to the mid-term review of the Natural Heritage Trust in both Houses of Parliament on 6 September 2000. I have attached another copy of the response for his information.

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT BY

SENATOR THE HON ROBERT HILL

MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

RESPONSE BY THE NATURAL HERITAGE MINISTERIAL

BOARD TO THE MID-TERM REVIEW OF

THE NATURAL HERITAGE TRUST

6 SEPTEMBER 2000



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The Government designed the Natural Heritage Trust to promote the conservation, sustainable use and repair of Australia's natural environment in the national interest.

The Government established the Trust in 1997 with a budget of \$1.25 billion, most of it to be spent over five years. It later extended the life of the trust by a year with additional funding of \$250 million.

The main source of funds was \$1.35 billion from the proceeds of the partial sale of Telstra. The Trust has turned the nation's investment in infrastructure to investment in its natural capital.

At 30 June this year, the Natural Heritage Trust's Ministerial Board had approved investment of \$870 million from Trust and related programs in about 9000 projects.

In 1999 the Board commissioned an independent review of the Trust's performance and administration.

I am pleased to report that the review commended the achievements of the Trust - "a great deal has been achieved in a very short time", it said - particularly in implementing the strategies needed to achieve the Trust's objectives.

The review found that the Trust was successful not only in stimulating the level of investment in the natural environment but

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also in enhancing the contribution of community and State government stakeholders.

Some 300 000 people have been involved in Trust projects. Voluntary community activities are the driving force in most Trust funded projects, and benefits flow into day to day resource management.

The Trust established innovative models for natural resource management. A joint ministerial board was formed to integrate programs of the Environment and Heritage portfolio and the Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry portfolio.

And the Commonwealth and the States signed partnership agreements, which have been very effective in defining Commonwealth and State objectives and in implementing administration and financial arrangements.

Also, the introduction of a 'One-Stop-Shop' process allowed faster, seamless access to the Trust's programs and was well received by the community.

And regional and state assessment panels strengthened the model by ensuring local input to decision making.

Some important lessons emerged from the review. The review found, for instance, that although the Trust has been successful, the magnitude of the problems being addressed required long-term government commitment and greater security of funding.

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The review recommended more emphasis on strategic targeting of investment and more emphasis on regional delivery.

And it noted that the Trust should be used strategically as a part of a wider spectrum of interventions such as capacity building, regional planning, research, institutional reform, regulation and market based mechanisms.

Significantly, the review did not identify any fundamental failings in the administration of the Trust, including financial accountability.

The Board will make changes to the Trust following the review. Increased funding will be devoted to integrated regional projects.

Administrative procedures already have been simplified to lessen the load for small projects.

And more emphasis is being put on monitoring and reporting the Trust's achievements. This will require the assistance of the States and the Commonwealth looks forward to their co-operation.

Importantly, and perhaps most valuably, the review's advice on natural resource management will inform the Commonwealth's policy development.

The Prime Minister has formed a high level Ministerial Group to consider the Government's long-term response to natural resource management.

The Ministerial Group is using the findings of the mid-term review.

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In this way it will assist the Government to build on the achievements of the Natural Heritage Trust, the largest and most successful environmental initiative by a government in this nation's history.

I commend the report to the Senate.

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**Outcome 1 Environment Australia Question: 52**  
**Division: Natural Heritage Division**  
**Topic: Natural Heritage Trust mid term review**  
**Written Question on Notice: tabled**

Senator Bishop asked:  
How many recommendations were provided?

Answer:  
620

**Outcome 1 Environment Australia Question: 53**  
**Division: Natural Heritage Division**  
**Topic: Natural Heritage Trust mid term review**  
**Written Question on Notice: tabled**

Senator Bishop asked:  
How many of these have been implemented? (what is this as a percentage?)

Answer:  
499 recommendations have been or are in the process of implementation. This represents 80% of the total of 620. Of this number, 153 recommendations are being implemented through the natural resource management process.

**Outcome , Question: 54-56**  
**Division: Natural Heritage Division**  
**Topic: Natural Heritage Trust**  
**Hansard Page/Written Question on Notice: 54-56**

Q54. Senator Bishop asked:

- How many (NHT Mid-Term Review recommendations) were incorporated into the Commonwealth Salinity action plan?

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Answer: The National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality draws broadly on the recommendations of the NHT Mid-Term Review as one of a number of sources, along with the Discussion Paper on Managing Natural Resources in Rural Australia for a Sustainable Future, the MDBC Salinity Audit, the PMSEIC report on Dryland Salinity and its Impact on Rural Industries and the Landscape. However, given that implementation of the Action Plan have not as yet been finalised (including negotiations with other jurisdictions), it is not possible to identify precisely the number of recommendations from the NHT Review that will be incorporated into the delivery of the Action Plan.

Q55. Senator Bishop asked:

- How many are no longer relevant as the NHT will be superseded by the Natural Resource Management Strategy?

Answer: The recommendations of the Mid Term Review will provide a significant input to ongoing policy considerations for natural resource management.

Q56. Senator Bishop asked:

- When will we see the Natural Resource Management Strategy?

Answer: On 3 November 2000, the Council of Australian Governments agreed to the Prime Minister's *National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality*. The Action Plan focuses attention on the highest priority national problems in natural resource management. The Prime Minister has indicated that a decision in relation to further programs will be made at the appropriate time.

**Outcome 1 Environment Australia**

**Question: 57**

**Division: Natural Heritage Division**

**Topic: Natural Heritage Trust mid term review**

**Written Question on Notice: tabled**

Senator Bishop asked:

Why were the reviews not conducted earlier to ensure that there was adequate time to incorporate the recommendations and findings of the review?

Answer:

The reviews were conducted in 1999, halfway in the life of the current phase of the Trust which commenced in 1996/97 and is due to finish in 2001/02. Some recommendations from the Trust have been adopted to refine aspects of

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administration and others have informed the development of the Government's policy on natural resource management.

**Outcome 1 Environment Australia Question: 58**

**Division: Natural Heritage Division**

**Topic: Natural Heritage Trust mid term review**

**Written Question on Notice: tabled**

Senator Bishop asked:  
How much did the review process cost overall?

Answer:  
\$2,188,393

**Outcome , Question: 59-60**  
**Division: Natural Heritage Division**

**Topic: Natural Heritage Trust**

**Hansard Page/Written Question on Notice: 59- 60**

Q59. Senator Bishop asked:

- Which department is managing the Natural Resource Management Strategy?

Answer: The *National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality* is being managed collaboratively by Agriculture, Fisheries and Forests Australia, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and Environment Australia.

Q60. Senator Bishop asked:

- What role is EA taking in the process?

Answer: Environment Australia has joint responsibility with Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

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**Outcome 1 Environment Australia Question: 61**

**Division: Natural Heritage Division**

**Topic: Natural Heritage Trust mid term review**

**Written Question on Notice: tabled**

Senator Bishop asked:

How many of the recommendations required fundamental changes to the program - 10%? 50%?

Answer:

Approximately 20% of recommendations if accepted could be said to require fundamental changes to the program. The Board judged that it was not appropriate to accept most of these at this time given the better than satisfactory performance of the Trust and the short time remaining. However these recommendations are being considered as part of the natural resource management policy initiative.

**Outcome 1 Environment Australia Question: 62**

**Division: Natural Heritage Division**

**Topic: Natural Heritage Trust mid term review**

**Written Question on Notice: tabled**

Senator Bishop asked:

How many required working around the edges?

Answer:

Approximately 80%

**Outcome 1 Environment Australia Question: 63**

**Division: Natural Heritage Division**

**Topic: Natural Heritage Trust mid term review**

**Written Question on Notice: tabled**

Senator Bishop asked:

If it was just a case of working round the edges, why couldn't these have been adopted for the last 2 years of the program?



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Answer:

I have instructed my Department that the accepted advice should be incorporated within program strategies as they are updated or adopted in practice in the day to day administration of the programs.

**Outcome 1 Environment Australia**

**Question: 64**

**Division: Natural Heritage Division**

**Topic: Natural Heritage Trust mid term review**

**Written Question on Notice: tabled**

Senator Bishop asked:

If they are fundamental changes, doesn't this indicate that there are fundamental flaws with the NHT?

Answer:

The mid-term review found that overall the Trust was performing well in meeting its objectives. 25% of recommendations were judged to relate to the delivery of future natural resource management programs and are being considered as part of the development of the government's natural resource management policy, building on the experience gained through the Trust. These recommendations will require extensive consultation and negotiation with community and State government stakeholders.

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**Outcome 1,**

**Question: 65-68**

**Division: Natural Heritage Division**

**Topic: Cape York Mid Term Review**

**Hansard Page/Written Question on Notice: 65-68**

**65** - Senator Bishop asked:

- What is the status of the implementation of the recommendations by the Commonwealth government

Answer:

The Mid Term Review for Cape York Peninsula NHT program had six recommendations. Of these, three are being adopted directly with the remainder under consideration by the RAP .

- Recommendation 2 – (Resolution of property rights through the Property Planning Technical Group (PPTG) and the Tenure Resolution Group). The PPTG has developed a strategic approach to completion of the pilot properties project to ensure property rights of all stakeholders are respected.
- Recommendation 4 – (Small Community projects to be part of a regional plan). Small community group proposals are being considered in the context of the Peninsula's subregions and extension activity to develop projects is also being undertaken on a subregional basis. The most recent funding application round includes devolved grant applications for the first time.
- Recommendation 5 – (Funding delays to be avoided and application processes streamlined). All agencies are endeavouring to streamline the approval and administrative processes. Many delays have occurred through the necessity for iterative development and approval of projects.

**66** - Senator Bishop asked:

- Has the Cape York Regional Advisory Panel been informed of steps required to implement these recommendations?

Answer:

The CYRAP has been advised of the recommendations.

**67** - Senator Bishop asked:

- Has the Commonwealth met with the Queensland state government to discuss reform of the CYNHT Plan consistent with the recommendations of the Mid-Term Review?

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Answer:

The Commonwealth has met with State Government counterparts through the Intergovernmental Steering Committee. The issue of implementation of the recommendations of the Mid Term Review were discussed in this forum on May 31 2000.

**68** - Senator Bishop asked:

- What are the achievements of the CY NHT Plan since 1998?

Answer:

To date there have been 33 projects approved with a total outlay of \$13.2 million from the CYNHT fund. A full list of these projects is attached.

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	<b>Title</b>	<b>1998/99</b>	<b>1999/00</b>	<b>2000/01</b>	<b>Total paid</b>	<b>Total outstanding</b>	<b>Total Project \$</b>
CY98.01	Making It Happen - CYPLUS GIS Operations	197,202			197,202		
CY98.21	Cooktown Interpretive Centre	315,000		35,000	350,000		
CY98.33	Cookshire Strategic Plan	31,500		3,500	35,000		
CY98.19	Cape York Weeds and Feral Animals Project	943,288	235,822		1,179,110		
CY98.51	CYNHT Facilitator	78,720	19,680		98,400		
CY98.02	Making It Happen-CYNHT Plan Support & Coordinator	196,296	49,074		245,370		
CY98.05	Assessment and Declaration of CY Peninsula Fish Habitat Areas	88,800	22,200		111,000		
CY98.40	Conservation Management of the Golden-Shouldered Parrot	42,000			42,000		
CY98.41	Determine the status of Southern Cassowaries, Casuaris casuaris, on CY Peninsula	49,800			49,800		
CY98.42	Locating populations of threatened birds on Cape York	25,176			25,176		
CY98.03	Sustaining the Mud Crab Fishery in Albatross Bay	8,965			8,965		
CY98.29	Biodiversity Restoration of a Local Wetland	5,742			5,742		
CY98.31	Natural Habitat Restoration Through Exotic Plant Eradication - Alligator Creek	7,900			7,900		
CY98.45	Cape York Peninsula Property Management Planning - Stage 1	<b>84,600</b>		<b>9,400</b>	<b>94,000</b>	<b>9,400</b>	<b>94,000</b>
CY98.55	Conservation Management of Star & Crimson Finches	<b>47,978</b>			<b>47,978</b>		<b>47,978</b>
CY99.01	Starcke Conservation Area Natural Resource Management Project		<b>80,000</b>	<b>80,000</b>	<b>160,000</b>		<b>160,000</b>

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CY99.21	Conservation Management of Nationally Endangered Plant Species on Cape York Peninsula	111,900	83,000	194,900			194,900
CY99.42	Cape York Property Plans - Pilot Projects	584,240	287,760	872,000	287,760		872,000
CY99.10	Rehabilitation of Cullen Point to Janie Creek-Mapoon	115,200	81,200	196,400			
CY98.01	Making It Happen - CYPLUS GIS Operations	119,226	129,480	248,706			
<b>Approved New</b>							
CY99.26	New Carpark, Split Rock Art Site, Laura and Rehabilitation of Old Carpark	168,000		168,000			
<b>Approved Cont</b>							
CY98.05	Assessment and Declaration of Cape York Peninsula Fish Habitat Area	115,000	122,000	237,000			
CY98.19	Cape York Weeds and Feral Animals Project	1,114,210	1,035,500	2,149,710			
CY98.40	Conservation Management of the Golden-Shouldered Parrot	29,800	38,300	68,100			
CY98.41	Determine the Status of the Southern Cassowaries of Cape York	28,000		28,000			
CY98.42	Locating Populations of Threatened Birds on Cape York	49,946		49,946			
CY98.51	Cape York Natural Heritage Trust Facilitator	88,936	91,700	180,636			
<b>Approved New</b>							
CY99.14	Mapping Red Goshawks for Property Planning	53,100	30,700	83,800			
CY99.31	Land & Sea Management Coordinator for the Wik and Kugu Homelands and Ranger Service	108,000	105,000	318,000			

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CY99.33	Development and Implementation of the Natural and Cultural Resource Management Plan for Lockhart River Homelands	114,400	99,200	312,800		
CY99.35	Cape York Peninsula Sustainable Fire Management		273,025	345,100	1,132,125	
<b>Approved Cont</b>						
CY98.31	Natural Habitat Restoration Through Exotic Plant Eradication - Alligator Creek	8,295	8,295	16,590		
CY98.55	Conservation Management of Star and Crimson Finches	35,600		35,600		
<b>Approved New</b>						
CY00.06	West CY NRM Plan, Local NR Centres & Info. Systems		1,141,500	1,969,500		
CY00.12	Land & Sea Coord. For Old Mapoon lands, waters & ranger service		23,100	110,400		
CY00.13	Shell Mound Mgt. & Protection West CYP		59,100	137,500		
CY00.14	Kuku Thaipan Ethnobotany - Conserving Plant knowledge & Sustainable Plant Use		169,300	332,400		
CY00.15	Conserving Indigenous Plant & Animal Knowledge for our future generations - Wik/Kugu		152,100	303,800		
CY00.19	Development & implementation of a Natural & Cultural Resource management Plan for the Coen Sub-region		156,250	312,500		
CY99.36	Weipa & Western Cape Visitors Centre and Keeping Place		500,000	500,000		
CY98.02	Making It Happen - CYNHT Plan Support & Coord		170,125		<b>170,125</b>	
		2,122,967	3,693,779	4,786,485	<b>12,786,181</b>	
<b>CYRAP Recommended</b>						

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CY00.22 AFFA	Innovative Farm Forestry Production Systems for CYP						
CY00.23	Revegetation of a Degraded Quarry Site on NewMapoon DOGIT						
CY00.24 AFFA	Restoration of Erosion of the Old Coen-Weipa Road on Merluna						
CY00.28	Mt Baird Plant Nursery						
CY00.29	Land and Sea Management Plan and MOU for Cooperative Management Hopevale						
CY00.31	Protecting Areas of Natural and Cultural Significance at Baru						
CY00.33	Natural and Cultural Resource Managemnet Centre for Wik/Kugu homelands						
Cy00.34	Strategic Use of Resources for Indigenous Land Management in CYP						
<b>CYRAP Recommended</b>							

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**Outcome 1,**

**Question: 69-70**

**Division: Natural Heritage Division**

Topic: Cape York Peninsula National Reserve System

**Written Question on Notice: 69 -70**

**69** - Senator Bishop asked:

- What progress has been made by the Commonwealth Government towards fulfilling these objectives on CYP?

Answer: The Commonwealth has worked closely with the Queensland government on this matter and an acquisition strategy for Cape York has been developed which identifies priority areas for purchase.

**70** - Senator Bishop asked:

- Why has the Commonwealth government failed to support a Peninsula Wide Assessment on Natural Conservation values to identify ecologically important and significant areas for addition to Australian National Reserve System as specified under Strategy 5 of the CY NHT plan?

Answer: The Commonwealth is aware that the Queensland Government is undertaking an assessment of natural conservation values of the peninsula under Strategy 6 of the NHT plan. The Commonwealth will respond to the values and management needs identified in that study and, consistent with the strategy, address the issues in both 'off-reserve' and 'on-reserve' funding decisions.

**Outcome 1,**

**Question: 71-74**

**Division: Natural Heritage Division**

**Topic: Property Planning on Cape York Peninsula**

**Written Question on Notice: 71 -74**

**71** - Senator Bishop asked:



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**Environment and Heritage**

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- How much taxpayers money has been expended on the development of Cape York Property Plans as of 22 November, 2000?

Answer: \$1m has been approved but not all that has been expended.

**72** - Senator Bishop asked:

- Has a property plan been finalised?

Answer: To date no property plans have been completed.

**73** - Senator Bishop asked:

- If not, when is it anticipated that the first of approx. 40 Cape York property plans will be completed?

Answer: Currently the pilot program is under way with plans being developed for 11 properties. Each plan requires the incorporation of information regarding lessee interests, indigenous access and use, and conservation requirements. This represents a very complex piece of work especially in relation to identifying and consulting with the traditional owners.

The current project planning provides for the first of the pilot project plans to be negotiated early next year, following the wet season, with the intention to complete those first three properties by mid year.

**74** - Senator Bishop asked:

- How will these property plans be funded at the conclusion of the NHT Plan in 2002, if they are not completed in the next 18 months?

Answer: Funding beyond the 2002 conclusion of the Trust will be a matter for future budget consideration.

**Outcome 1,**

**Question: 75-80**

**Division: Natural Heritage Division**

**Topic: Weeds and Feral Animals on Cape York**

**Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology & the Arts**

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**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Environment and Heritage**

**Environment Australia**

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**Written Question on Notice: 75 –80**

**75** – Senator Bishop asked:

What outcomes have been achieved in the first 18 months of the program?

Answer: This program centres on weed and feral animal control for the whole of Cape York Peninsula. Work undertaken to date:

- development of feral animal activity database
- feral pig eradication
- feral cat control and survey
- brumby control and survey
- development of community pest management agreements
- community ranger training.
- detailed mapping of weed infestations across CYP

**76** - Senator Bishop asked:

To what extent have all stakeholders(including traditional owners, conservationists and pastoralists) been involved in the development and implementation of the Plan?

Answer: A key component of the strategy is to negotiate access agreements to enable on ground works to progress. To date three access agreements have been negotiated with Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Traditional Owners for the Keeting Lagoon Conservation Park, Lakefield National Park and Endeavour River National Park.

Meetings have also been held in a number of communities resulting in work being directly undertaken in weed and feral animal control which will have longer term benefit to those communities. This has been supplemented with ongoing training of community rangers. The project also links with a number of other Cape York NHT projects which are liaising with the Cook Shire Weeds and Feral Animal Control team with respect to provision of technical advice and training of community ranger services.

**77** - Senator Bishop asked:

What technical advice has been sought to guide the implementation of this expensive program?

Answer: Technical advice is provided through the Cape York Peninsula Pest Advisory Committee. Membership of the Committee includes landholders, Deed of

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Grant In Trust (DOGIT) community councils, Department of Natural Resources and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service.

**78** – Senator Bishop asked:

What long-term strategies have been developed to control and monitor weed and feral problems post CY NHT Plan?

Answer: Training of community ranger services to collect data and undertake weed and feral control in the local communities will ensure that this project has a life span beyond the end of the NHT. The recent establishment of the State Land Pest Committee will see a more coordinated response to weed and feral animal issues in Cape York Peninsula.

**79** – Senator Bishop asked:

Has a Cape-Wide strategy been developed to combat weeds and ferals on a tenure neutral basis?

Answer: The Cape York Weeds and Feral Animals Project functions on a tenure neutral basis and its activities are open to all on the Cape who wish to participate.

**80** – Senator Bishop asked:

Has the Cook Shire Council responsibly administered this program?

Answer: The results of a review of this program indicate that it has been responsibly administered by the Cook Shire.

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**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Environment and Heritage**

**Environment Australia**

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**Outcome 1,**

**Question: 81-83**

**Division: Natural Heritage Division**

**Topic: Enhancing Cape York Protected Areas**

**Written Question on Notice: 81 - 83**

**81** - Senator Bishop asked:

- As of June 2000, how much of the planned \$3 million has been expended on management of Cape York's National Parks and Protected Areas?

Answer: Currently no funds have been expended under this program. It is expected that a bid from QPWS will soon be forthcoming that will provide the level of detail necessary to properly assess the priority areas for funding.

**82** - Senator Bishop asked:

- When will the Commonwealth Government and Queensland government implement the planned 4 year program of capital works within Cape Yorks Parks and protected areas?

Answer: It is hoped the above mentioned bid will provide the catalyst for this program to move forward.

**83** - Senator Bishop asked:

- What actions will be taken by the Commonwealth government to implement this strategy before the conclusion of the CY NHT Plan?

Answer: As above.

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**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Environment and Heritage**

**Environment Australia**

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**Outcome 1 Environment Australia Questions: 84 - 88**  
**Division: Natural Heritage Division**  
**Topic: NHT Projects**  
**Written Question on Notice: tabled**

Senator Bishop asked:

- 84: How many projects under the NHT are one year in duration?  
85: How many projects receive funding for more than one year on the basis of an application?  
86: How many applications were received in the last funding round?  
87: How many of those were granted funding?  
88: Of those who did not receive funding, how many had been previously granted funding for the same project?

Answer:

- 84: As at 30 November 2000 there have been 2091 Natural Heritage Trust One-Stop-Shop projects that have received only one year's funding.  
85: As at 30 November 2000 there have been 3785 projects that have received Natural Heritage Trust One-Stop-Shop funding for more than one year.  
86: In the 2000-2001 Natural Heritage Trust One-Stop-Shop funding round, approximately 3500 applications for funding were received nationally.  
87: Of these, 2671 applications received funding.  
88: 53 projects that had previously received funding were unsuccessful in 2000-2001.

**Outcome 1 Environment Australia Questions: 89 & 90**  
**Division: Natural Heritage Division**  
**Topic: NHT Projects**  
**Written Question on Notice: tabled**

Senator Bishop asked:

- 89: Is the department concerned that many of these projects were relying on NHT funding and without it, the project is likely to remain incomplete, undoing much of the progress made with earlier NHT funding?  
90: What is the department doing to prevent this from happening?

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Answer:

- 89: The Natural Heritage Trust application clearly states that funding is provided one year at a time and that continuing project funding is decided on the basis of a review of the project's progress. Decisions to discontinue funding of projects are made only where there are compelling reasons to do so.
- 90: The guidelines and application form stress that continuing project funding is decided on the basis of the project's progress and merit. Continuing project applications, upon which decisions are made, seek project details on performance and financial management. The progress of continuing projects is assessed at State level and recommendation made to the Commonwealth. Where the community-based assessment panels assess progress as inadequate, they may recommend to the Commonwealth that funding be deferred or discontinued.

**Outcome 1 Environment Australia**  
**Division: Natural Heritage Division**

**Question: 91 to 92**

**Topic: NHT Projects**

**Written Question on Notice: tabled**

Senator Bishop asked:

91: The Walter Hill Ranges project in Queensland was granted funding for two consecutive years, but has had its application rejected this year. Seedstock and seedlings have been prepared, but there is no funding for the planting of these seedlings. Can you explain why the project was not funded?

92: Have any similar projects been identified by Environment Australia?

Answer:

91: The "Walter Hill Ranges Rehabilitation Project" in Queensland has been approved for funding this year.

92: N/A

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**Environment and Heritage**

**Environment Australia**

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**Outcome 1,  
Division: Natural Heritage Division**

**Question: 93**

**Topic: NHT Budget**

**Hansard Page/Written Question on Notice: Tabled,**

Senator Bishop asked:

Could you confirm that total NHT spending to 30 June 2000 (ie the first four years of the NHT, totals only about \$700m)?

Answer:

Totals for the NHT are \$699.243 million as of 30 June 2000.  
(Environment - \$344.281 million, AFFA - \$354.962 million)

However, \$879.800 million has been approved as of 30<sup>th</sup> June 2000.

**Outcome 1,  
Division: Natural Heritage Division**

**Question: 94**

**Topic: NHT Budget**

**Hansard Page/Written Question on Notice: Tabled**

Senator Bishop asked:

In order to reach the total spending commitment of \$1.5 billion, how much money will need to be spent over the next 2 years?

Answer:

\$799.757 million remains unspent.

\$619.202 million (approx) remains uncommitted.

- Note: Approx because to get an accurate figure as of today would entail a co-ordination exercise to all NHT Program area to derive an accurate figure.

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**Environment and Heritage**

**Environment Australia**

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**Outcome 1,  
Division: Natural Heritage Division**

**Question: 95**

**Topic: NHT Budget**

**Hansard Page/Written Question on Notice: Tabled**

Senator Bishop asked:

So the first 5 years had an average annual outlay of \$140 million, and the last 2 years will have an average \$400 million, leading up to an election. Is this correct?

Answer:

Expenditure over the first 4 years is as follows:

1996/97 - \$36.324 million

1997/98 - \$131.442 million

1998/99 - \$232.090 million

1999/00 - \$299.389 million

Total - \$699.245 million



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**Outcome 1 Environment Australia Question: 96**

**Division: Natural Heritage Division**

**Topic: NHT Budget**

**Written Question on Notice: tabled**

Senator Bishop asked:

Why wasn't spending carried out at a much more even level as originally envisaged and published?

Answer:

Estimates for the Trust always envisaged a significant increase in annual allocations over the initial years of the Trust expenditure package. Actual expenditure from the Natural Heritage Trust has steadily increased from 1996-97.

Trust funds are approved for expenditure each year, but actual payment may be delayed into the following financial year to ensure good program management. From 1999-2000, over \$123 million will be rolled over to 2000-2001, of which \$94 million is already approved for project activities but, for a variety of reasons, expenditure will occur in 2000-2001.

Reasons for delayed expenditure include:

- The One Stop Shop programs operate on a October to September cycle and some projects may not require second or third tranche payments until the next financial year for various reasons, such as delays due to drought- these payments may appear as carry-overs in the estimates.
- The National Reserve System Program and Coasts and Clean Seas had many approved 1999-2000 projects requiring payments in 2000-2001 or later.

**Outcome 1 Environment Australia Question: 97**

**Division: Natural Heritage Division**

**Topic: NHT budget**

**Written Question on Notice: Tabled**

Senator Bishop asked:

What implications does this have for strategic planning for natural resource management?

Answer: None

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**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Environment and Heritage**

**Environment Australia**

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**Outcome 1 Environment Australia Question: 98**  
**Division: Natural Heritage Division**  
**Topic: NHT budget**  
**Written Question on Notice: tabled**

Senator Bishop asked:

How is the department managing public expectations for when the NHT funds have expired?

Answer:

The Natural Heritage Trust has one and a half years to go and this has been clearly articulated in guidelines, budget statements and annual reports.

The Prime Minister has stated that a decision in relation to further programs will be made at the appropriate time.

**Outcome 1 Environment Australia Question: 99 and 100**  
**Division: Natural Heritage Division**  
**Topic: NHT budget**  
**Written Question on Notice: tabled**

Senator Bishop asked:

99: How is the department managing forward planning of programs in the absence of allocated funds after June 2002?

100: What direction has the department been given by the government in this regard?

Answer:

99: This issue is being considered by the department.

100: The Government has stated that the details of future of the Natural Heritage Trust will be considered at an appropriate time.

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**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Environment and Heritage**

**Environment Australia**

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**Outcome 1,  
Division: Natural Heritage Division**

**Question: 101**

**Topic: NHT Accounts**

**Hansard Page/Written Question on Notice: Tabled**

Senator Bishop asked:

Why haven't any interest earnings been shown as being appropriated to the Reserve, when the Act stipulates that this should be done?

Answer:

Fixed income percentage (interest earnings) form part of the annual appropriation. The fixed income percentage is calculated at 8% on the uninvested balance of the Reserve as at 30 June each year.

Appropriations have been based on estimates established at the commencement of the trust, these figures are as follows:

- 1997/98 - \$39.332 million
- 1998/99 - \$63.864 million
- 1999/00 - \$45.852 million
- 2000/01 - \$25.677 million

**TOTAL: \$174.725 Mil**

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**Environment and Heritage**

**Environment Australia**

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2000-2001, (23/11/00)

**Outcome 1,**

**Question: 102**

**Division: Natural Heritage Division**

**Topic: NHT Accounts**

**Hansard Page/Written Question on Notice: Tabled**

Senator Bishop asked:

Is there any reason why a full account cannot be published of how the Reserve has gone in the past, and is planned to go, including all interest earned on capital, planned further capital injections, where all capital injections came from (both sale of Telstra and from consolidated revenue) and all interest earned to date and likely to be earned?

Answer:

The total NHT Appropriation is approximately \$1.784 billion, this is made up of \$1.499 billion for the NHT program plus approximately \$0.300 billion to be held in perpetuity.

The details are as follows:

<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Amount \$ (billion)</b>
Telstra Initial Funding	1.100
CRF Estimated Budget	0.255
Fixed income percentage at 8%	0.175
Other Revenue	0.004
2 <sup>nd</sup> Tranche Telstra Sale	0.250
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>1.784</b>

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**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Environment and Heritage**

**Environment Australia**

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2000-2001, (23/11/00)

**Outcome 1**

**Question: 103-109**

**Topic: Tiwi Islands – Northern Territory**

**Written Question on Notice: 103-109**

Senator Bishop asked with reference to the proposed forestry plantation of Acacia Mangium on the Tiwi Islands:

**Q103** - I understand that NHT funds are being used to fund an EIS into a proposal for land clearing in the Tiwi Islands. How much funding has been provided and what is the scope of the project?

**Answer**

NHT funds are not being used to fund an EIS into a proposal for land clearing in the Tiwi Islands. A conservation management plan is being funded under the Bushcare program and the proponent is the Tiwi Land Council. Funding for 2000-2001 is \$113,600 with the proponent probably seeking \$18,500 in 2001-2002. The plan will identify areas of high natural conservation value. This will allow for the retention of identified areas of high conservation alongside the forestry operations.

**Q104** - Has there been any assessment of the flora or fauna of the islands?

**Answer**

The Commonwealth has assessed two proposals to develop forestry plantations on Melville Island under the *Environment Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act 1974*. The assessments considered proposals to establish two plantations of 2700 ha and 2500 ha. The assessments reviewed the potential impacts of the proposals on the flora and fauna of the island, and included consideration of an Assessment of Biodiversity prepared by the Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory. I understand that the proponent is now considering a larger forestry proposal on the Tiwi Islands and is conducting flora and fauna surveys in conjunction with the Northern Territory Government.

**Q105** - No public environmental impact assessment has been completed for this proposal and the Northern Territory Government has stated it has no intention to undertake one. Is the Federal Environment Minister satisfied that there will be no serious environmental impacts resulting from the project?

**Q106** - If so, please detail the documents which provide this reassurance. If not, what steps are being taken by the Minister to ensure thorough and public environmental impact assessment is completed?

Answer to Q105-Q106

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The new proposal has not yet been referred to the Commonwealth and there is insufficient information to determine whether or not the proposal is likely to be a controlled action under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999* (the EPBC Act). The Northern Territory Government and the proponent have been informed that the proposal may require approval under the EPBC Act and have been advised of their responsibilities under the Act. If approval is required under the EPBC Act, assessment documentation would be released for public comment as part of the assessment process under that Act.

**Q107** - The Tiwi Islands, and Melville Island in particular where the initial 30,000 hectares clearing is proposed for, are known to be home to a number of threatened species in the proposed project area, and considering that no environmental impact assessment has been completed for the proposed clearing, why has the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* not been triggered and a full EIS undertaken?

Answer

The process for obtaining an approval under the EPBC Act would commence when the proponent formally refers the proposal under that Act. We understand that the proponent is currently considering referral.

**Q108** - Environmental management plans have been prepared for the Tiwi Land Council by NT Parks and Wildlife staff. Several of these staff positions are NHT funded. Please detail the reasons and justification for NHT funded positions being used to complete environmental assessment work for proponents of a commercial venture.

Answer

Natural Heritage Trust funding is being provided through Bushcare for development of a conservation management plan. The funding includes funds for one full-time Tiwi Land Council position (Project Manager), one consultant vegetation mapper (3months) and Tiwi consultants. No funds were requested for NT Parks and Wildlife staff and no funding has been provided for preparation of environmental management plans for the plantation proposal.

**Q109** - What justification is there for the information gained from the above work being withheld from the public?

Answer

The work funded by Bushcare is yet to be carried out. When available, the information gained from this project will be available to the public.

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**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Environment and Heritage**

**Environment Australia**

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2000-2001, (23/11/00)

**Outcome 1,**

**Question: 110-113**

**Division: Natural Heritage Division**

**Topic: UN Convention of Desertification**

Written Question on Notice: 110 - 113

**110** - Senator Bishop asked:

- Why has the government made its ratification of the convention on desertification conditional on not having to develop a national action plan?

Answer: Article 9 of the UNCCD requires affected developing country Parties, and Parties which are members of Regional Implementation Annexes, to prepare a National Action Program (NAP) to identify the factors contributing to desertification in their countries, and to describe practical measures to combat them. NAPs are optional for developed country Parties which are not members of a Regional Implementation Annex. Australia falls into this category. Australia does not need, and is not be required by the CCD, to develop a NAP. Current land management programs and policies in place or under development in Australia already meet, if not exceed the requirements of the Convention.

**111** - Senator Bishop asked:

- Were there any other conditions on ratification?

Answer: There were no conditions on Australia's ratification of the Convention.

**112** - Senator Bishop asked:

- Will Australia be sending an official delegation to COP 4 of the convention in December?

Answer: Australia will be sending an official delegation to CoP4. The delegation is made up of officials from the Department of Environment and Heritage and German Embassy staff from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

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**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Environment and Heritage**

**Environment Australia**

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**113** - Senator Bishop asked:

- Would the government consider having a formal stakeholder consultation process on its involvement in the convention, particularly relating to the government's position for COP 4 and particularly including NGOs?

Answer: The Commonwealth has conducted extensive consultations on the UNCCD with all stakeholder groups, from the earliest days of negotiation through to ratification. Extensive consultations were undertaken by the Commonwealth before the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (which initiated work on the Convention), and prior to and during all Convention negotiating sessions. Consultations included State and Territory Governments, business and industry representatives, and environmental and international aid organisations. These have continued to the present, in respect of ratification.

The States and Territories, industry, environment and aid NGO's have been offered an open invitation to participate in all Australian delegations to UNCCD meetings.