

Senate Standing Committee on Economics

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Resources, Energy and Tourism Portfolio

Budget Estimates

4 June 2013

Question: **BR12**

Topic: **Report on the Economic Impact of the Current Mining Boom on the Australian Tourism Industry**

Proof Hansard Page: **71 and 74**

Senator Waters asked:

Senator WATERS: I have some questions about the report on the economic impact of the current mining boom on the Australian tourism industry. I am sure that you are all very sad to leave staffing matters and move to policy matters. When was this report commissioned?

Dr Jago: The report was commissioned a couple of years ago-before my time. The advisory board, about a year and a half to two years ago decided to do a study on this.

Senator WATERS: Okay. When was it completed?

Dr Jago: It was completed late last year.

Senator WATERS: You said that the advisory board-

Dr Jago: The Tourism Research Advisory Board, which has oversight of the research agenda for the industry.

Senator WATERS: Are they able to commission things of their own volition or do they need a direction from someone?

Dr Jago: They do not commission research. The board was appointed to look after the research agenda. It is the board that Tourism Research Australia answers to.

Senator WATERS: It was completed late last year.

Dr Jago: Correct.

Senator WATERS: I discovered it only very recently. Can you confirm when it was placed on the department's website?

Dr Jago: It was placed on the website as soon it was released. I will have to take on notice when it was finished. [Answered on Page 74]

Senator WATERS: That would be great. My understanding is that it was put up on the website in January.

Dr Jago: It was put up when it came out. It may have been very late last year so that it went on the website in either December or January-that could be correct. But it was put on the web almost immediately after completion.

Senator WATERS: Almost immediately. Could you take on notice what the delay was and particularly what the reasons for the delay.

Dr Jago: I will check, but I do not believe that there was any delay.

Senator WATERS: Good. If you could confirm that for me, that would be good. How was the report publicised?

Dr Jago: I assume that a briefing went to the minister. There is normally a media release to go with it.

Senator WATERS: Okay. There was not one in this instance. Why is that?

Dr Jago: I cannot answer that.

Senator WATERS: Is there anyone here who can?

Dr Jago: Tourism Research Australia has begun issuing media releases with its reports, but that only commenced about four or five weeks ago. Prior to that, we did not issue releases. If someone else wished to issue a release, they could.

Senator WATERS: I see. So when you said "normally" it is only normal as of the last month.

Dr Jago: Yes. As of now, all TRA reports have a media release. But that is a recent change.

Senator WATERS: Prior to that, reports done by subsidiary bodies were not promoted or noted by the department?

Dr Jago: They could be. It was released. Maybe the minister's office or another agency would put out a release.

Senator WATERS: Was there a draft? Is this something for which a draft media release would normally be prepared, either for the minister or the department to look at? You have just clarified that, actually. You said that in the last few weeks Tourism Research Australia-

Dr Jago: Yes. We now produce our own releases. They go to the minister's office for information. But we put them out separately.

Senator WATERS: Okay. Prior to this new process taking effect, would your body have provided a draft media release either to the department or to the minister?

Dr Jago: What would usually happen is that the media office would produce something, we would fact check it to make sure that the information in it was correct and then it would be released by the media office.

Senator WATERS: Okay. So why was that not what happened in this instance?

Dr Jago: I am not able to say.

Senator WATERS: Is there anyone from the media office who is able to give the reason why that normal process was not followed?

Dr Jago: We can take it on notice. I do not believe that there is anyone from the office here.

Senator WATERS: Okay. I am just intrigued to know why this one was buried, effectively.

Dr Jago: It was on the website, so I am not sure that it was buried.

..Dr Jago: The release date of that report was 15 January.

Senator WATERS: Thanks. You said that it was finished at the end of last year. I am interested in why there was a delay. Thank you.

Answer:

When was this project commissioned?

Whilst there was no formal commissioning of this research, the project commenced in late August, early September 2011.

Who initiated the project?

Mr Drew Clarke, Secretary, Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism at that time.

When was the project completed?

The project was undertaken in two stages. The first stage of the project was a snapshot entitled "The Impact of the Mining Boom on Tourism" that was published to the web in November 2011.

A draft of the second stage of this project was presented to the September 2012 meeting of the TRAB at which time the Advisory Board expanded the scope of the project and requested that consultation be undertaken with some key industry informants.

TRA produced the final report entitled "The Economic Impact of the Current Mining Boom on Australia's Tourism Industry" in early December 2012. The Ministers' Office received a copy of the final report and a brief under embargo on 21 December 2012. Advisory Board members received a copy of the final report on the same day. The covering note indicated that the report was due for release on 17 January 2013.

The second report was released on 17 January 2013 and put on TRA's part of the RET website. TRA's new website indicated that this report was released on 15 January 2013 but this is not correct and has now been amended to 17 January 2013.

Were there any delays in the release?

There were no delays between completion of the final report within TRA and the proofed version going to the Minister's Office on 21 December 2012. Normally, a report of this type would be released 1-2 weeks after a 'for information' copy being sent to the Ministers' Office under embargo. As this report was sent out under embargo on the last working day of the year before Christmas, the public release was 4 weeks later as a result of the Xmas-New Year close down.

Media Release

As of May 2013, TRA does a media release on all of its reports. Prior to May 2013, it was up to the Minister's Office as to whether individual TRA reports were of sufficient interest to warrant a media release. Whilst there was no media release for the final report of this project, there was a Political Alert (issued by CCH Political Alert subscription services) on 17 January 2013.