

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government

Budget Estimates 25 May 2011

Question: 16

Topic: Northern Australia Sustainable Futures Program

Asked By: Senator MACDONALD

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Ms Fleming: No, it is in the budget, and it is known as the Northern Australia Sustainable Futures Program.

Senator IAN MACDONALD: So all of these projects come out of the—

Ms Fleming: It is a \$6 million program over three years, and they are subparts of it. I am happy to provide you with an update on each of those.

Senator IAN MACDONALD: Okay. You will get me an update on all of them, but do I take it that work really has not started? I see that it states, 'Partnership with the CRC for Remote Economic Participation.' We spoke about that earlier.

Answer: An update of each of the elements of the Northern Australia Sustainable Futures Program is at Attachment A

Project	Description and current status
Northern Australia Ministerial Forum(the Forum)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Forum provides a focal point for strategic leadership and a collaborative framework for the broad based development of northern Australia • The first Forum meeting was held in Darwin on 13 December 2010. The next meeting is to be held in Port Hedland on 28 July 2011.
Standing Committee of Senior Officials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Standing Committee of Senior Officials supports the Forum by providing advice, coordinating input to the Forum's deliberations and actions decisions. The first meeting of the Standing Committee was held on 4 March 2011. The next meeting is to be held two weeks prior to the July Ministerial Forum meeting.
Northern Australian Indigenous Experts Forum on Sustainable Development (Indigenous Experts Forum)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of the Indigenous Experts Forum will be to support and advise the Northern Australia Ministerial Forum, and to facilitate the engagement of Indigenous experts and leaders with Ministers and senior officials on policy issues relevant to the sustainable economic development of northern Australia. • The operational model for the Forum has been agreed and the Office of Northern Australia is liaising with Indigenous organizations to establish the Indigenous Experts Forum.
Community Based Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This project will examine cross-government approaches to improving community participation in land and water planning and development. • The project scope is being finalised. This project is due to commence in 2011-12.
Northern Australia Local Government and Household Water Management Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This project will develop initiatives to address priority water challenges facing communities across northern Australia. The project is being coordinated by the Australian Centre of Excellence in Local Government. • The project commenced in April 2011.

Northern Australia Data Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This project focuses on the development of data and metrics that better inform decision making and improve the capacity to profile regions in northern and remote Australia. • This project commenced in March 2011.
Sustainable Development: building markets in environmental and land management services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This project will develop a proof of concept for establishing an economic market in environmental and land management services in northern Australia. The project will also identify barriers to participation for Indigenous communities in managing Australia's environment and cultural heritage. • Tenders to deliver this project are currently being assessed.
Partnership with the Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for Remote Economic Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sponsorship contribution (\$100,000) was made to the CRC and the Department has been accepted as an Essential Participant. • Office of Northern Australia is actively participating in CRC activities.
A timetable for infrastructure investment in northern Australia: regional development priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This project will identify infrastructure priorities in northern Australia. • The project commenced in March 2011
Northern Australia Beef Industry Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This study comprises three projects that will provide a thorough assessment of the contemporary risks and opportunities facing the northern beef industry. <i>Project 1: Assessment of risks and opportunities</i> Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences commenced its assessment in April 2011 for completion in December 2011. <i>Project 2: Building capacity and partnerships in the Indigenous pastoral industry</i> This project is being delivered by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. <i>Project 3: Mosaic agriculture in northern Australia</i> This project seeks test the sustainability and prospective of mosaic irrigation. The project aims to provide a comprehensive and practical guide to the establishment of mosaic irrigation for the northern Australian beef industry. CSIRO commenced work on this project in April 2011 for completion in December 2013.