



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Senator the Hon. Glenn Sterle
Chairman
Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator Sterle

Having reviewed the transcript of the Supplementary Budget Estimates hearing conducted by the Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee on 21 February 2011, I would like to make the following corrections.

The first correction relates to an answer provided by Mr Noble to a question from Senator Back, which can be found on page 58 of the Hansard:

Senator BACK—So apart from the figures you have given us, is it possible to give some indication as to what the payments have been to the various groups engaged as consultants to the program? They would not be included in your figures of \$2.14 million and \$1.26 million. They would be the payments made to farming businesses.

Mr Noble—For the farm planning program, I understand that the Western Australian government has committed \$416,000 to deliver that program. That is a combination of funding to Curtin University and the activities undertaken by the Department of Agriculture and Food in Western Australia.

Mr Noble mistakenly said that funds for delivery of the program were a combination of funding to Curtin University and the activities undertaken by the Department of Agriculture and Food in Western Australia where in fact funding for the activities is undertaken by the Department of Agriculture and Food in Western Australia only. The correct response should read:

Mr Noble – For the farming planning program, I understand that the Western Australian government has committed \$416,000 to deliver that program. Funding for the activities is undertaken by the Department of Agriculture and Food in Western Australia.

The second correction relates to an answer provided by Mr Morris to a question from Senator Colbeck, which can be found on pages 79 and 80 of the proof Hansard:

Senator COLBECK—That will make Senator Boswell happy! If you cannot tell me any more about it, there is nothing much more I can ask about it. I asked at previous estimates whether ABARES was doing any work on forest industry related work in respect of timber demand. You told me in response to question No. CC14 that the department is not undertaking any work on future timber demand. Is that still the case?

Mr Morris—I will start off, but we might have to give you a bit more detail on notice. We have recently signed a contract with the forestry industry to expand our role in terms of providing forestry statistics.

Mr Morris has been advised since the hearing that, while a proposal was signed, a contract has not yet been signed. Finalisation of this contract is still subject to consideration by the Board of Forest and Wood Products Australia. The correct response should read:

Mr Morris—I will start off, but we might have to give you a bit more detail on notice. A proposal has been signed but a contract has not yet been signed. Finalisation of this contract is subject to consideration by the Board of Forest and Wood Products Australia.

The third correction relates to an answer provided by Dr Dickson to a question by Senator Macdonald, which can be found on page 91 of the proof Hansard:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Right. And then the process is that Dr O’Connell makes a recommendation to the minister, and then it is up to the minister whether or not he accepts that.

Dr Dickson—Yes, that is correct.

Dr Dickson’s response may have inferred that the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry is solely responsible for accepting the Selection Committee’s recommendation and appointing the Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Fisheries Management Authority. This is not the case. The Prime Minister’s approval of the appointment is also required. The correct response should read:

Dr Dickson - Yes, that is correct. The Prime Minister’s approval of the appointment is also required.

The fourth correction relates to an answer provided by Mr Souness to a question from Senator Nash, which can be found on page 128 of the proof Hansard:

Mr Souness—In negotiation of that treaty, the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Agreement. I think that is probably best directed to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Senator NASH—This is a new one. We do not normally get sent to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Mr Souness—It is a treaty arrangement that is much broader than just food. TTMRA covers a lot of trade between Australia and New Zealand. I am sorry; I would not have the information. Customs look after the Commerce (Trade Descriptions) Act and treaty arrangements fall under the domain of Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The combination of the two might be difficult to unravel, but essentially it means that food coming in from New Zealand still has to have country-of-origin labelling on it despite New Zealand not mandating country-of-origin labelling.

Mr Souness mistakenly referred to the Trans Tasman Mutual Recognition Arrangement as the Trans Tasman Mutual Recognition Agreement and also stated the Arrangement is a treaty arrangement, when it is in fact a non-treaty agreement. Mr Souness also wished to clarify his remark about responsibility for the *Commerce (Trade Descriptions) Act 1905* (CTD Act). Under the Administrative Arrangements Order, the Attorney-General’s Department has responsibility for the CTD Act and the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service is a portfolio agency of that department. The correct response should read:

Mr Souness - It is a non-treaty agreement that is much broader than just food. TTMRA covers a lot of trade between Australia and New Zealand. I am sorry; I would not have the information. The Attorney-General's Department looks after the Commerce (Trade Descriptions) Act and non-treaty arrangements fall under the domain of Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The combination of the two might be difficult to unravel, but essentially it means that food coming in from New Zealand still has to have country-of-origin labelling on it despite New Zealand not mandating country-of-origin labelling.

Thank you for the opportunity to review the transcript of the Supplementary Budget Hearing from February 2011 and to provide clarification on the above points.

Yours sincerely



Libby Bie
General Manager
Ministerial and Parliamentary Branch

7 April 2011