

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates February 2012

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 37

Division/Agency: SRM – Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Caring for our Country – Natural Resource Management

Proof Hansard page: 85-86

Senator EDWARDS asked:

I am new, as you well know. Hopefully, I will add to this process, rather than have you sitting there and groaning and saying, ‘Not another newbie!’ What kind of reporting obligations do NRM boards have with regard to the base level funding they are provided with under Caring for Country? I am happy for you to take these on notice. Also, what interim reporting are they required to submit to you under Caring for our Country for programs that go beyond one year, and what are the annual reporting requirements? Do they have to cite whether they have expended all funding provided to them? Is there a requirement for any surplus funds to come back? Do these NRM boards provide you with project descriptions and give you quantitative and qualitative reports on whether they have met their key performance indicators on what they sold to you to get the funding once the funding has been expended? I do not require an answer now. This is all going on. You can answer it later. As I understand it, there are feedback reports provided to the Commonwealth that outline the money that has been spent and the success of those initiatives or projects initiated by NRM boards using CFOC funding. It is very difficult to find out whether this is publicly available. I see a lot of surplus funds in NRM boards, which earns a huge amount of interest annually. They continue to levy land owners and still come to you and get more money when in actual fact they are building bureaucracies. Are we driving the right culture?

Answer:

Regional Natural Resource Management (NRM) bodies must report twice-yearly on Caring for our Country base-level funding, through interim (half-yearly) and annual progress reports. For each reporting period they must submit a performance report outlining their progress towards achieving the Caring for our Country targets and activity milestones as set out in their contract schedules, and a financial expenditure report. They must also provide annual audited financial statements of Caring for our Country funding certified by a qualified independent auditor. For multi-year investments, reporting is required twice yearly until completion of activities.

Regional NRM bodies must account for all Caring for our Country funding provided to them, through twice-yearly expenditure reports, and annual audited financial statements.

Surplus base-level funds can be used on alternative activities but must have the prior approval of the Australian Government, and be used for the objectives of Caring for our Country.

Regional NRM bodies provide project descriptions and provide quantitative and qualitative reports on their progress towards achieving the Caring for our Country targets for which they

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Question: 37 (continued)

are contracted. The Australian Government releases annual Caring for our Country business plans, which set out the Caring for our Country targets available for funding under each business plan. Annual business plan targets go towards achieving the Caring for our Country five-year outcomes. Details of the five-year outcomes and each annual business plan can be found at www.nrm.gov.au. Regional NRM body proposals for regional base-level funding must address the targets as set out in the annual Caring for our Country business plan for which the proposal was submitted.

Caring for our Country targets are quantitative targets, and regional NRM bodies must report their progress in achieving the targets for which they are contracted, including any explanations of delays or under-achievement.

Financial and performance reporting information from these reports is aggregated for publicly available Australian Government annual program reporting in the Caring for our Country annual Report Card.

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Question: 38

Division/Agency: SRM – Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Biodiversity Fund

Proof Hansard page: 87

Senator SIEWERT asked:

Senator SIEWERT: I will ask next door obviously some more questions about the Biodiversity Fund. In terms of the applications that have just closed, can you tell us the usual details, how many projects you have and their value?

Mr McNamara: For Action on the Ground, which closed Wednesday last week, we have about 240 applications, although we did receive just before closing a number of requests to extend from northern New South Wales and southern Queensland because of the flood events there. We granted up to 10 extensions. We should have all applications in by Wednesday this week. So, probably just over 240 for Action on the Ground. For Caring for our Country the same thing applies. There were a number of people who rang up from those flood affected areas seeking an extension, and we granted those—again, about up to 10 people. We will be looking at probably 455 to 460 projects for them.

Senator SIEWERT: What is the value of those projects?

Mr McNamara: I am sorry, I do not have that information. We can take that on notice, though.

Answer:

The Caring for our Country, open call, 2012-13 business plan received 453 applications seeking \$143 480 161.87 (GST inclusive) in Commonwealth funding.

The Action on the Ground program received 247 applications seeking \$105 568 028.00 (GST inclusive) in Commonwealth funding.

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Question: 82

Division/Agency: SRM – Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Marine Bioregional Planning

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

In response to QON 259, May 2011 the Department was asked whether it had provided advice to the Environment Minister on the Marine Bioregional Planning process and the Displaced Effort Policy. In response to QON 162, October 2011 which requested information on why this advice had not been provided the Department stated that it “regularly provides advice regarding both these issues”. Please advise which response is correct and why an incorrect response had been made.

Answer:

The responses to both QoN 259 from the Budget Estimates hearing in May 2011 and QoN 162 from the Supplementary Budget Estimates hearing in October 2011 are correct.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) provided advice to officers of the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (DSEWPaC) on these issues. Officers from DSEWPaC have responsibility for providing advice to the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities. Officers from DSEWPaC have regularly consulted with DAFF officers on progress and developments in relation to the marine bioregional planning process including the Fisheries Adjustment Policy and associated package for fishers displaced by marine reserves.

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Question: 96

Division/Agency: SRM – Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Staff Turnover

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

The response to QON 129 October 2011 indicated a higher than average staff turnover in the Fisheries Branch. What investigation has taken place?

- a) What are the underlying causes?
- b) What are the current figures?

Answer:

No investigation was undertaken by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) into the turnover of staff in the Fisheries Branch. During the period from 1 May 2011 to 31 October 2011 the Fisheries Branch staff turnover was 13.3 per cent in comparison to 8.1 per cent for other DAFF branches of a similar size. This is not a significant difference and is less than two extra turnovers per year for a branch of this size.

- a) Separation data for Fisheries Branch has been examined against team environment, separation reason, tenure, employee demographics and staff exit surveys. No shared underlying causes were found to exist.
- b) In the 2011–12 financial year to date (1 July 2011 – 13 February 2012) three staff have separated from the Fisheries Branch. As this branch has an average headcount in the financial year to date of 32.7, the year to date separation rate is 9.2 per cent.

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Question: 97

Division/Agency: SRM – Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Weeds of National Significance

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

1. Can the Minister explain and forward the minutes and paperwork that shows the process and methodology used to determine the new weeds of national significance.
2. It seems from responses to QON October 2011, that Weeds of National Significance Coordinators are working on papers for weeds that haven't yet been declared Weeds of National Significance.
3. How is this justified?
4. How do locally important weeds become Weeds of National Significance?

Answer:

1. The Australian Weeds Committee manages the process used to determine Weeds of National Significance listing. In relation to nominations for listing, the Australian Weeds Committee considers science and policy issues and reports to the National Biosecurity Committee that in turn reports to the Primary Industries Standing Committee. The Standing Committee has agreed to the listing of twelve additional Weeds of National Significance through an out-of-session decision in late 2011.
The Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Science (ABARES) undertook the scientific assessment for the Australian Weeds Committee based on each nominated plant's invasiveness, impacts across social, economic and environmental values and potential for spread. ABARES are preparing a paper for publication in a scientific journal and will be presenting the methodology at an international conference later this year.
Policy considerations included that multiple jurisdictions supported nominations and they complied with draft criteria for "Category 3 - Established Invasive Species of National Significance" in the Australian Weeds Committee/Vertebrate Pests Committee draft National Categorisation System for Invasive Species. Those criteria are that:
 - the taxon is present in the wild in Australia (naturalised and invasive in at least one State or Territory)
 - eradication of the taxon is not feasible (national cost-sharing not assumed)
 - the potential range of the taxon involves more than one State or Territory
 - the taxon is currently or potentially causing "nationally significant impacts"
 - the taxon requires national coordination of effort to reduce/minimise its impacts.

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Question: 97 (continued)

Further to these draft national categorisation criteria the Australian Weeds Committee determined that nominations should meet a feasibility of control criteria, derived from the then draft National Environmental Biosecurity Response Agreement criteria for feasibility of eradication.

In accordance with the Primary Industries Standing Committee's general principles, these working documents have remained restricted to member organisations of the committee and its sub committees.

2. Yes, coordinators have developed a series of fact sheets based on all the weeds nominated by the jurisdictions as candidate Weeds of National Significance in the current process.
3. The information, once published, will better inform nationally coordinated management and help communities reduce the impact of these significant weeds.
4. Nominations of additional plant species for consideration as Weeds of National Significance are made through the state, territory and Commonwealth members of the Australian Weeds Committee. Criteria include the plant's invasiveness, impacts across social, economic and environmental values, potential for spread and feasibility of control. The original methodology is published in the Determination of Weeds of National Significance by John R Thorp and Rod Lynch ISBN: 0 642 44913 9.

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Question: 98

Division/Agency: SRM – Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Landcare

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

1. QON 125 October 2011 asked for specific information regarding the regional body transaction costs. The response received did not answer the question and was not specific:
"Regional body transaction costs for core operating and administrative expenses met by the Australian Government through regional base level allocations under the Caring for our Country initiative should not exceed 10 per cent of the total Australian Government funding provided. Non-statutory regional bodies may allocate an additional 5 per cent of these funds towards governance improvement"
2. Please provide the actual figures requested through QON 125, subquestions 5 and 6, October 2011.

Answer:

Sub-questions 5 and 6 from QON 125 October 2011 asked:

5. Please detail the average regional body transaction costs as a percentage of the on ground delivery costs.
6. What are the range of transaction costs as a percentage of the on ground delivery costs for regional bodies across Australia?

Statutory regional natural resource management bodies are permitted to use up to 10 per cent from their total Caring for our Country base level allocation for core operating and administrative expenses to improve governance (transaction costs). Non-statutory regional natural resource management bodies are permitted to use up to 15 per cent from their total Caring for our Country base level allocation for these transaction costs.

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Question: 98 (continued)

The table below shows the maximum transactions costs permitted for regional bodies in 2011–12:

Jurisdiction	Body Type	Maximum Transaction Costs as Percentage of Total Annual Allocation (%)	Transaction Costs as a Percentage of On Ground Delivery Costs (%)
Australian Capital Territory	Statutory	10	11.1
Northern Territory	Non-statutory	15	17.6
New South Wales	Statutory	10	11.1
Queensland	Non-statutory	15	17.6
South Australia	Statutory	10	11.1
Tasmania	Non-statutory	15	17.6
Victoria	Statutory	10	11.1
Western Australia	Non-statutory	15	17.6
Total			13.7

Transaction costs as a percentage of the on ground delivery costs for regional bodies range from 11.1 per cent in states where regional bodies are statutory organisations, up to 17.6 per cent in states where regional bodies are non-statutory organisations. All remaining funding is directed towards on ground works and assisting the community to be involved in these.

The average permitted regional body transaction costs across Australia are 13.7 per cent of the annual on-ground delivery costs or 12.0 per cent of the total Caring for our Country regional base level annual allocation.

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 116

Division/Agency: SRM – Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Australian Feral Camel Management Project

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator EDWARDS asked:

1. After the \$19 million under the Australian Feral Camel Management Project (managed by Ninti One Limited) is expended in 2012-13 what plans does the department have to management the ongoing feral camel problem in central Australia?
2. Does the SRM unit intend to work with Trade and Market Access or AusTrade to find a better commercial outcome for both the DAFF and the export meat industry?
3. Has the department spoken with any interested parties to slaughter feral camels in an Australian abattoir?
 - a. If yes, who were they?
4. Has the department considered providing funding to establish mustering and holding facilities to assist any interested party in slaughtering feral camels as a part of its strategy to deal with the feral camel population and provide Aboriginal employment opportunities to the people APY Lands?
 - a. If not, why not?
 - b. Would the DAFF consider such a proposal if presented?
5. Has the department considered providing funding for a freight subsidy to assist an interested party in slaughtering feral camels as a part of its strategy to deal with the feral camel population?
 - a. If not, why not?
 - b. Would the DAFF consider such a proposal if presented with one?
6. Has the department undertaken a cost-benefit analysis of the current cull program compared with assisting any interested party in establishing a camel abattoir to slaughter feral camels?
 - a. If not, why not?
 - b. If so, what were the conclusions of the analysis?
7. How much has it cost to date under the Australian Feral Camel Management program to destroy each camel on a fully absorbed cost accounting basis?
8. Has the South Australian, Western Australian or Northern Territory Government contributed financially to this project? If so which Government(s) and how much?

Answer:

1. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) acknowledges that there will need to be on-going efforts to manage the numbers and densities of feral camels across much of Australian rangelands if their negative impacts on environmental and economic assets and social and cultural values are to be constrained within acceptable limits.

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Question: 116 (continued)

DAFF recognises that eradication of the feral camels from Australia's rangelands is not feasible, and that there are opportunities for both commercial and non-commercial approaches to feral camel management.

The on-going responsibility for the management of feral camels and the mitigation of their impacts lies with the respective state and territory governments and land owners/managers. The Australian Government's role and level of involvement on the on-going management of the feral camels will be considered closer to the completion of the current Caring for our Country project.

2. DAFF will work with other relevant agencies such as AusTrade on the development of commercial opportunities where they arise. However, the development of a viable industry involves commercial decisions — DAFF's primary roles are in regulation and quality assurance.
3. Yes, departmental officers have spoken with a number of parties interested in the use of camels for commercial gain. As some of these discussions have been commercial-in-confidence, it would be inappropriate to name specific parties.
- 4a. The Caring for our Country funds provided to the feral camel management project are managed by the project manager, Ninti One Ltd. Individual proposals for support for camel removal are considered by the project manager and assessed against project Investment Guidelines. The project manager has worked with a range of Indigenous communities — including people from the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands in South Australia, from the Martu and Ngaanyatjarra lands in Western Australia, and from communities represented by the Central Lands Council in the Northern Territory — to assist them in developing their capacity to manage feral camels and their impacts on Indigenous lands.
- b. Individual proposals for support for camel removal are considered by Ninti One Ltd and assessed against their Investment Guidelines. There are opportunities for investment of Caring for our Country funds to establish mustering and holding facilities and provide employment opportunities for Indigenous people, but these investments must be consistent with the purposes for which the funds were appropriated — the improved management of natural resources.
- 5a. Yes. However, provision of a freight subsidy to assist an interested party in slaughtering feral camels is not consistent with the Caring for our Country eligibility criteria which preclude direct subsidisation of commercial activities. Provision of on-going subsidies to an industry is inconsistent with Australia's trade policy.

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Question: 116 (continued)

- b. No. This would not be consistent with either the Caring for our Country eligibility criteria which preclude direct subsidisation of commercial activities or Australia's trade policy.
- 6a. No, the department has not undertaken a cost-benefit analysis of the current project compared with assisting any interested party in establishing a camel abattoir to slaughter feral camels. The Caring for our Country project is an environmental management project and investing in the establishment of a camel abattoir would not be consistent with the purposes for which the funds were appropriated.
- b. Not applicable.
7. On a fully absorbed cost accounting basis, including expenditure on:
- establishing the partnerships necessary to work across land tenures and jurisdictional boundaries;
 - establishing the intelligence facilities to enable operations to be targeted for maximum cost-effectiveness;
 - establishing the monitoring and reporting framework to demonstrate project performance;
 - managing the animal welfare issues in supported operations; and
 - growing the local capacity for long-term feral camel management, as well as the direct operational costs, the cost to the Australian Government is approximately \$212 per camel removed to date.

Such costs would also need to be incurred in any comparably sized commercial use program but may not be accounted for so transparently and comparisons may be misleading.

8. The South Australian, Western Australian and Northern Territory governments are all contributing both cash and in-kind support (mainly officer time to plan and undertake operations) for activities complementary to the project:
- South Australian Government: \$2.96 million to date;
 - Northern Territory Government: \$3.3 million over the four years 2009–13; and
 - Western Australian Government: un-costed in-kind support in 2009–10 and 2010–11, \$500 000 as cash with additional in-kind support in 2011-12 and a minimum of \$250 000 as cash with additional in-kind support in 2012–13.

By way of example, South Australia's in-kind contribution to camel management included the salaries, vehicles and office support required to plan, contract and manage a major project to remove feral camels from the Simpson Desert.

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 118

Division/Agency: SRM – Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Caring for our Country – Natural Resource Management

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator EDWARDS asked:

1. What reporting obligations do NRM Boards have with regard to the base level funding they are provided with under Caring For Our Country?
2. What reporting obligations do NRM Boards have with regard to any specific project funding they are provided with under Caring For Our Country?
 - a) If there is a standard template or report the Board must complete, if so can this be provided?
3. Does any NRM Board site whether they have completed all
 - a. projects and their objectives,
 - b. expended baseline funding provided to them?
4. What happens to any funding not spent on any specifically funded projects?
5. The NRM Boards provide Caring For Our Country with a project description – do they report back to the DAFF against quantitative targets to show that they have achieved the outcomes they set out to establish?
6. Are feedback reports provided to the Commonwealth which outline how the money was spent and the success or failure of the initiatives/projects implemented by the NRM Boards using CFOC funding?
 - a. If so, are these publicly available?
 - b. If no why not?
 - c. Can you please provide the most recent feedback reports for all of the South Australian NRM Boards? If not why?
 - d. Can the most recent Financial Reports (required under MERI) be provided for all South Australian NRM Boards? If not, why?
 - e. Can the most recent MERI Plans be provided for all South Australian NRM Boards? If not, why?

Answer:

1. Regional Natural Resource Management (NRM) bodies must report twice-yearly on Caring for our Country base-level funding, through interim (half-yearly) and annual progress reports. For each reporting period they must submit a performance report outlining their progress towards achieving the Caring for our Country targets and activity milestones as set out in their contract schedules, and a financial expenditure report. They must also provide annual audited financial statements of Caring for our Country funding certified by a qualified independent auditor. For multi-year investments, reporting is required twice yearly until completion of activities.

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Question: 118 (continued)

2. Funding provided to regional NRM bodies for specific projects under the Caring for our Country Business Plan competitive (open call) grants process is subject to the same reporting requirements as base-level funding.
 - a) Yes. The reporting templates for Caring for our Country regional base-level and open call projects are at appendix 2 of the Caring for our Country Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement (MERI) Strategy, which can be found at www.nrm.gov.au/funding/meri/meri-strategy.
3. Yes. As part of their reporting obligations to the Australian Government, regional NRM bodies must indicate the extent to which they have achieved all the Caring for our Country targets for which they are funded, as set out in their contract schedules. This applies to:
 - a) Caring for our Country Business Plan competitive open call projects
 - b) Regional NRM body base-level funding.
4. Regional NRM bodies may use up to 10 per cent of their base-level funding for organisational core operating expenses, and 10 per cent for monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement (MERI), directly related to Caring for our Country investments. Under the 2011-12 business plan, some regional NRM bodies were permitted to use up to 5 per cent of their base-level funding for specific investments to directly improve core governance. All remaining Caring for our Country base-level funding must be spent on work to deliver Caring for our Country targets, as set out in agreed contract schedules. Surplus base-level funds can be used on alternative activities but must have the prior approval of the Australian Government, and be used for the objectives of Caring for our Country.
5. Yes.
6. Yes.
 - a) No.
 - b) Reporting documents such as these, pertaining to day-to-day contract administration, are not routinely published due to the transaction costs that would be required. Financial and performance reporting information from these reports is aggregated for publicly available Australian Government annual program reporting in the Caring for our Country annual Report Card.
 - c) Yes. Provided.
 - d) Yes. Provided.
 - e) Yes. Provided.

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 208

Division/Agency: SRM – Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Key Performance Indicators

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator RHIANNON asked:

1. The DAFF Budget provides for Key Performance Indicators for Sustainable Management - Natural Resources, which include:
 - a. Increase the number of land managers, primary producers and fishers who have improved their knowledge and skills in natural resource management and adoption of sustainable management practices;
 - b. Increase the number of primary producers who have adopted activities that contribute to the conservation and protection of biodiversity;
 - c. Increase the number of hectares of land that are under cropping, horticulture and grazing with improved practices.
2. Do these KPIs include free range or organic systems as means of ‘Sustainable Management’?
3. If not, has DAFF made any attempts to increase, or at least to encourage, the use of free range or organic systems?

Answer:

- 1-3. Yes but the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) mentioned do not distinguish free range and organic farming systems from other means of ‘Sustainable Management’.

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 228

Division/Agency: SRM – Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: State of the Environment 2011

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator WATERS asked:

The State of the Environment 2011 report card assessments on invasive species found high to very high impacts of invasive species on most aspects of the environment with deteriorating or unclear trends. The impacts of invasive species on biodiversity ('very high'), the trend ('deteriorating') and the management effectiveness ('ineffective') received the worst possible ratings. Please advise:

- a. Whether the Department has undertaken or contributed to an assessment of what reforms in its biosecurity functions will be needed to achieve a more positive report card for invasive species by the 2016 State of the Environment report?
- b. What measures the Department intends to take beyond existing measures and programs to stop and reverse the threats of invasive species on biodiversity?

Answer:

- a. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry is implementing reforms to Australia's biosecurity system to deliver a modern biosecurity system that is responsive and targeted, in a changing global trading environment. The benefits of the reformed biosecurity system will be realised by industry, government, the environment and international trading partners. The reform program is substantial and changes will be achieved incrementally.

The reforms being undertaken position the department to meet increasing demands and to ensure the biosecurity system is effective and sustainable into the future. The reform program is consistent with the themes outlined in the Beale review, informed by previous reviews and stakeholder needs; and underpinned by five key principles:

- implementing a risk-based approach to biosecurity management
- managing biosecurity risk across the continuum – offshore, at the border and onshore
- strengthening partnerships with stakeholders
- being intelligence-led and evidence-based
- supported by modern legislation, technology, funding and business systems.

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Question: 228 (continued)

The Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity has been negotiated to strengthen the collaborative approach between the Commonwealth and state and territory governments in addressing Australia's biosecurity issues. The National Environmental Biosecurity Response Agreement, as the first deliverable of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity, aims to significantly strengthen Australia's biosecurity system by establishing national arrangements for responses to nationally significant biosecurity incidents where there are predominantly public benefits such as the environment.

- b. The department routinely examines and evaluates options for more cost-effective measures to reduce the impact of invasive species on biodiversity. For example:
- the Caring for our Country review will consider recommendations for more cost-effective forms of intervention in community-or industry-based pest management
 - the department is supporting research by the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre to identify more virulent strains of Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease (calici virus)
 - the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre routinely provides advice to departmental officers on opportunities for development of new or enhanced pest management techniques.

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Question: 229

Division/Agency: SRM – Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010–2030

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator WATERS asked:

Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010–2030 (ABCS) has 10 targets, one of which (Target 7) is focused on invasive species, and aims to, by 2015, reduce by at least 10% the impacts of invasive species on threatened species and ecological communities in terrestrial, aquatic and marine environments. Further, the foreword to the Strategy indicates that the goal by 2030 is to reduce the impacts of invasive species "so that their impact on biodiversity is negligible".

In relation to these goals please advise:

1. Has the Department undertaken any planning to date about how these two targets will be met within the biosecurity functions managed by the Department?
2. Has the Department advised the Minister on what will be required to achieve these two targets, in terms of both actions and/or resourcing?
3. Has the Department or the Minister initiated or been involved in any joint government biosecurity processes to determine how the 2015 biodiversity target and 2030 goal for invasive species will be met? What are the results of this activity?
4. Has the Department undertaken or contributed to a baseline assessment against which the 2015 target will be assessed?
5. Will any such assessment be publicly released? If so, when?
6. If no such assessment has been or is planned to be undertaken, has not been done, how will it be done?
7. Has the Department undertaken or contributed to any other assessment undertaken in the last 5 years of the actions and resources needed to address biosecurity threats to biodiversity? If so please advise on the scope / purpose of these assessments.
8. Has the Minister sought advice from his Biosecurity Advisory Council about any matter relating to the biodiversity 2015 target? On what issues has advice been sought?
9. On what environmental matters more broadly has the Minister sought advice from his Biosecurity Advisory Council?

Answer:

1. The Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (DSEWPaC) has prime carriage of Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010–2030 and is developing its monitoring and reporting framework. The department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) officers are assisting where portfolio responsibilities converge.
2. Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010–2030 is the responsibility of the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities.

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3. DAFF is participating in Council of Australian Governments (COAG) consultations relating to various environmental issues. DSEWPaC is taking the lead on this issue through the COAG Standing Council on Environment and Water.
4. No, DAFF has not undertaken or contributed to a baseline assessment against which the target will be assessed as this is the responsibility of DSEWPaC.
5. The release of any baseline assessment information would be the responsibility of DSEWPaC.
6. This is the responsibility of the DSEWPaC.
7. Yes, the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) has worked on a number of weed and pest projects that in some way address biosecurity threats to biodiversity. For example, ABARES has undertaken a risk assessment on terrestrial and freshwater environmental invasive pathogens and invertebrates not yet in Australia to identify a list of nationally significant species that could be a future risk and identified major pathways of entry for them.
8. On 16 July 2010, the previous Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Hon. Tony Burke MP, formally requested the Biosecurity Advisory Council (BAC) to provide independent advice on a number of matters, including ways to address cross-sector pests and diseases not covered by current cost-sharing arrangements under the deeds (e.g. weeds and pastures).
9. On 3 March 2011, the Biosecurity Advisory Council submitted its final advice to the Senator the Hon. Joe Ludwig, (Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry). The BAC's advice is publicly available on the BAC's website - www.daff.gov.au/biosecurity-advisory-council.

Elements of this advice, such as: *“broadening industry and community engagement in monitoring and surveillance, ways to address cross-sector pests and diseases not covered by current cost-sharing arrangements”* and *“Council’s perspective on prioritising biosecurity risk and investment”* are relevant to the Biodiversity 2015 target. On 25 May 2011, Minister Ludwig requested advice from the BAC on what would be required over the next two years to achieve a more unified, streamlined approach to managing emergency biosecurity responses. Minister Ludwig received this advice on 21 December 2011.