

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2007

Transport and Regional Services

Question: TLG 01

Division/Agency: Territories and Local Government

Topic: Launceston Levee

Hansard Pages: 14-15 (22/05/07)

Senator O'Brien asked:

Senator O'BRIEN—With respect to the \$13 million one-off payment for the Launceston levees, was that the subject of a full application?

Ms Page—I would have to get back to you on that, Senator.

Senator O'BRIEN—Would the Department receive such an application if it were made?

Ms Page—I would like to check that.

Senator O'BRIEN—I am asking whether that would be the process. You do not know what the process is; is that what you are saying?

Ms Page—This is a one-off payment that is additional to the normal program, and I would like to go back and review the processes.

Answer:

Yes.

Yes.

With the announcement by the Prime Minister on 13 May 2007 committing up to \$13 million towards the project, Minister Lloyd wrote to the Hon David Llewellyn MHA, Tasmanian Minister for Police and Emergency Management, on 31 May 2007 confirming that the project would be administered in accordance with the Partnership Agreement governing the *Natural Disaster Mitigation Programme*. The Partnership Agreement provides that funding will be shared equally between each level of government and that quarterly reports will be provided on project progress.

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Transport and Regional Services

Question: TLG 02

Division/Agency: Territories and Local Government

Topic: SA Local Councils Supplementary Funding

Hansard Page: 54-55 (22/05/07)

Senator O'Brien asked:

Senator O'Brien—In Budget Paper No. 2 at page 300, under the *South Australian Local Councils Continuation of Funding*, there is \$57 million allocated over the forward estimates. Can you identify how that will be allocated or what process will be used to determine its allocation?

Ms Page—That is a continuing provision of funding to South Australia which recognises the particular disadvantage that South Australia has under the allocation of local roads. I cannot remember whether that goes directly to councils or whether some of it goes to South Australia for roads in unincorporated areas. I could take that on notice. It is a continuing measure.

Answer:

The distribution of the supplementary local road funding among South Australian councils will continue the arrangements in place for the distribution of the supplementary funding provided to South Australia from 2004-05 to 2006-07. The allocation of the supplementary funding followed the allocation recommended by the South Australian Local Government Grants Commission for the distribution of the local road component of the *Local Government Financial Assistance Grants*. This arrangement will be continued for the supplementary local road funding provided from 2007-08.

The local road financial assistance grants are not provided for roads in unincorporated areas (i.e. those parts of the State not included within a local government area). However, the South Australian Grants Commission currently allocates 15 per cent of the local road grants to local road projects of regional significance and projects in unincorporated areas can receive funding from this component.

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Question: TLG 03

Division/Agency: Territories and Local Government

Topic: ALGA National Local Road Database

Hansard Page: 88 (22/05/07)

Senator O'Brien asked:

Mr O'Neill—We provided some seed funding for that some time ago, but they are undertaking a project to improve data on local roads around Australia. We have not seen a report of that yet.

Senator LUNDY—You provided a grant to ALGA to achieve that?

Mr O'Neill—Part-funded, I believe.

Senator LUNDY—When do you expect some outcome from that investment?

Mr O'Neill—I might have to take that on notice. They may be preparing to announce something at the upcoming roads congress, but I will take that on notice.

Answer:

The Australian Government contributed \$22,000 (GST-inclusive) towards the development of the ALGA national local road database. A website giving access to the database went live earlier this year and can be found at <http://www.jr.net.au/nlrds/>

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Question: TLG 04

Division/Agency: Territories and Local Government

Topic: Commonwealth Contribution to KAVHA

Hansard Page: 88 (22/05/07)

Senator Hogg asked:

Mr Angley—Yes, that is the Commonwealth's contribution to the operations of the KAVHA project.

Senator HOGG—On an annual basis?

Mr Angley—Yes, \$600,000.

Senator HOGG—It is not a substantial amount. Has that been increased in recent years?

Mr Angley—I think it has been about that amount for the last few years.

Senator HOGG—Could you therefore tell me what it has been for the last three financial years?

Ms Page—Yes, we could certainly do that.

Senator HOGG—Do you suspect, though, that that is the same amount?

Mr Angley—Yes, we certainly have not changed it radically, but I will check.

Answer:

The Commonwealth contributions to the Kingston and Arthur's Vale Historic Area Trust Fund have been:

2006-07 - \$542,000

2005-06 - \$520,000

2004-05 - \$520,000

An additional one-off payment of \$70,000 was made in 2004-05 to accelerate asbestos removal from buildings within the KAVHA precinct.

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Question: TLG 05

Division/Agency: Territories and Local Government

Topic: Auditing of KAVHA Funds

Hansard Page: 88 (22/05/07)

Senator Hogg asked:

Senator HOGG—The expenditure of the amount of money, is that audited in some way, and if so by whom?

Mr Angley—I am not sure. We certainly do the works program at the beginning of the year and I am sure we do audit it, but I would have to check on exactly how that is done.

Senator HOGG—Would you take that on notice as well?

Answer:

The Norfolk Island Government provides independently audited financial statements of the Kingston and Arthur's Vale Historic Area Trust Fund to the Department of Transport and Regional Services each financial year.

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Question: TLG 06

Division/Agency: Territories and Local Government

Topic: Runway Loan Schedule Payments

Hansard Pages: 89-90 (22/05/07)

Senator Hogg asked:

Senator HOGG—Then the next one, the runway resurfacing, I understand that that is taking place. What is the repayment strategy on that?

Mr Angley—The repayments are not due to begin until 30 June, 1 July 2009.

Senator HOGG—1 July 2009?

Mr Angley—Yes.

Senator HOGG—Is there an agreed amount that will be repaid?

Mr Angley—\$12 million.

Senator HOGG—Sorry, I presume that will be repaid in instalments?

Ms Page—Yes.

Senator HOGG—Is there an agreed amount for each instalment?

Ms Page—That loan has been re-scheduled because the Norfolk Government asked could it have a deferral of the commencement of the repayment, and that is why, as Mr Angley said, it does not start until 2009. There is an agreed schedule of payments, I think.

Mr Angley—Yes, I could find out. There is certainly an agreement and the Government agreed to move it out three years for the starting.

Answer:

The loan agreement for resurfacing of the Norfolk Island airport runways set up a repayment schedule of two payments of \$600,000 per year. The first repayment is due on 1 June 2009. The loan repayment schedule is **attached**.

[TLG 06 attachment]

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Question: TLG 07

Division/Agency: Territories and Local Government

Topic: Cost of the Office of Administrator on Norfolk Island

Hansard Page: 90 (22/05/07)

Senator Hogg asked:

Senator HOGG—I understand the reasons there. If I turn back to page 51, I will ask this question in respect of both the Office of the Administrator of Norfolk Island, which is outlined at the top of page 51, and I would like also a similar figure for the Indian Ocean Territories, if that is available. If I can understand what is here, is it the cost of running the Office of the Administrator of Norfolk Island that is \$0.5 million per annum?

Ms Page—Yes, it is the salary of the Administrator, consistent with the relevant Remuneration Tribunal determination, plus the additional costs of running his office.

Senator HOGG—That \$0.5 million is salary, plus office costs, relevant travel costs and other costs?

Mr Angleley—That is right.

Senator HOGG—Does that include the costs of the Official Secretary?

Mr Angleley—No.

Ms Page—He is paid for by the Department, he is a departmental employee.

Senator HOGG—Right, paid for by the Department. Is it possible to get a breakdown of those costs?

Ms Page—I think we have indeed done it in the last 12 months or so, but we will have another look.

Answer:

The breakdown of costs for the Office of Administrator of Norfolk Island for 2007/08 is contained in the following table.

Line Item	\$ Million
Administrator's remuneration	0.166
Administrator's car	0.032
Administrator's travel	0.021
Locally engaged staff	0.159
Official hospitality	0.032
Property operating costs	0.060
Government House repairs/maintenance	0.011
Government House upgrade	0.055
Communications	0.007
Total	0.543

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Question: TLG 08

Division/Agency: Territories and Local Government

Topic: Office of the Administrator – Indian Ocean Territories

Hansard Page: 90 (22/05/07)

Senator Hogg asked:

Senator HOGG—If you could give me the same figure for the Indian Ocean Territories; is that possible?

Mr Angley—Certainly.

Ms Page—Yes.

Mr Yates—The cost of the administrator there would be comparable to that of Norfolk, but we would have to take it on notice for the detail.

Senator HOGG—Yes, and the same break-up as well.

Mr Yates—Yes.

Answer:

[Note: refer to TLG 06 & TLG 07 for requested breakdown of detail.]

The Office of the Administrator Indian Ocean Territories covers the roles of:

- Administrator Territory of Christmas Island; and
- Administrator Territory of Cocos (Keeling) Island.

The current Administrator of the Indian Ocean Territories is Mr Neil Lucas PSM.

There is no Official Secretary position in the Indian Ocean Territories.

A full-time, locally-engaged executive assistant is provided to the office as part of the support provided by DOTARS/Christmas Island Administration.

The breakdown of costs for the Office of the Administrator of the Indian Ocean Territories for 2007-08 is contained in the following table.

Employee Expenses	\$ million
Administrator	0.213
Supplier Expenses	
Locally Engaged Staff	0.097
General office administration	0.041
Official Hospitality	0.018
Domestic Travel	0.039
Motor Vehicle	0.013
Relocation/Recruitment Expenses	*0.060
Total Expenses Office of Administrator	0.481

General office include: training/conference, office upgrade, postage, phone, contract relief staff, stationery and printing, meeting expense and donations/sponsorship.

* Commission end 31 January 2008 – relocation allowed for if no extension to term.

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Question: TLG 09

Division/Agency: Territories and Local Government

Topic: Cost of Commonwealth Commissioned Reports on Norfolk Island

Hansard Page: 91 (22/05/07)

Senator Crossin asked:

Senator CROSSIN—I will keep going with Norfolk Island. Some of the reports have been commissioned by the Commonwealth since 2005. My understanding is that we have the Acumen Alliance; the Australian Bureau of Statistics did the Norfolk Island statistics in June 2006; and the Commonwealth Grants Commission reviewed the financial capacity of Norfolk Island in 2006. Are you able to give me a costing for each of those reports?

Ms Page—I think we might have provided it, but we can certainly provide it again.

Senator CROSSIN—I want to know how much this Government has spent on commissioning those three reports.

Ms Page—Yes, certainly.

Answer:

The cost of the reports are:

- Acumen Alliance, *Norfolk Island Government Financial Advisory Report* - \$95,003 (including GST).
- Australian Bureau of Statistics *Norfolk Island Business Statistics* - \$106,700 (including GST).
- Commonwealth Grants Commission *Review of the financial capacity of Norfolk Island* - \$323,383 (including GST).

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Question: TLG 10

Division/Agency: Territories and Local Government

Topic: Cabinet Consideration of Norfolk Island Governance Arrangements

Hansard Page: 91 (22/05/07)

Senator Crossin asked:

Senator CROSSIN—There are also now five reports from the National Capital and External Territories Committee, and all five of those reports have clearly pointed to this Federal Government needing to take action to ensure the sustainability of Norfolk Island. Minister Johnston, can you explain to me why the cabinet submission to give some better sustainability for Norfolk Island did not get approval? Minister Lloyd clearly took a proposal to do something about the situation on Norfolk Island, and I am wondering if you can shed some light on why that is not progressing.

Senator Johnston—No, I cannot. I will have to take that on notice.

Senator CROSSIN—You must have been at that Cabinet meeting, surely.

Senator Johnston—I was not. As much as I would like to be, I am not in Cabinet, so I do not know what Cabinet's deliberations were. It would probably be inappropriate to discuss them in any event.

Senator CROSSIN—Perhaps you could take on notice the reasons—

Senator Johnston—I certainly will.

Senator CROSSIN—the Government would be happy to provide publicly as to why some of these initiatives have not been taken up.

Answer:

Attached is Minister Lloyd's Media Release of 20 December 2006 regarding Norfolk Island governance arrangements.

[TLG 10 attachment]

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Question: TLG 11

Division/Agency: Territories and Local Government

Topic: Grants to Norfolk Island Since 2004

Hansard Page: 92 (22/05/07)

Senator Crossin asked:

Senator CROSSIN—Can you take on notice for me how many grants have been extended to Norfolk Island since 2004 and what those grants were for?

Ms Page—Yes.

Answer:

The Department of Transport and Regional Services has extended two grants from the Regional Partnerships programme to Norfolk Island since 2004. These are:

- Destination Norfolk Island Advertising Campaign - \$300,000.
- Training of volunteer ambulance officers on Norfolk Island - \$11,000.

Consolidated grant information for Norfolk Island is not readily-available. It will require considerable resources to determine how many grants have been extended to Norfolk Island by individual Australian Government Departments and Agencies to enable a response to this question. The information requested will be provided to the Committee as soon as it is available.

Revised answer provided 24/09/2007:

The Australian Government has provided the following grants to Norfolk Island since 2004.

September 2004	Australian Tourism Development programme - Construct a cellar door facility at Two Chimneys Vineyard and Winery to provide a venue for wine tastings, vineyard tours and special events.	\$84,600
September 2004	Regional Partnerships programme - Training of volunteer ambulance officers on Norfolk Island.	\$11,000
April 2005	Historic Shipwrecks programme - Enhance HMS Sirius exhibition at Kingston and Arthur's Vale Historic Area.	\$11,500
June 2005	Natural Heritage Trust - Introduce a green waste management system.	\$650,000
October 2005	Natural Heritage Trust - Norfolk Island natural resource	\$240,000

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	management plan.	
June 2006	Norfolk Island Administrator's office – Oral history project.	\$25,000
October 2006	Natural Heritage Trust - Headstone Creek restoration.	\$38,691
October 2006	Natural Heritage Trust - Plant native plants and Norfolk Island Pines to protect and restore sub-tropical rainforest and natural wetlands.	\$18,624
October 2006	Natural Heritage Trust - Cascade Reserve habitat rehabilitation.	\$11,725
February 2007	Regional Partnerships programme - Destination Norfolk Island Advertising Campaign.	\$300,000
June 2007	National Cultural Heritage Account - Purchase and shipping of historic whaling desk to Norfolk Island.	\$2,000
September 2007	Regional Partnerships programme - Replace the existing deteriorated roofing on the guide and community hall.	\$9,857

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Question: TLG 12

Division/Agency: Territories and Local Government

Topic: Business Units – DOTARS Indian Ocean Territories Administration

Hansard Page: 93 (22/05/07)

Senator Crossin asked:

Mr Yates—That is correct. We have a series of business units on the Island. They have a management structure and they end up reporting through to my APS Director, Cheryl Klaffer, on the Island.

Senator CROSSIN—Can you provide me with a list, by occupation and number, of those people?

Mr Yates—Yes, we can. I will take that on notice.

Answer:

Summary of Personnel (Christmas Island and Cocos Keeling Island) as at 31 May 2007:

Business Unit Cost Centre	FTE
40216 – Office of the Administrator	2.0
40217 – Corporate Services	6.5
40220 – Justice Services	1.2
40221 – Land Management (vacant)	1.0
40218 & 40219 – Housing	10.3
40223 – IOT Power Authority	15.5
40224 – IOT Health Service	41.0
40232 - Education	15.2
Total Non-APS FTE Employees*	92.7
30402 – Departmental employees	2.0
Total FTE Employees	94.7
Pool of Casuals –School	12.0
IOGT Apprentices (CI only)	2.0
IOGT Trainees (CI & CKI)	2.0
Total Other Employment	16.0

Note: Occupation and number of non-APS employees* – see **attachment**

[TLG 12 attachment]

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Question: TLG 13

Division/Agency: Territories and Local Government

Topic: Christmas Island Community Consultative Committee

Hansard Page: 93 (22/5/07)

Senator Crossin asked:

Senator CROSSIN—The Community Consultative Committee is still operating on Christmas Island?

Mr Yates—It is still functional. I do not have any details immediately at hand as to when it last met. I can get that information for you.

Answer:

Meetings of the Christmas Island Community Consultative Committee (CCC) are convened by the Shire of Christmas Island.

Advice has been received from the Shire of Christmas Island that the CCC last met on 22 February 2007 (as at 2/7/07).

The meeting was held despite the lack of a quorum to receive information from and provide feedback on the service delivery arrangements that were then under review. The service delivery project officer from the WA Government and a DOTARS representative attended the meeting.

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Question: TLG 14

Division/Agency: Territories and Local Government

Topic: Christmas Island Community Consultative Committee

Hansard Page: 93 (22/5/07)

Senator Crossin asked:

Senator CROSSIN—Can you take on notice for me now the membership of the community consultative council?

Answer:

Advice has been received from the Shire of Christmas Island that as at 15 June 2007 the membership of the Christmas Island Community Consultative Committee was:

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Representing</u>
1.	Gordon THOMSON	Convenor/Shire President
2.	Margaret ROBINSON	CEO – Shire of Christmas Island
3.	CHEW Boon Beng	Manager Community Services
4.	All Shire Councillors	Shire of Christmas Island (currently 7)
5.	James LEE	Union of Christmas Island Workers
6.	CHEW Gee Ho	Chinese Literary Association
7.	<i>Vacant</i>	Islamic Council
8.	Nora KOH	C.I. Women's Association
9.	Albert NG	Poon Saan Club
10.	SEET Choy Lan	Christmas Island Phosphates
11.	Russell PAYNE	Chamber of Commerce
12.	Rosnah PAL	C.I. Malay Association
13.	Eddie TAN	Austasia Business Council

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Question: TLG 15

Division/Agency: Territories and Local Government

Topic: Christmas Island Laundry

Hansard Pages: 94-95 (22/5/07)

Senator Crossin asked:

Senator CROSSIN—Let me just go to a few other issues that I have. Can you give me an update on where we might be at—and this is quite an old request but it is worth raising every now and then—with the issue of the five laundry workers who are still \$20,000 out-of-pocket from the closure of the casino?

Ms Page—No. I am not aware of that issue, Senator.

Mr Yates—I am aware in a general sense that that is an un-resolved issue, but I would have to take on notice any detail.

Senator CROSSIN—Can you take it on notice?

Ms Page—Yes, certainly.

Senator CROSSIN—Ms Page, just for your interest, when the casino was closed the Commonwealth Government actually had the laundry there and the assets of the laundry were sold off but the unpaid entitlements to the laundry workers were never passed on. So, my understanding is that it is a revenue matter: the Commonwealth actually took control of the laundry, sold off the washing machines and the dryers inside it, paid everyone who had to be paid except the five workers in the laundry, who I understand are about \$20,000 out-of-pocket.

Ms Page—We will take that on notice.

Mr Yates—Yes. We will have to take that on notice.

Senator CROSSIN—Can you take that on notice and tell me where that might be at?

Mr Yates—Yes.

Senator Johnston—Were these laundry workers employees of the Commonwealth?

Senator CROSSIN—No, but there was an arrangement that, when the casino was closed, the Commonwealth would become the administrator of the asset, so they actually sold and divested all of the interests and then paid out whoever was to be paid: (a) there is no doubt the laundry workers are owed \$20,000 each; (b) there is no doubt the Commonwealth actually has that money because they sold the assets of the laundry. We have been working on this issue for five years now.

Senator Johnston—Is there doubt that the Commonwealth actually owes them the money?

Senator CROSSIN—No.

Senator Johnston—All right, that is interesting. We will take that on notice and get to the bottom of it.

Senator CROSSIN—No, there is no doubt. There is a whole history about this issue. Answers have been given in Estimates Hearings since about 1999 to 2000, so I would be interested. The money from the sale of the assets of the Christmas Island laundry went into the account of the Christmas Island Administration. We would like an update on where that is at.

Mr Angley—We will get you a clear written answer.

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Answer:

The former employees of Christmas Island Laundry Pty Ltd (CIL) do not have a legal basis for a claim against the Commonwealth for outstanding entitlements.

CIL was a private company that operated from a property owned by the Commonwealth. CIL went into liquidation and vacated the property shortly after the closure of the Christmas Island Resort in April 1998. The Commonwealth subsequently sold the property in March 2000.

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Question: TLG 16

Division/Agency: Territories and Local Government

Topic: Asbestos on the Indian Ocean Territories

Hansard Page: 95 (22/05/07)

Senator Crossin asked:

Senator CROSSIN—Are you able to provide me with a list of government buildings that will be cleared of asbestos?

Mr Yates—We should be able to. When I say ‘should’, we had a full survey done of both islands, which made assessments of all the buildings. In fact, I think we should be able to provide that on notice. It is a fairly large document and I do not have it with me.

Mr Angley—There are 220 buildings.

Mr Yates—It was an assessment of the asbestos in the buildings, so it was roofing, cladding, insulation.

Senator CROSSIN—To make it a bit easier, give me a breakdown of government buildings and government houses on Christmas and Cocos Islands. So that will be four columns you will need to provide instead of 220 buildings.

Ms Page—Okay.

Answer:

Set out in the table below is the breakdown of the government buildings and government houses on Christmas and Cocos Islands that will be cleared of asbestos.

The additional column under the heading ‘Other’ includes buildings and structures like the power station office and control room, hospital, community hall, kindergarten transportable buildings, technical school, church, temple, bus shelters and water supply pipes.

The asbestos on the sites was categorised into levels of deterioration ranging from A1 being poor condition to A4 being stable.

All identified category A1 locations, on 21 sites, have been addressed, leaving the remaining buildings and structures accounted for in the table. It should be noted that some addresses have been identified with multiple locations of asbestos, for example, in garages and other out-buildings.

	Residential Housing	Commercial	Other
Christmas Island	68	41	39
Cocos (Keeling) Island	34	19	5
Total	102	60	44

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Question: TLG 17

Division/Agency: Territories and Local Government

Topic: Name of Consultant

Hansard Page: 97 (22/5/07)

Senator Crossin asked:

Senator CROSSIN—Who are these consultants and what have they been tasked to do?

Mr Yates—The name escapes me, so I will have to take that on notice. In summary, their aim is to take the work done by the SGS report, review the current situation and provide us with practical steps that we can use to develop the Islands' economies.

Answer:

Urbis JHD Pty Ltd.

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Question: TLG18

Division/Agency: Territories and Local Government

Topic: SBS TV – Christmas Island

Hansard Reference: 100 (22/5/07)

Senator Crossin asked:

Senator CROSSIN—I want to raise with you an issue that has been raised with me about the time it has taken to repair a fault with the SBS TV channel on Christmas Island. Is that your responsibility?

Mr Yates—It is, yes.

Senator CROSSIN—Why did it take so long and has it been fixed?

Mr Yates—Essentially, because it has been repaired and is back in service. It took time to get that particular item of equipment. I do not have all the technical details. If you need that I can take that on notice. But a piece of electronic equipment on the island failed. It was the ABC one that failed and a judgement was made that we would put the ABC on air and take SBS off, based on the viewing habits of the majority of the population.

Senator CROSSIN—How long did it take to repair?

Mr Yates—I would have to take the details on notice. I do not know about that.

Answer:

The damaged transmitter was sent to Perth for repair. However, parts had to be sourced from Italy and the fault took approximately 14 weeks to fix. The SBS TV channel was fully restored on 9 April 2007.