

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2008

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: RPI 01

Division/Agency: Rural Policy and Innovation

Topic: Exceptional Circumstances

Hansard Page: 95 (27/05/08)

Senator Nash asked:

Senator NASH—Have you got comparative figures for the 12 months previous?

Mr Thompson—We do not have those figures here with us but we could take that on notice.

Senator NASH—If you could take that on notice that would be good.

Answer:

The areas of Exceptional Circumstances declared agricultural land, by state, as of 27 March 2007 were:

New South Wales – 98.1%

Victoria – 95.1%

Queensland – 58.8%

SA – 48.0%

WA – 15.0%

NT – 0%

ACT – 100%

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: RPI 02

Division/Agency: Rural Policy and Innovation

Topic: Exceptional Circumstances

Hansard Page: 95 (27/05/08)

Senator Nash asked:

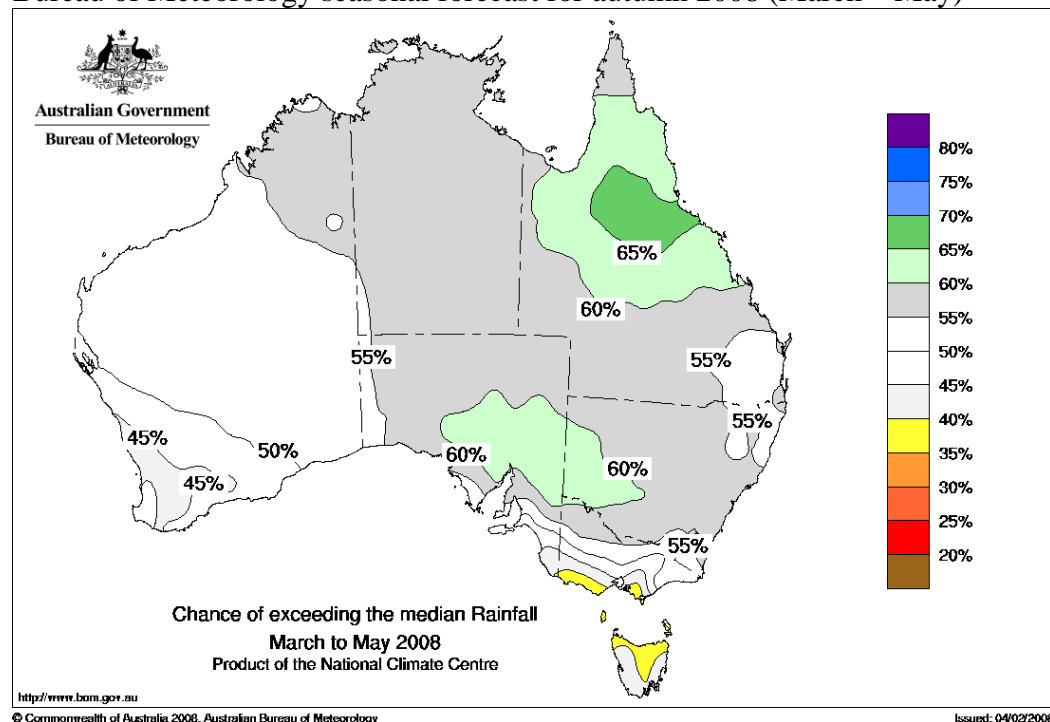
Senator NASH—One of the earlier witnesses, in one of their reports, was referring to the previous nine months of good rain. I thought [it] might have been a little optimistic on their behalf, but that is by the by. As to the Bureau of Meteorology information that you work from, is it possible—and you can certainly take this on notice—to supply that to the committee so that we can have a look at the actual information that you are working on to determine your view of the likelihood of drought and drought forecast?

Mr Thompson—Yes, we can do that. The piece of information we draw on for the current situation is material that is publicly available by and large in the National Agricultural Monitoring System, and, for the bureau forecasts, we rely on their regular seasonal forecasts and drought forecasts which, again, are publicly available reports.

Answer:

The relevant Bureau of Meteorology Reports are provided below.

Bureau of Meteorology seasonal forecast for autumn 2008 (March – May)



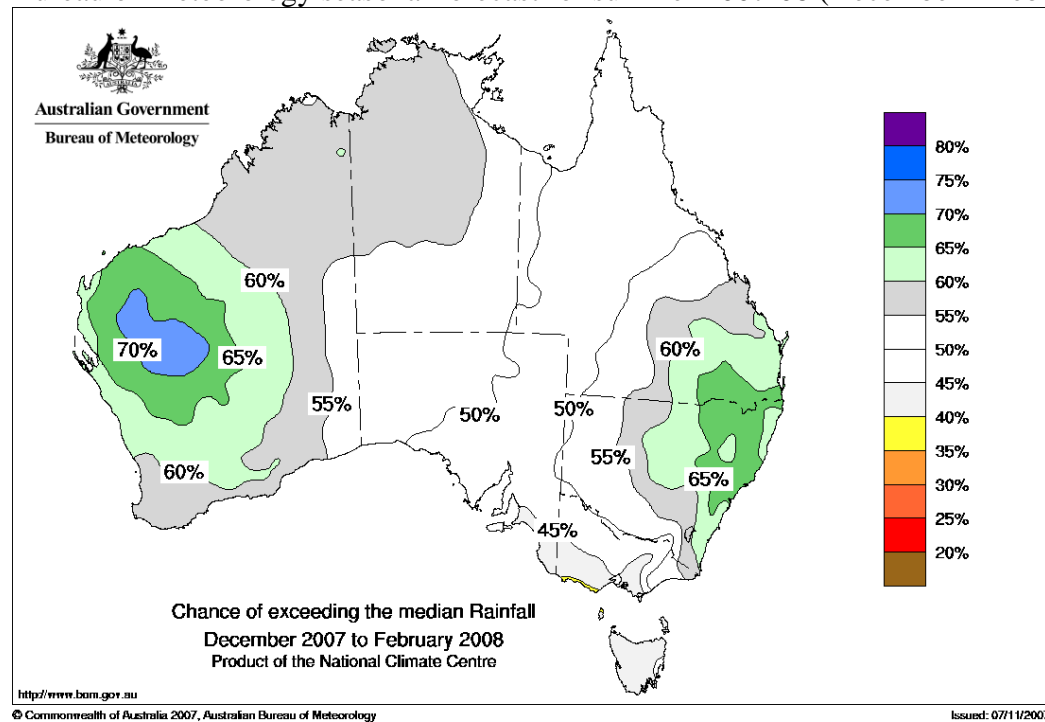
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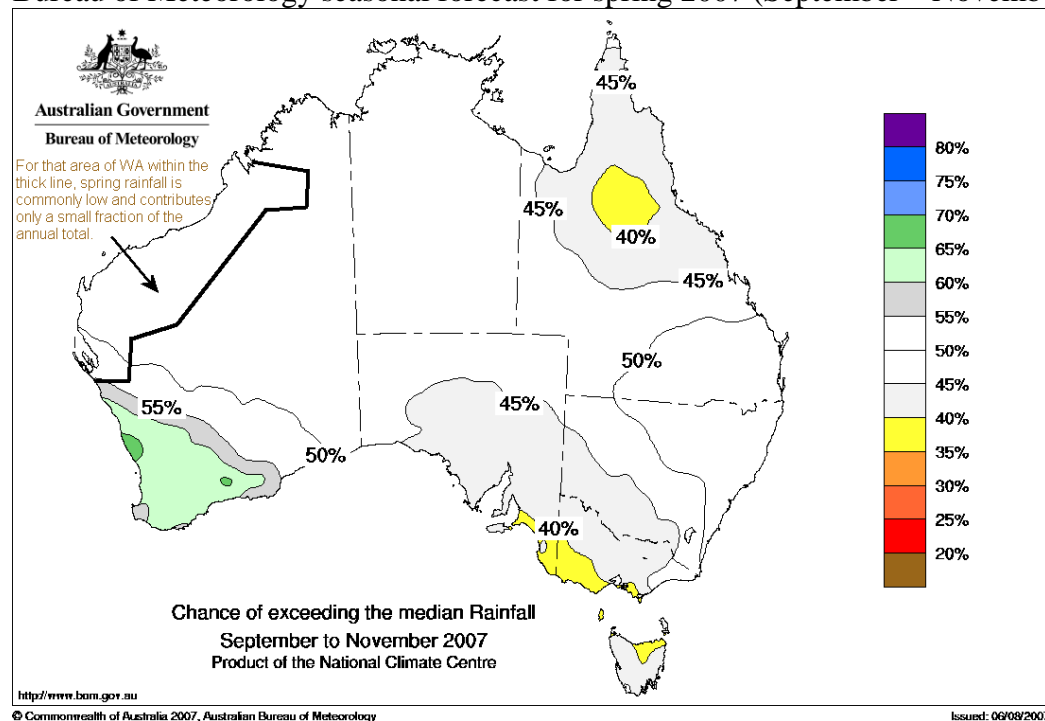
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Bureau of Meteorology seasonal forecast for summer 2007-08 (December – February)



Bureau of Meteorology seasonal forecast for spring 2007 (September – November)



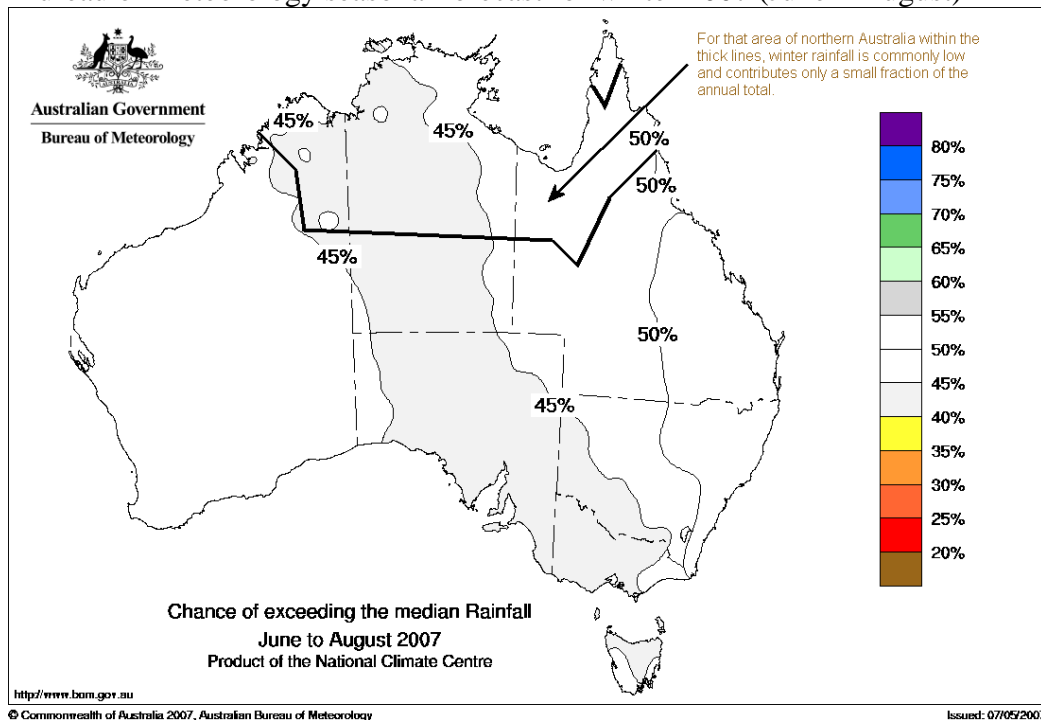
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Bureau of Meteorology seasonal forecast for winter 2007 (June – August)



The Bureau of Meteorology seasonal outlooks are general statements about the probability or risk of wetter or drier than average weather over a three-month period. The temperature outlooks are for the average maximum and minimum temperatures for the entire three-month outlook period. The outlooks are based on the statistics of chance (the odds) taken from Australian rainfall/temperatures and sea surface temperature records for the tropical Pacific and Indian Oceans. Information about whether individual days or weeks may be unusually wet, hot or cold, is unavailable. These outlooks should be used as a tool in risk management and decision making.

Forecasts are not available for longer time periods than 3 months because for longer time periods the reliability of the underlying models, and consequently the resulting forecast, drops away quickly.

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Question: RPI 03

Division/Agency: Rural Policy and Innovation

Topic: Review of drought policy

Hansard Page: 97 (27/05/08)

Senator Nash asked:

Senator NASH—There is nowhere in any department that is pulling all of this sort of stuff together to give us a picture of how the drought is affecting rural Australia?

From what you just said, it sounds like there are lots of things happening but there is no one, overarching thing drawing all of that together so we can get a picture of what I would imagine is the fairly dramatic effect this is having on rural communities?

Mr Thompson—I am not aware of any particular study that draws all that together.

Senator NASH—Is the government planning on looking at that? I am aware that you are representing only the other minister but—

Senator Sherry—Beyond what has been indicated, the analysis that Mr Burke has announced, and the detail to come, no, I will have to take that on notice.

Senator NASH—If you could take that on notice and take it back to the minister because I very genuinely think that it is something that is very important that we start focusing on, particularly if the drought does not break this year. We are going to be in a dire situation in rural and regional Australia; there is no doubt about that. But that is not for this evening.

Answer:

On 23 April 2008, the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Hon. Tony Burke MP, announced a comprehensive national review of drought policy. The review will include an expert panel's assessment of the social impacts of drought and the extent and range of current government and non-government social support services available to farm families and rural communities.

On 2 June 2008, Minister Burke announced the membership of the expert social panel, headed by AgForce Queensland President, Peter Kenny. The seven member panel will tour many areas of regional Australia to hear first hand about the social and community issues (such as health, education and training, families, community development and employment) facing rural Australia because of the drought and ask affected parties to make written submissions outlining their experiences. As a part of this assessment, there will also be an analysis of the existing studies and papers that examine the social impacts of drought.

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Question: RPI 04

Division/Agency: Rural Policy and Innovation

Topic: Drought-Changes to Exceptional Circumstances Program

Hansard Page: 98 (27/05/08)

Senator Nash asked:

Senator NASH—What date in June is that expiry?

Ms Cupit—In those 20 areas, I will have to check the exact timing, but I think its 19 areas are due to expire on 15 June and one area is due to expire on 30 June.

Answer:

New South Wales	Expiry date as at 27 May 2008
Bourke & Brewarrina	15 June 2008
Queensland	
Burnett	15 June 2008
Burnett addendum	15 June 2008
Central Coast	15 June 2008
Central Mid West	15 June 2008
Central Darling Downs	15 June 2008
Emerald-Bauhinia	15 June 2008
Hinchinbrook-Thuringowa	15 June 2008
Mackay-Whitsunday	15 June 2008
North West Ashy Downs	15 June 2008
Northern Darling Downs	15 June 2008
Peak Downs	15 June 2008
South-West QLD	15 June 2008
Southern Darling Downs	15 June 2008
Southern Murweh	15 June 2008
Southern South East	15 June 2008
Stanthorpe-Inglewood	15 June 2008
Sunshine Coast	15 June 2008
Western Downs-Maranoa	15 June 2008
South Australia	
Central North East	30 June 2008

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Question: RPI 05

Division/Agency: Rural Policy and Innovation

Topic: Exceptional Circumstances Exit Package

Hansard Page: 100 (27/05/08)

Senator Nash asked:

Senator NASH—Between February and now have you had any interest or any expressions—

Mr Thompson—I do not have those figures for between February and now but there has been a continuing small level of interest. The number of farmers expressing interest in it is roughly the same as they were before. If you wanted the details of the difference between February and now, we would have to take that on notice.

Answer:

As at 2 May 2008, a total of 19 Exceptional Circumstance (EC) Exit Grants have been paid. Throughout the period 1 February to 2 May 2008, 15 grants were paid and 120 expressions of interest were received.

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Question: RPI 06

Division/Agency: Rural Policy and Innovation

Topic: Exceptional Circumstances

Hansard Page: 104 (27/05/08)

Senator Scullion asked:

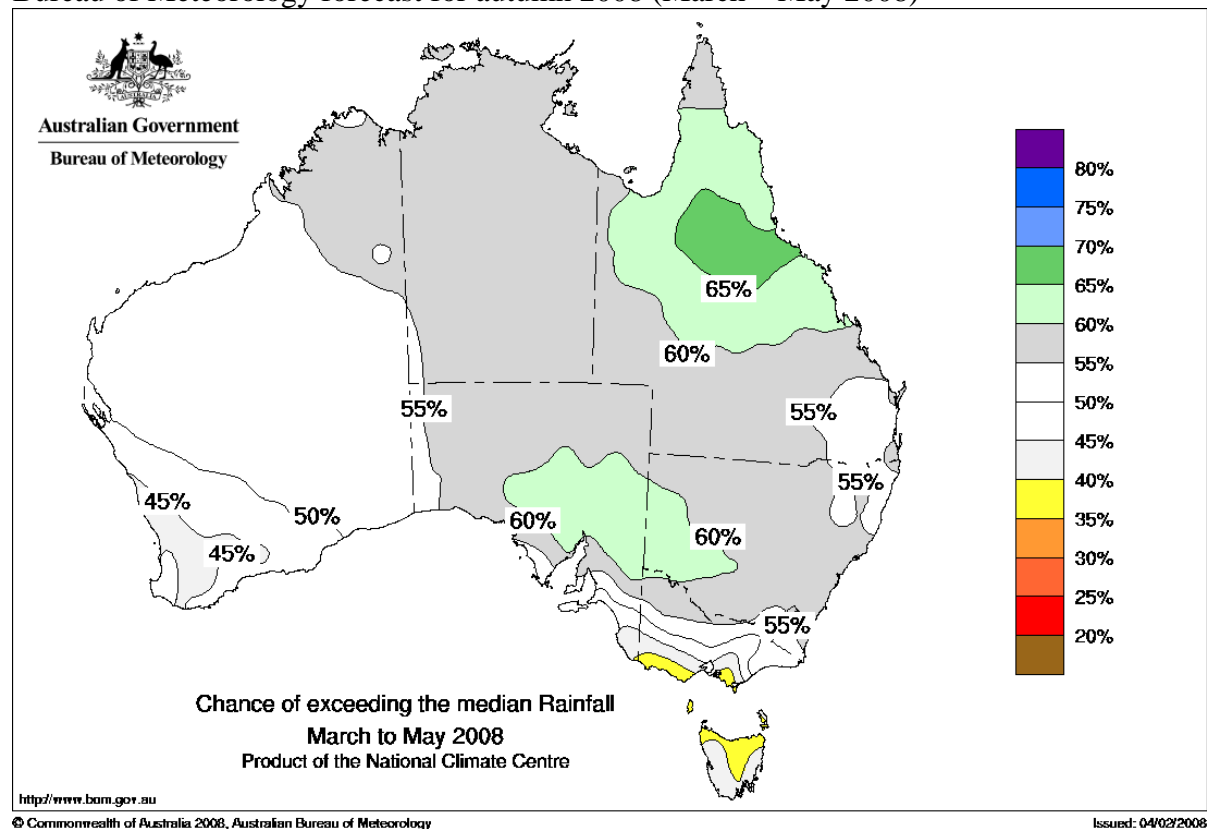
Senator SCULLION—Would you be able to provide us with the two prior three-month reports that have been provided to you by the Bureau of Meteorology?

Mr Thompson—Yes.

Answer:

The relevant Bureau of Meteorology Reports are provided below.

Bureau of Meteorology forecast for autumn 2008 (March – May 2008)



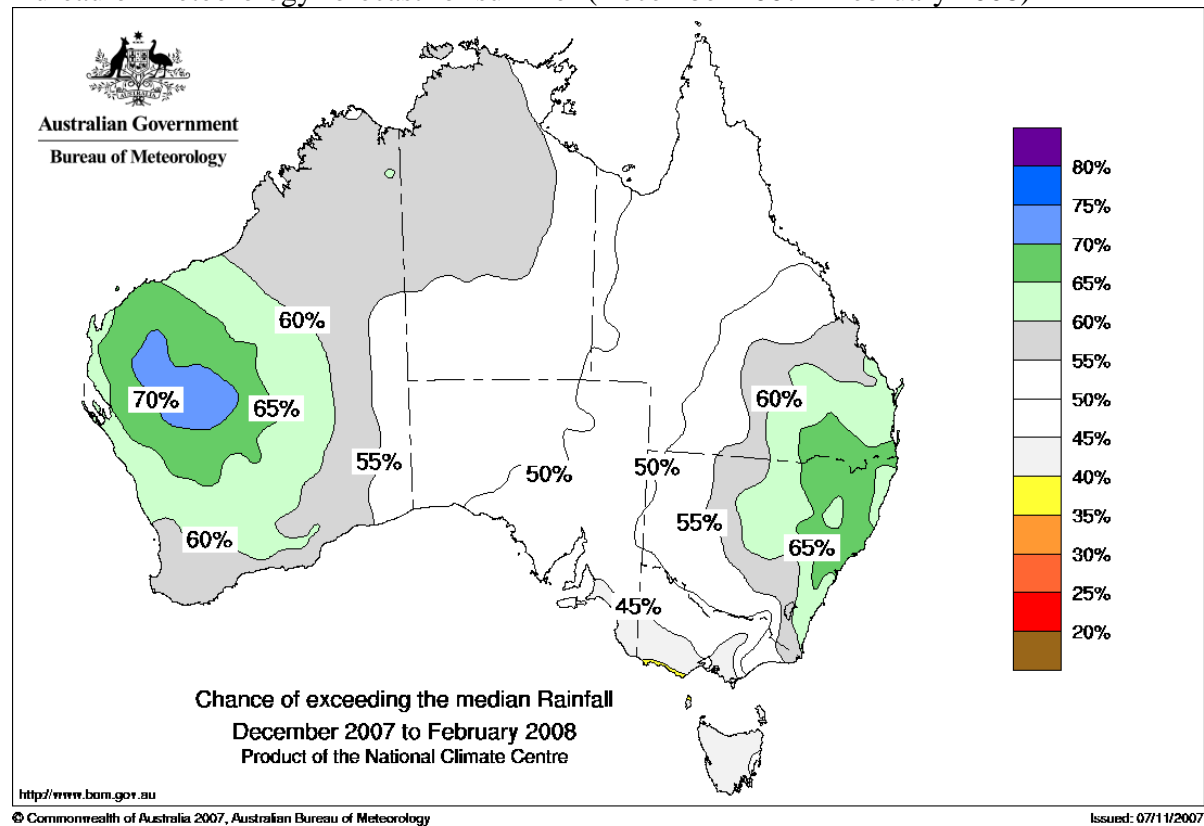
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Bureau of Meteorology forecast for summer (December 2007 – February 2008)



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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: RPI 07

Division/Agency: Rural Policy and Innovation

Topic: The Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) in Western Australia

Hansard Page: 106 (26/05/08)

Senator Siewert asked:

Senator SIEWERT—Also, can you tell us who the successful tenderer was?

Ms Kidman—The decision on the preferred applicant has been made. That is the North East Farming Futures Group Incorporated.

Senator Seiwert—How long have they been operating?

Ms Kidman—I am not sure of that. I would have to take that on notice.

Senator SIEWERT—Could you provide us with that information. Could you provide us with the 10 criteria that were used for that assessment, please?

Answer:

North East Farming Futures was incorporated in January 2007.

Eleven criteria were used to assess the applications. These were:

1. What is your understanding of the aim and expected outcomes of the RFCS and its role in the future of Australian farmers, fishers and small rural businesses?
2. How will you ensure your organisation contributes towards the aim, role and outcomes of the RFCS?
3. On the map of Western Australia provided in the application package, indicate the proposed location of your head office and the proposed locations of rural financial counsellors – your answer to criterion 8 below will help you determine these locations.
4. Describe, or provide a diagram of, your organisation's proposed structure.
5. On the matrix on page 10 of the application form, provide the names of the organisation's board of directors and their skills and qualifications. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) may ask board members for a curriculum vitae (CV) or may contact organisations to verify claims.
6. What are the roles and duties of management staff, such as executive officers or general managers, in your organisation?
If your executive officer or general manager will also undertake the duties of a rural financial counsellor, what are your strategies to manage the risks inherent in a dual management/staff role, such as conflicts of interest and the separation of the two roles in the perception of other staff, clients and stakeholders? How will you ensure a rigorous performance management process for both roles?
7. What are the roles and duties of a rural financial counsellor in your proposed rural financial counselling service? Describe how your organisation will deliver rural financial counselling services to clients.

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8. Provide an assessment of the need for rural financial counselling in your region or state. Include in this assessment answers to the following questions:
 - How will you meet times of critical demand?
 - How will you ensure access to your organisation for remotely located clients? (You can indicate proposed locations for your rural financial counsellors on the map if you wish – see criterion 3 above.)
9. On the template in the application package, provide a budget that indicates how you will spend the funding to provide rural financial counselling services. (For applicants who are existing service providers in the 2006–08 funding period, do not include any money from the current period.)

You need to complete both parts of the budget template:

 - Part A: planned service delivery levels
 - Part B: the indicative annual budget and all associated notes.

Note: Any budgets submitted as part of the application process are for the purposes of assessment only and may not reflect the actual amount funded. Value for money will be considered in the assessment process.
10. Provide a brief communications plan that describes:
 - how, and to what extent, your organisation will engage with local communities in your proposed service area (this could include working with any existing local reference committees within the RFCS Programme or with any other community organisations). List the organisations and provide contact numbers of a referee in each organisation (**do not** attach letters of support)
 - how your organisation will communicate with clients and stakeholders
 - how your organisation will work with other organisations providing similar or complementary services (eg mental health, personal/social counselling, financial advisers, succession planners, agronomists, landcare facilitators, weed facilitators), and
 - how your organisation will increase awareness of the RFCS Programme among potential clients (including Indigenous or non-English speaking potential clients).
11. What are the risks your organisation faces in operating a rural financial counselling service? Provide a copy of your risk management strategy indicating how you will manage these risks.

Also refer to response RPI 08.

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Question: RPI 08

Division/Agency: Rural Policy and Innovation

Topic: The Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) in Western Australia.

Hansard Page: 106 (26/05/08)

Senator Adams asked:

Senator ADAMS—May we have the background of that particular group, because I know that it has not been going very long.

Answer:

North East Farming Futures (NEFF) was incorporated in January 2007. The organisation was established as individual farm improvement groups in the North East Agricultural Region of Western Australia recognised a need to work more strongly together to develop viable approaches to farming.

The group aims to help growers meet the challenges of climate change, environmental impacts, terms-of-trade, social expectations and changing industry structures by developing sound business cases for new farming methods and systems. This approach includes improving farmer co-operation and collaboration and accessing the expertise available from research organisations, universities and governments.

A separate Board of Directors, drawn from throughout Western Australia, has been established within the organisation to direct and control the activities of Rural Financial Counsellors at the state level. The collective skills of this board are considered appropriate for meeting the high level strategic and governance standards required to deliver the Rural Financial Counselling Service Program.

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Question: RPI 09

Division/Agency: Rural Policy and Innovation

Topic: Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC)

Hansard Page: 37 (26/05/08)

Senator Adams asked:

Senator ADAMS—Can I continue then? Can you please provide further details of the sorts of policies and programs that RIRDC will be working on over the next year in output groups 1.1, that is the new rural industries; 1.2, established rural industries; and 1.3, national rural issues?

Mr Thompson—We can do that. We would have to take that on notice.

Senator ADAMS—I was going to ask you to do that because I know we are running out of time. Are you planning to abolish policy areas or programs from output 1.3? In the national rural issues given on page 216 of the portfolio budget statement it is stated: “The RIDC will focus on a smaller number of issues of national interest in future”. I would like this on notice. If so, which areas? Thank you.

Mr Thompson—We would have to take that on notice, too.

Answer:

1. In RIRDC’s 2008–09 Annual Operational Plan, Portfolio 1 *New Rural Industries* aims to provide the knowledge for diversification in Australia’s wide range of new and emerging animal and plant industries, including through:

- increased human capacity in new rural industries, which will target capacity-building issues, including holding a new industries forum and leaders’ summit
- more rapid adoption of new industry innovations, instigating a New Crops On-Line Information Centre and assessing the feasibility of initiating a New Animal Industries On-Line Centre, and
- diversification options in the prospective biofuels industry, including expanding and developing a new five-year plan for the Bioenergy, Bioproducts and Energy Program.

Portfolio 2 *Established Rural Industries* aims to provide the knowledge to increase the profitability, resilience and sustainability of RIRDC’s established rural industries, including through:

- sustained research and development against five-year plans for drought-affected sectors, such as rice and fodder
- development and implementation of the Pollination Australia Program with Horticulture Australia Ltd (HAL) and other research and development corporations, and
- new five-year R&D plans for Fodder Crops and Chicken Meat Programs.

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Portfolio 3 *National Rural Issues* aims to provide the knowledge to address national rural issues, including through:

- instigating and developing a new foresighting program called the Emerging Rural Issues Program
- development of a plan for new investment in the Climate Change and Variability Program
- development of major R&D opportunities in carbon sequestration, including a review of the Agroforestry and Farm Forestry Program in the context of climate change and emissions trading
- development of new five-year plans for the Global Competitiveness and RIRDC Rural Leadership Programs, and
- leveraged R&D investment in priority areas, including increasing co-investment in the Collaborative Partnership for Farming and Fishing Health and Safety.

2. During 2007-08, through its National Rural Issues Portfolio RIRDC began a process of aligning more closely with stakeholders needs. In 2008-09 two programs – Environment and Farm Management, and Rangelands and Wildlife – will continue to wind down with no new investments planned. Funding adjustments are being used for work in priority areas, including climate change and variability, global competitiveness and RIRDC's role in adoption, leadership and regional renewal and Indigenous rural development.

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Question: RPI 10

Division/Agency: Rural Policy and Innovation

Topic: Research and Development Corporation expenditure on genetically modified crops and organic agriculture

Hansard Page: 109-110 (27/05/08)

Senator Siewert asked:

Senator SIEWERT—Do you have a figure on how much the federal government is investing in research into genetically engineered crops in Australia?

Dr O'Flynn—The question is possibly in two parts. We have invested some funding through the work that we have commissioned under the National Biotechnology Strategy. That is not actually into research, that is more into analysis and communication. The research in GM crops would be through the Research and Development Corporation, and I cannot answer that question.

Senator SIEWERT—There was quite a lot of discussion under GRDC, but is that the only area that you are funding into or are there other areas?

Mr Thompson—No. I think you will find that most of the industry based R&D corporations have an element of their funding directed at GM. Cotton does; sugar has some and grains has quite a bit as you are aware. We could take it on notice. Just as Peter Redding was able to give you that answer yesterday for GRDC, we would be able to take it on notice and get it for all the R&D corporations.

Senator SIEWERT—If you could that would be very much appreciated. Could you also take on notice to give me a run-down on any research or the funding items on organic agriculture?

Mr Thompson—I think we can do that as well.

Senator SIEWERT—If that is possible it would be appreciated. Thank you. Is it possible when you are providing the information to tell us the amount of funding and who is doing those research projects?

Mr Thompson—We would have to check with each of the R&D corporations, but at the level at which they disaggregate their project funding, the amount of money, and unless there is something I am unaware of, usually the name of the research institution is available.

Answer:

The relevant rural Research and Development Corporations (RDCs) have provided advice on their research investment into genetically engineered crops and organic agriculture. The **attached** table includes information on expenditure in 2007–08 and details of the research organisation.

On the basis of the information in the table, in 2007–08 RDC expenditure on research for genetically engineered crops totalled \$10,692,469 and for organic agriculture totalled \$1,482,304.

[RPI 10 attachment]

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: RPI 11

Division/Agency: Rural Policy and Innovation Division

Topic: Regulation of genetically modified organisms

Hansard Page: 110 (27/05/08)

Senator Siewert asked:

Senator SIEWERT—I am also aware that genetically modified organisms are currently being released into the environment and you have just gone through a budget process. Labor also promised that there would be ‘a strong national body that is independent and scientifically based that will be overseeing the process’. Are there any proposals to date to put in place that strong national body?

Senator Sherry—I will take it on notice and check with the minister.

Senator SIEWERT—That would be appreciated. Thank you.

Answer:

The Labor Government’s pre-election policy document *Labor’s Plan for Primary Industries* states that:

“Labor supports the existing national framework for management and regulation of gene technology.”

This policy position was endorsed by Commonwealth Ministers with responsibility for biotechnology policy at the Biotechnology Ministerial Council meeting on 5 May 2008.

The regulation of the development and use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in Australia is achieved through a cooperative legislative framework which includes the Gene Technology Regulator (the Regulator), Food Standards Australia New Zealand and a number of other regulatory authorities with complimentary responsibilities and expertise. Release of GMOs into the environment is overseen by the Regulator.

The Regulator is an independent statutory office holder with extensive powers to monitor and enforce the legislation. The Regulator’s assessments of licence applications proposing dealings involving the intentional release of GMOs into the environment is scientifically based and involve the preparation of Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plans in accordance with the requirements of the *Gene Technology Act 2000*. The Regulator applies a *Risk Analysis Framework* based on the internationally recognised Australia-New Zealand Standard on Risk Management (AS/NZS 4360:2004), including a comprehensive and critical assessment of data supplied by the applicant, together with a thorough review of other relevant national and international scientific literature.

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Question: RPI 12

Division/Agency: Rural Policy and Innovation

Topic: Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation Rural
Women's Awards

Hansard Page: 111 (27/05/08)

Senator I. Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Mr Thompson, you mentioned that the RIRDC Rural Women's Awards was on tonight. Is that correct?

Mr Thompson—I think so.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Could you obtain on notice for us a list of the invitees to that?

Mr Thompson—Yes, we can.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Off the top of your head do you know why Senator Adams and Senator Nash were not invited this year as they have been in previous year, apart from the fact that they are busy at estimates?

Senator Sherry—That is right. I did not get an invite either, representing the minister, because I knew I would be here.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—It is rural women.

Senator Sherry—I am sure that males would be invited as well. I do not think that we would be precluded.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—In past years these two senators representing very rural constituencies have been invited. I do not think they have been this year. Perhaps the organisers knew they would be at estimates, but I doubt that that is the case. So, is there some reason for their not being selected?

Mr Thompson—The organisation of the event is undertaken by RIRDC. I would have to take advice from them as to who was on the invitation list.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—But you will get the list for me?

Mr Thompson—Yes.

Answer:

A list of invitees to the 2008 Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) Rural Women's Awards is **attached**. The list of invitees was provided to the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (the department) by the RIRDC. The department made formatting changes to the list received and added information regarding Title or Organisation where required.

[RPI 12 attachment]

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Question: RPI 13

Division/Agency: RPI/DAFF

Topic: \$66 million reduction in Innovation Program Funding

Hansard Page: 112 (27/05/08)

Senator Scullion asked:

Senator SCULLION—Dr O’Connell, I know you have a longstanding and keen interest in innovation and research and I just wondered if you would be able to comment. But historically and from other jobs that I know you have had, can you comment on the fact that \$66 million has been taken out of one sector. This is not research; we have already dealt with the research stuff; that has already been cut to blazes. Have you any sort of handle on what the impacts of that are going to be?

Dr O’Connell—You have quoted the figure of \$66 million, which I am not sure of. I could take that on notice.

Senator SCULLION—Certainly.

Answer:

As noted by Senator Scullion, the 2008–09 Budget announced savings of \$236.6 million from a number of innovation programs. The Budget also provided \$189.8 million in funding for a number of new programs, including those noted by Senator Scullion, that contribute to the overall innovation effort.

	Savings measures \$m	Expenditure \$m
Advancing Agricultural Industries	33.0	
FarmBis	37.0	
Farm Help	97.3	
National Food Industry Strategy – Food Innovation Grants	62.7	
New Industries Development Program	6.6	
Total	236.6	
Australia’s Farming Future		130.0
Regional Food Producers Innovation and Productivity Program		35.0
Promoting Australian Produce Program		5.0
National Weeds and Productivity Research Program		15.4
Fisheries Research Program		4.4
Total		189.8

The difference of \$46.8 million is a refocussing of funding in line with the government’s election commitments to target funding to assist the primary industry sectors to adapt and respond to climate change, and improve farm productivity through continued investment in research, development and extension.

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The government continues to support the current funding formula that provides for industry levies and matching funding by the Federal government for investment in rural research.

The government has detailed a five-point plan to fight inflation and ease the burden on working families who are under pressure from rising costs and interest rates. The plan aims to achieve a budget surplus of at least 1.5 per cent of GDP in 2008–09. The 2008–09 Budget provides incentives for people to save and aims to tackle chronic skills shortages, explore other approaches to dealing with infrastructure problems and provide practical ways of helping people re-enter the workforce. It is important to note that all Australians, including rural businesses and communities, will benefit from the government's fight against inflation.

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Question: RPI 14

Division/Agency: Rural Policy and Innovation

Topic: Drought – Changes to Exceptional Circumstances Program

Hansard Page: Written Question

Senator Scullion asked:

What changes to the Exceptional Circumstances program have resulted from the government's election commitments?

Answer:

There have been no changes to the Exceptional Circumstances policy or program since the government has come into office.

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: RPI 15

Division/Agency: Rural Policy and Innovation

Topic: Drought-Changes to Exceptional Circumstances Program

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Scullion asked:

Have changes to EC resulted in a gap in income for farmers coming off EC following June 30 2008?

Answer:

There have been no changes to the Exceptional Circumstances policy or program since the government has come into office.

Those farmers who are no longer able to access Exceptional Circumstances assistance beyond June 2008 as a result of an Exceptional Circumstances declared area not being extended will be able to apply for Transitional Income Support, subject to specific eligibility criteria.

The Transitional Income Support program will operate from 16 June 2008 to 30 June 2009 and provide eligible farmers in financial difficulty with up to 12 months income support while they take steps to improve their long term financial security.

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: RPI 16

Division/Agency: Rural Policy and Innovation

Topic: Drought-Changes to Exceptional Circumstances Program

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Scullion asked:

What modelling or assessment was carried out to determine the number of farmers affected?

Answer:

Centrelink provides information on the number of farmers and small business operators in an Exceptional Circumstances declared area that are currently receiving relief payments and the maximum number to have received Exceptional Circumstances Relief Payments (ECRP) at any time that an Exceptional Circumstances declaration has existed for that area. These figures are used to calculate the estimated cost for ECRP when an area is reviewed. They are also used to calculate the number of farmers and small business operators that are affected should an area not be extended.

The state Rural Assistance Authorities provide data on the number of applications received for Exceptional Circumstances Interest Rate Subsidies (ECIRS), both approved and declined. The number of applications approved in the 12 months prior to an area's extension is used to calculate the estimated annual cost of ECIRS for that area.

For areas with revised boundaries, maps and information on population density for the new area are provided by the state Rural Assistance Authorities.

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: RPI 17

Division/Agency: Rural Policy and Innovation

Topic: Drought-Changes to Exceptional Circumstances Program

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Scullion asked:

How many farmers are projected to be affected?

Answer:

As at 27 April 2008, there are approximately 21 930 farmers in Exceptional Circumstances declared areas that are due to expire in June 2008. Of these there are 3530 currently in receipt of Exceptional Circumstances Relief Payments.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2008

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: RPI 18

Division/Agency: Rural Policy and Innovation

Topic: Tasmanian Poppy Growers/Clyde River

Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Abetz asked:

How many poppy growers in the Clyde River area have received or are set to receive money through the drought assistance programs run by the Australian Government?

Answer:

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry can not provide this information, as neither Centrelink nor the State Rural Assistance Authorities collect industry data down to this level of detail.