

**Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Budget Estimates May 2009

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** LWA01

**Division/Agency:** Land & Water Australia

**Topic:** LWA Accommodation

**Hansard Page:** 43/44 (25/05/2009)

**Senator Ian Macdonald asked:**

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—Perhaps Dr O’Connell might have thought about this. Are you going to take over the lease or pay out the landlord, or are we just going to default on that?

**Mr Hunter**—The calculations that were made in establishing a budget for 2009-10 for Land and Water Australia took into account calculations based on costs associated with winding up the organisation. We took into account what we thought might need to be met in terms of accommodation costs.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—So, on notice—I assume you do not have it here—could you let the committee know what the government is going to waste in paying rent on a building that is no longer used by Land and Water Australia?

**Mr Hunter**—Dr Robinson has indicated that they are seeking legal advice at the moment in relation to the lease, and presumably there will be discussions between Land and Water Australia and the landlord—

**Senator HEFFERNAN**—Who is the owner?

**Answer:**

In February 2004, Land & Water Australia entered into a 7 year lease (coinciding with the timing of its approved strategic plan 2005-2010) with Nyrang Holdings Pty Ltd (ACN 008 549 335) for premises in Canberra – (specifically Units 34 & 53 in Unit Plan 2326) from 1 February 2004 through until 31 January 2011. Commercial matters associated with the lease including rent, air-conditioning and fitout matters have been administered through the property manager, Raine & Horne Commercial in Manuka.

In June 2009 the property manager, Raine & Horne advised LWA that the current owner of the units was a company named Joleta Pty Ltd.

The rental cost for the premises for the period 1 January 2010 through 31 January 2011 (LWA will cease to operate on or about 31 December 2009) is forecast at \$599,735.

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**Question:** LWA01 (continued)

In May 2009, Land & Water Australia sought legal advice on its lease and on 25 June 2009 wrote to Joleta Pty Ltd C/- Raine & Horne Commercial Canberra, alerting them to a number of commercial issues; including drawing their attention to a clause within the lease that only obliges Land & Water Australia to pay rent and outgoings up to the date on which it ceases to exist. Land & Water Australia has advised the landlord that it anticipates that on or about 31 December 2009 LWA will cease to exist. Therefore Land and Water Australia anticipates that it will not pay rent on the commercial lease during the period 1 January 2010 through 31 January 2011.

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**Question:** LWA02

**Division/Agency:** Land & Water Australia

**Topic:** Tropical Rivers and Coastal Knowledge Initiative

**Hansard Page:** 44 (25/05/2009)

**Senator Ian Macdonald asked:**

*Tropical Rivers and Coastal Knowledge Initiative*

**Dr Robinson**—Yes, the Tropical Rivers and Coastal Knowledge initiative is managed by us on behalf of three primary research partners or research investors—ourselves, the National Water Commission and the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts—and it is a research consortium as well between another 13-odd research bodies that span across the north. We are managing agent for that initiative.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—Which I assume, Dr O’Connell, either the department or the National Water Commission will now take over.

**Dr O’Connell**—Either the department or another body. As I mentioned, that clearly is a priority and there are a range of funding and research bodies which are fully integrated into that. So we would expect that to continue. It is just a question of how to manage the changeover.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—Who owns the research done to date?

**Dr Robinson**—Under the TRaCK initiative?

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—Yes.

**Dr Robinson**—I will take that on notice but I believe the IP would be owned collectively by those research funders; if not the research funders, then the research funders and the research providers.

**Answer:**

Under the lead contracts between Land & Water Australia (LWA) and the TRaCK research organisations, each research organisation owns all intellectual property created in the course of undertaking a project. Under these contracts, LWA, the Australian Government (through the Commonwealth Environment Research Facilities Program), the National Water Commission, the Queensland Government, Charles Darwin University, the University of Western Australia, Griffith University, CSIRO and the North Australia Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance were granted a permanent, irrevocable, free, world-wide, non-exclusive licence (including a right to sub-license) to use, communicate, reproduce, adapt and exploit material created by the projects for the purposes of reporting on, evaluating, monitoring, communicating and publicising the projects.

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**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** LWA03

**Division/Agency:** Land & Water Australia

**Topic:** Research completed and TraCK project

**Hansard Page:** 44-45 (25/05/2009)

**Senator Ian Macdonald asked:**

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—I am interested in what we, as a committee, might be entitled to ask you for of the research done up to the time of your unfortunate demise.

**Dr Robinson**—As a general rule, regardless of who owns the IP, in this situation it will be released publicly as it becomes available.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—So anything publishable has been published to date?

**Dr Robinson**—To date, yes.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD**—On notice, can you give me a list of what has been published in relation to that TRaCK project? Thank you very much.

**Answer:**

The amount of technical information starting to be generated from TRaCK is now growing rapidly with more than 30 reports and publications expected to be submitted for publication in the coming year. To date, however, only a small number of projects have been completed, with the majority still in a data gathering and analysis phase following extensive dry season field work in 2008, with further work planned for 2009-10. Most projects will be producing both research project reports and technical papers for scientific, peer-reviewed, journals and some examples of the technical papers are shown in the list of references below. Recent technical papers produced include:

- Burford, M.A., Alongi, D.M., McKinnon, A.D., Trott, L.J. 2008. Primary production and nutrients in a tropical macrotidal estuary, Darwin Harbour, Australia. *Estuarine, Coastal and Shelf Science*, 79, 440-448.
- Hutley, LB, Isaac P, Beringer J, Cook PG, Weinmann R. 2008. Seasonal patterns of evapotranspiration from cleared and uncleared tropical savanna: implications for catchment water balance in the wet-dry tropics. *Eos Trans. AGU*, 89(23).

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**Question:** LWA03 (continued)

- Jackson, S. 2008. Recognition of Indigenous interests in Australian water resource management, with particular reference to environmental flow assessment. *Geography Compass (Environment & Society)* Vol 3.
- Kennard, MJ., Pusey, BJ., Olden, JD., Mackay, SJ., Stein, JL. & Marsh, N. (submitted). Ecohydrological classification of natural flow regimes to support environmental flow assessments: an Australian case study. *Freshwater Biology*.
- Kennard, M.J., Pusey, B.J., Mackay, S.J., Olden, J.D. & Marsh, N. (submitted). Quantifying uncertainty in estimation of hydrologic metrics for ecohydrological studies. *River Research and Applications*.
- Straton, A., Jackson, S., Marinoni, O., Proctor, W. and E. Woodward. Exploring and evaluating scenarios for a river catchment in northern Australia: the DMCE as a tool for water planning. Submitted to *Environment and Planning*

In addition, project reports are starting to be produced. At present these include:

- Four reports on collaborative water planning, which analyse community (including indigenous, industry and rural communities) participation in water planning and aim to develop tools for better community engagement.
- A report that classifies northern Australian rivers on the basis of their flow regimes and ecology, so that rivers can be grouped based on similarities and differences, allowing research results to be applied from one area to another.
- Reports that mapped and assessed the impact of *alluvial* gully erosion in four tropical savannah rivers of Western Cape York and the Gulf Country.
- A draft report to the Northern Territory Natural Resource Management Board Government on a framework for monitoring water quality in the Daly River is out for public comment.
- A report on the social and cultural values and a stakeholder assessment of water use scenarios for the Howard River, Northern Territory.
- A report on the results of field work examining water quality decline in the Buffalo Creek, Darwin Harbor.

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**Question:** LWA03 (continued)

Information on the above technical papers and reports as well as a wide range of project fact sheets, newsletters, presentations and special reports are all available on the TRaCK website under 'Publications' at [www.track.gov.au](http://www.track.gov.au).

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**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** LWA04

**Division/Agency:** Land & Water Australia

**Topic:** Groundwater

**Hansard Page:** 52 (25/05/2009)

**Senator Milne asked:**

**Senator MILNE**—My colleague Senator Siewert has followed up on environmental flows. Who is the lead agency or where does the work come from on the sustainability of Australia's groundwater? Do you do that in Land and Water Australia or was it your intention to do that as a follow-on from environmental flows?

**Dr Robinson**—In respect of our Environmental Water Allocation program and other parts of the portfolio, we certainly have had and will continue to make some investments in that area, but there are also other investments being made outside our portfolio, through the National Water Commission and the department of the environment, I believe. I could not tell you the number of projects related to groundwater that we currently have or are planning to have. I could take that on notice.

**Dr O'Connell**—Within government, the Environment portfolio has responsibility. It would certainly come under the National Water Initiative and the role of the National Water Commission to look after both the policy and, ultimately, the allocation issues, along with the states obviously.

**Answer:**

Land and Water Australia (LWA) has invested in research projects and knowledge and adoption activities related to the sustainability of Australia's groundwater over the past two decades. These investments have been made through various Programs.

At the time that LWA's termination was announced (May 2009) there were ten projects related to the sustainability of Australia's groundwater underway or nearing completion while two more were being contracted.

Attached is the list of current and proposed projects, and examples of previous research activities between 1991 and 2008.

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**Question:** LWA04 (continued)

**LWA Groundwater Investments**

*Current*

- Quantifying surface water groundwater exchange using thermal and chemical measurements
- Managing Soil Salinity for Wine Quality Groundwater Irrigated Vineyards
- Managed Aquifer Recharge - Risks to Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems - A Review
- Salinity processes in Lake Eyre Basin Rivers
- The recent Western Victorian drought and its impact: without precedent?
- Understanding multiple human impacts on stream flow regimes
- Quantifying acid and trace metal fluxes in aquifers under anthropogenic influence
- Sustainable management of connected water resources: robbing Peter to pay Paul?
- Sustainability of fresh water lenses under major rivers
- The ecohydrology of Australian landscapes: an analysis and synthesis

*Proposed*

- Quantifying surface water groundwater exchange using thermal and chemical measurements
- Indigenous Water Policy Project – Kimberley Case Study: La Grange Groundwater Area

*Previous (1991 to 2008)*

- River and Groundwater Hydrology: Development and trial of a methodology for total water resource assessment in Tropical Australia
- Sustainability of fresh water lenses under major rivers
- The ecohydrology of Australian landscapes: an analysis and synthesis
- Ecohydrological regionalisation of Australia: a tool for management and science
- Capture and synthesis of hydrology
- Drought and Freshwater Ecosystems (Land & Water Australia Fellowships - Professor P.S Lake)
- Breaking through the equity barrier in environmental policy
- Transport of Groundwater Contaminants in Heterogeneous Aquifers
- Stream-aquifer interaction - technical and management challenges
- Impacts of Groundwater Affecting Activities on Baseflow Variability and Ecological Response
- Transport of Groundwater Contaminants in Heterogeneous Aquifers
- A Framework to Provide for the Assessment of Environmental Water Requirements of Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems



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**Question:** LWA04 (continued)

- River - groundwater interactions, El-Nino and salinity impacts on water policies
- Optimising groundwater usage to mitigate native vegetation decline in the Namoi valley
- Influence of fractures on groundwater flow in an urban saline catchment, Wagga Wagga
- Guidelines for managing groundwater for vegetation health in saline areas
- Groundwater recharge and flow velocities in fractured rock aquifers
- Multi-level groundwater vulnerability assessment to contamination of pesticides and nutrients
- Ecosystem dependence on groundwater workshops
- Contamination of groundwater systems by nitrate
- National Catchment Groundwater Classification Workshop
- Groundwater resources of the Balfes Creek catchment
- Potential for groundwater salinisation: Mallee region, Murray Basin
- Management of a regional groundwater discharge zone in an area of dryland agriculture
- Evaluation of groundwater pollution potential of pesticides
- National Groundwater Quality Program - Analysis for investment decision
- Advanced farming systems for groundwater control