

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: PIAPH01

Division/Agency: Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health

Topic: Avian Influenza

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

What is the lapsing Avian Influenza program? How many people are employed in this program? Why is it lapsing? When was it initiated? What was the purpose of this program? How much funding has been committed to the program over the life of the program? Will it be replaced or absorbed into other programs?

Answer:

The objective of the Avian Influenza (AI) Program is to strengthen Australia's preparedness, detection, management and response capabilities for highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI).

Funding of \$44 million over three years (\$36m Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS), \$8m Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health (PIAPH) was provided to the agriculture portfolio in the 2006-07 Budget for AI-related activities. Additional funding of \$15 million has also been provided for the continuation of the AI Program in 2009-10. Any future program after June 2010 is a matter for the Government.

Currently 98.6 full-time equivalent staff are allocated against the AI Program (7.6 in PIAPH and 91 in AQIS).

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: PIAPH02

Division/Agency: Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health

Topic: AAHL

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

What activities are undertaken at the Australian Animal Health Laboratory, (AAHL)?

Answer:

In relation to activities of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry portfolio, Australian Animal Health Laboratory (AAHL) undertakes:

- 1 **Diagnostic services:** Provision of timely, quality assured diagnostic service for emergency animal diseases, including exotic and new and emerging diseases.
- 2 **Emergency response:** In the event of an emergency animal disease, provide a diagnostic service as part of an agreed national emergency response.
- 3 **Technical advice:** Provision of expert advice and support on all diagnostic laboratory issues to the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and national animal health bodies.
- 4 **Education and training:** Provision of specialized training to Australian veterinarians and diagnosticians in emergency animal disease recognition and diagnosis.
- 5 **Research:** Undertaking an agreed program of research to support and improve AAHL's diagnostic capability and the understanding of emergency animal diseases.
- 6 **Reagent supply:** Provision of specialised diagnostic reagents for emergency animal diseases for those agreed diagnostic activities that will be undertaken in state/territory laboratories and appropriate private laboratories.
- 7 **Support to international activities:** AAHL provides scientific and diagnostic expertise to support Australia's national interests in the region and beyond.
- 8 **Surveillance and molecular epidemiology:** Provision of molecular data on emergency animal diseases for epidemiological studies.
- 9 **Management of laboratory support services,** including engineering services, microbiological security operations, central monitoring services operations, information technology services, occupational, health and safety, and general support services.

Questions relating to the overall activities undertaken by AAHL should be addressed to the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: PIAPH03

Division/Agency: Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health

Topic: Diagnostic Surveillance

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

Has routine diagnostic surveillance for classical swine flu or any other diseases been increased in 2008-09 or will be increased in 2009-10?

Answer:

Routine active surveillance programs are in place for a range of livestock diseases, primarily to support trade and statements of disease freedom. These programs have not been increased in 2008-09 and there are no plans to increase them in 2009-10 at this time. The programs are coordinated through Animal Health Australia (www.animalhealth.com.au/programs/adsp/adsp_home.cfm).

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: PIAPH04

Division/Agency: Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health

Topic: AAHL

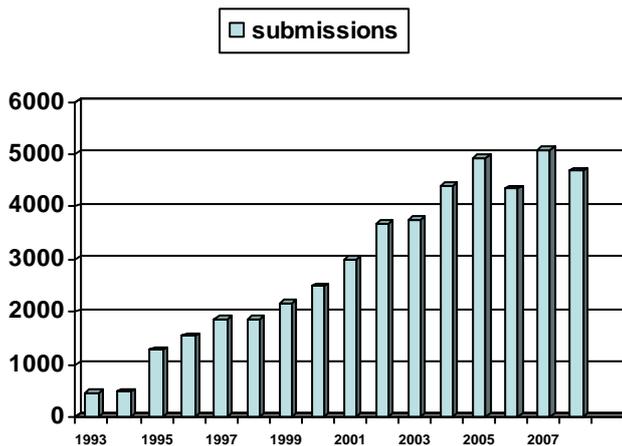
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

Has the diagnostic workload of the AAHL increased in 2007-08, and 2008-09?

Answer:

The total number of annual submissions, which serves as an indicator of diagnostic workload, has reached a plateau in the last few years as shown in the graph below.



The following table illustrates the increase in work associated with the equine influenza outbreak in 2007.

Year	Jobs	Tests
2006-07	3986	41196
2007-08	4876	46830
2008-09*	4148	35967

* Figures to the end of May

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Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: PIAPH05

Division/Agency: Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health

Topic: AAHL

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

Why has the government failed to recognise the vital role AAHL plays in disease diagnostics and research not only here in Australia, but internationally as well?

Answer:

The role of Australian Animal Health Laboratory (AAHL) in disease diagnostics and research in Australia and internationally is well recognised by the government and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (the department).

The department recognises the essential role AAHL plays both in research and disease diagnosis. The department jointly funds AAHL with CSIRO, which continues to provide agreed diagnostic and research services in accordance with a Memorandum of Understanding between CSIRO and the department. With the department's support, AAHL has been actively serving as the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) reference laboratories for a number of animal diseases (i.e. Hendra and Nipah virus disease, bluetongue, avian influenza, Newcastle disease, epizootic haematopoietic necrosis, yellowhead disease and new emerging diseases). Recently AAHL has also taken on the role as an OIE Collaborating Centre for capacity building in this region. In addition, AAHL has been involved in a number of research projects supported through funding sources such as AusAID in Indonesia, Vietnam, Lao, Thailand and other Association of Southeast Asian Nations regional countries.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: PIAPH06

Division/Agency: Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health

Topic: AAHL

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

Why has the government failed to increase its contribution in real terms to the operating costs of the AAHL, with an increase of just \$21,000 in 2009-10?

Answer:

CSIRO manages Australian Animal Health Laboratory (AAHL) and questions relating to overall AAHL funding should be addressed to the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry provides funding for operating costs to deliver agreed diagnostic and research services for the department through an ongoing Memorandum of Understanding between CSIRO and the department. The increase of \$21,000 in 2009-2010 reflects the annual funding adjustment to enable AAHL to continue to deliver the agreed diagnostic and research services for the department.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: PIAPH07

Division/Agency: Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health

Topic: AAHL

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

How many graduates are employed at AAHL under the Departments graduate program?

Answer:

There is currently no graduate employed at Australian Animal Health Laboratory (AAHL) under the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's Graduate Development Program. AAHL is managed by CSIRO.

Questions relating to graduates employed at AAHL under other graduate programs should be addressed to the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: PIAPH08

Division/Agency: Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health

Topic: Biosecurity Arrangements Disease Monitoring/Surveillance

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

What are the current arrangements and responsibilities of State Governments under COAG bio-security arrangements, animal health particularly in relation to disease monitoring, and surveillance?

Answer:

State and territory jurisdictions have a key role in maintaining a whole of government capacity to sustain the existing animal health status within their boundaries, including a baseline capacity to investigate and initiate a response to emergency animal diseases. These commitments are set out in the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement Deed managed by Animal Health Australia (www.animalhealth.com.au/programs/ealp/eadra.cfm).

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: PIAPH09

Division/Agency: Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health

Topic: Food Standards Code

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

I refer you to the Document 'Labor's Plan for Primary Industries', Election 2007; Page 20 which states;

Consideration of amendments to the Food Standards Code to clarify country of origin labelling requirements.

What 'Consideration' has the department undertaken to clarify country of origin labelling requirements?

Answer:

Refer to the response provided to Senator Williams following the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's Additional Estimates Hearing in February 2009 - PIAPH18.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: PIAPH10

Division/Agency: Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health

Topic: Country of Origin Labelling

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

What are the current requirements for the country of origin labelling on fresh food and on processed food?

Answer:

Refer to the response provided to Senator Williams following the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's Additional Estimates Hearing in February 2009 - PIAPH18.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: PIAPH11

Division/Agency: Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health

Topic: Country of Origin Labelling

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked: Is it currently possible for a consumer to find out where processed food which is labelled 'packaged in Australia from import products' comes from?

Answer:

Refer to the response provided to Senator Williams following the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's Additional Estimates Hearing in February 2009 - PIAPH18.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: PIAPH12

Division/Agency: Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health

Topic: Country of Origin Labelling

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

How would the consumers find out where the imported products came from?

Answer:

Refer to the response provided to Senator Williams following the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's Additional Estimates Hearing in February 2009 - PIAPH18.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: PIAPH13

Division/Agency: Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health

Topic: Country of Origin Labelling

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

Is it possible for the department to find out where the imported products came from?

Answer:

Refer to the response provided to Senator Williams following the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's Additional Estimates Hearing in February 2009 - PIAPH18.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: PIAPH14

Division/Agency: Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health

Topic: Trace back Trace Forward Food Ingredients

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

Has the department undertaken any work or training exercises on being able to trace back and trace forward ingredients used in processed food?

Answer:

Refer to the response provided to Senator Williams following the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry 's Additional Estimates Hearing in February 2009 - PIAPH18.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: PIAPH15

Division/Agency: Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health

Topic: Trade Practices Act

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

Who within the Department has been talking to Treasury about amending the Trade Practices Act? When were these discussions held?

Answer:

Senior departmental officers from the Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health Division met with senior Australian Competition and Consumer Commission officials on 29 August 2008 to discuss the viability of amending the *Trade Practices Act*. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has had additional correspondence with the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission on this issue.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: PIAPH16

Division/Agency: Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health

Topic: Food Labelling

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

I refer you to the Document 'Labor's Plan for Primary Industries', Election 2007;
Page 20 which states;

'Strengthening compliance arrangements'

What work has the Department undertaken to strengthen food labelling compliance arrangements?

Answer:

Refer to the response provided to Senator Williams following the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's Additional Estimates Hearing in February 2009 - PIAPH19.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: PIAPH17

Division/Agency: Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health

Topic: Country of Origin Labelling

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

Has the department made any inspections of major retailers to ensure they are labelling country of origin the food properly?

Answer:

No. Enforcement of food standards including labelling is the responsibility of relevant state and territory agencies.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: PIAPH18

Division/Agency: Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health

Topic: Simplify and Strengthen Food Labelling Laws

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked: I refer you to the Document 'Labor's Plan for Primary Industries', Election 2007; Page 19 which states;

'A Rudd Labor Government will simplify and strengthen food labelling laws.

This will include;

A new 'Grown in Australia' label under the Trade Practices Act for products that are not only made in Australia, but also grown in Australia.

What work has been undertaken on developing a new 'Grown in Australia label'?

Answer:

Senator Carr, Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research has policy responsibility for country of origin labelling within the *Trade Practices Act, 1974* (the TPA). The TPA is administered by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission. Senior departmental officers from the Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health Division met with senior Australian Competition and Consumer Commission officials on 29 August 2008 to discuss the viability of amending the Trade Practices Act. The department has had additional correspondence with the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission on this issue.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: PIAPH19

Division/Agency: Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health

Topic: Simplify and Strengthen Food Labelling Laws

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

Who within the Department is undertaking the work?

Answer:

The Agricultural Productivity Division is undertaking the work.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: PIAPH20

Division/Agency: Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health

Topic: Simplify and Strengthen Food Labelling Laws

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked: What consultations and with whom have they been held in relation to the Grown in Australia label?

Answer:

Senior departmental officers from the Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health Division met with senior Australian Competition and Consumer Commission officials on 29 August 2008 to discuss the viability of amending the Trade Practices Act. The department has had additional correspondence with the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission on this issue. The department contacted a range of stakeholders including Australian Made Campaign Limited, major supermarket chains, the Australian Food and Grocery Council and a leading food manufacturer to determine the effectiveness of the voluntary Australian Grown campaign and its relevance to food labelling policy.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: PIAPH21

Division/Agency: Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health

Topic: Simplify and Strengthen Food Labelling Laws

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked: When will the label 'Grown in Australia' be introduced?

Answer:

The government is progressing its election commitment to introduce a new 'grown in' label.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: PIAPH22

Division/Agency: Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health

Topic: Simplify and Strengthen Food Labelling Laws

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked: What products will the label apply to?

Answer:

Currently country of origin labelling is mandated for all packaged foods and unpackaged fresh or processed seafood, pork, fruit and vegetables. It is envisaged that any new 'Grown in' label will be able to be used on these products provided they meet the conditions for use of the label. The current voluntary 'Grown in Australia' label allows for the use of the label where each significant ingredient has been grown in Australia, and that all or virtually all of the processes involved in the production of the good have occurred in Australia.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: PIAPH23

Division/Agency: Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health

Topic: Simplify and Strengthen Food Labelling Laws

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked: Will it be compulsory for all food retail and wholesale outlets to display the label?

Answer:

Country of origin labelling is currently mandated for all packaged food and unpackaged fresh or processed seafood, pork, fruit and vegetables offered for retail sale. It is envisaged that that any new 'Grown in' label would be able to be used on these products provided they meet the conditions for use of the label.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: PIAPH24

Division/Agency: Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health

Topic: Simplify and Strengthen Food Labelling Laws

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked: What is the expected cost to food manufacturers?

Answer:

Costs associated with any possible introduction of a new *Grown in Australia* label would include the cost of reprinting labels should companies wish to use the 'Grown in' label. However, given that country of origin labelling is already currently mandated for all packaged foods and unpackaged fresh or processed seafood, pork, fruit and vegetables, it may be possible for manufacturers to incorporate this cost into their current label printing cycles and in response to consumer demand.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: PIAPH25

Division/Agency: Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health

Topic: Simplify and Strengthen Food Labelling Laws

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

Who within the Department has been talking to Treasury about amending the Trade Practices Act? When were these discussions held?

Answer:

Refer to the response provided to Senator Williams following the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's Additional Estimates Hearing in February 2009 - PIAPH19.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: PIAPH26

Division/Agency: Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health

Topic: *Food Labelling: (Media release - National Rural News dated 18 May 2009)*

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked: There is new tamper proof technology that pinpoints where in the world particular foods have been produced, this technology uses isotopic and trace element signatures unique to foods from individual regions across the world it can now provide a forensic fingerprinting showing exactly where the food was produced, right down to district level. Consumers want to know where their food is coming from, is safe from pesticides and other contaminants and consumers are prepared to pay a premium for food whose origin is known and assured.

1. Is the Department aware of this new technology?
2. If so, is it considering looking into acquiring the technology?
3. Could we have a report/update from Department re this technology?

Answer:

1. Yes
2. No
3. The Department has not produced a report on this technology. However, there is information covering various aspects of this technology available on the world-wide web.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: PIAPH 27

Division/Agency: Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health

Topic: Securing the Future

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked: What is the lapsing Securing the Future program? How many people are employed in this program? Why is it lapsing? When was it initiated? What was the purpose of this program? How much funding has been committed to the program over the life of the program? Will it be replaced or absorbed into other programs?

Answer:

Securing the Future: Protecting our Industries from Biological, Chemical and Physical Risks. Securing the Future is an Australian Government funded program implemented to protect Australian industries from biological, chemical and physical risks. The program supports capacity building, intelligence gathering and dissemination to improve Australia's capacity and capability to respond to biosecurity threats in a more systematic, effective and timely manner.

The program commenced in 2004-05 as a four year program but funding was extended in the 2008-09 and again in the 2009-10 Budget. The program's future funding after June 2010 is a matter for the Government.

The departmental component of the program budget funds eight officers based in the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Canberra, to manage the program. Funds are also expended through funding agreements with state departments of primary industries and consultancies which support additional work through state/territory agencies.

The total commitment for the program over the six years to June 2010 is \$31.5 million.