

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

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2006

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question No:** BRS01

**Division/Agency:** Bureau of Rural Sciences

**Topic:** National Agricultural Monitoring System

**Hansard Page:** 97 (31/10/06)

**Senator O'Brien asked:**

**Senator O'Brien**—Last time you told us that there was a work plan underway and you would report to PIMC this month.

**Dr Ritman**—The Primary Industries Ministerial Council. There will be a work plan report from the irrigated industries. As you would appreciate, it covers quite a deal of different sorts of information that we have to get together for the NAMS—a lot of the water information that would help in irrigated industries. There is an ongoing work plan for the whole of this year and there will be a report as to the progress of the project.

**Dr Samson**—The work plan was looked at the ministerial council meeting earlier this month and agreed to. We can check and get back to you, but my recollection of the work plan is that substantial progress will be made on bringing irrigated industries into the NAMS system by the end of the current financial year.

**Answer:**

The work plan for Year Two of the National Agricultural Monitoring System (2006/2007), including Irrigated Industries was presented and agreed to at the Primary Industries Standing Committee Meeting held in Canberra on 19 October 2006.

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**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question No:** BRS02

**Division/Agency:** Bureau of Rural Sciences

**Topic:** Currency of NAMS data

**Hansard Page:** 98 (31/10/06)

**Senator O'Brien asked:**

**Senator O'Brien**—I just draw to your attention a couple of things that are also notable—cattle numbers, for example. I could not get data on that specifically for the Latrobe region and was provided data for the whole Mersey-Lyall region, about a third of the state. I was not able to focus in as closely as some other sets enable you to. In the case of annual vegetation greenness time series, no data was available for the Latrobe region at all. Is it envisaged that there will be a time when that material will be available, or will you always be limited by the availability of data in relation to some of these things?

**Dr Samson**—I think your latter point is the realistic one, that there will always be some limitations imposed on the system. For example, I think it is fair to say that in the NAMS we use some of the ABS census data. As we know, the census only occurs every five years.

**Senator O'Brien**—Five years, yes.

**Dr Samson**—Yes. I am not sure there is a lot we can really do about that. In terms of some of the other data, though, and some of the examples you have given, we are certainly happy to look into those specifics and get back to you with the basis of those datasets and the frequency of the data collection. With some of those smaller, more local datasets there may be the opportunity to improve the situation. As I say, it is conceivable that down the track, if all jurisdictions agree and we identify some data where we believe it would be a good investment to enhance the quality, the quantity or the timeliness of it, then it would be possible to do that.

**Answer:**

The best available data is used in the National Agricultural Monitoring System (NAMS). The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) provides the data on cattle numbers. Full agricultural surveys are conducted every 5 years and smaller surveys are conducted on a yearly basis. The ABS currently only releases data on Statistical Division boundaries. The ABS are currently working on a new method of data collection (mesh blocks) which will improve the scale of information collected. This information will be incorporated into the NAMS as soon as it is available.

Annual vegetation greenness time series are produced at the Service Level Agreement (SLA) level. Nearly all of Australia, including Tasmania is covered by time series analyses (see Figure 1 for coverage in Tasmania). However, a number of SLAs were excluded from the analyses because they were considered urban areas. This exclusion analysis could be revisited.

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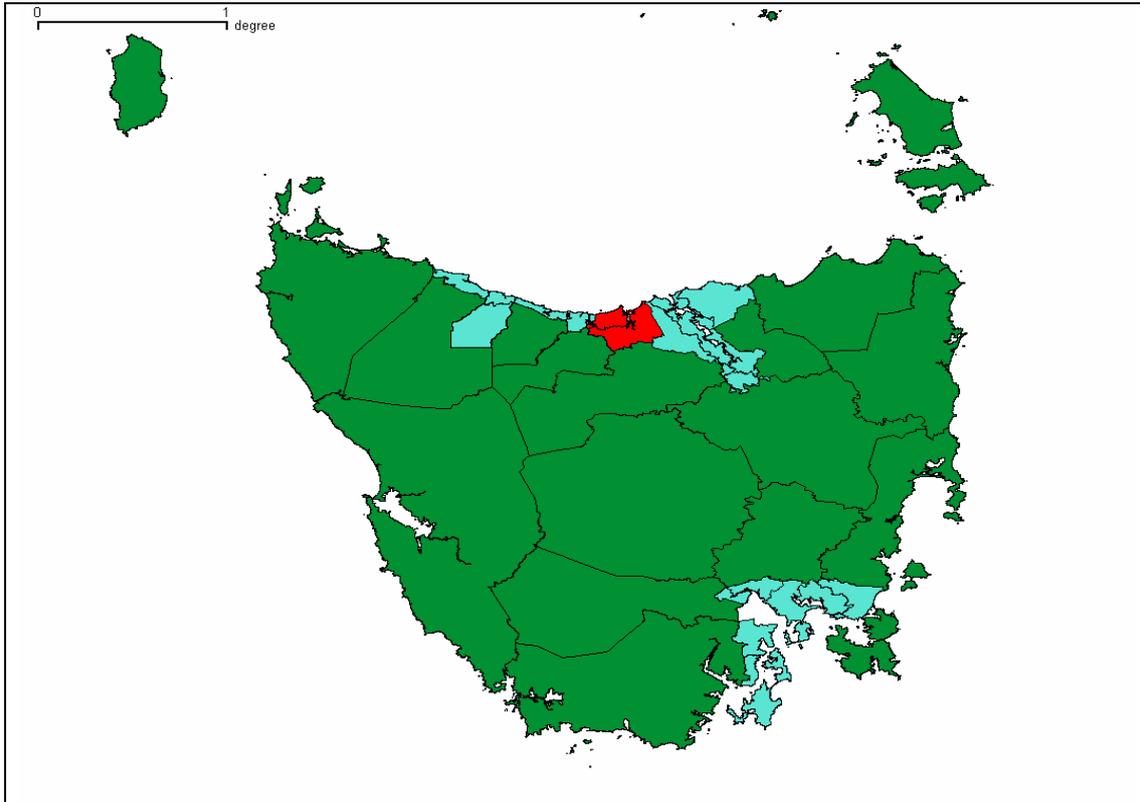


Figure 1. Area of Tasmania covered by annual vegetation greenness time series (in green). The areas in blue represent excluded SLAs and the area in red is the Latrobe SLA.

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**Question No:** BRS03

**Division/Agency:** Bureau of Rural Sciences

**Topic:** Marine Matters: An Atlas of Australian Marine Fishing and Coastal Communities

**Hansard Page:** 99 (31/10/06)

**Senator O'Brien asked:**

**Senator O'Brien**—What did this project cost?

**Dr Bygrave**—I think it was in the order of \$500,000 to \$600,000, and it was funded through the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation and the Department of Environment and Heritage.

**Senator O'Brien**—Fifty-fifty?

**Dr Bygrave**—I cannot recall. I can take that on notice, if you wish.

**Senator O'Brien**—Yes, if you would, please.

**Answer:**

The total budget for the Atlas of Australian Marine Fisheries and Coastal Communities was \$629,048. Fifty per cent of funding was provided through the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation and the other fifty per cent through the Australian Government Department of the Environment and Heritage.