

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 01

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: National Reserve System

Hansard Page: 19 (19/10/2009)

Senator Siewert asked:

Mr Thompson—The order of magnitude of the projects is a little over 112 projects, Senator. The reason I am a little unclear is that we have announced 56 Landcare projects and the number of competitive projects was 56, which I think you are aware of. I am not familiar with the number of projects in the National Reserve System or the World Heritage area. There are some projects there as well.

Senator SIEWERT—Which all come out of that money?

Mr Thompson—They all come out of that money.

Senator SIEWERT—Out of the \$152 million?

Mr Thompson—The \$152 million over four years, yes.

Senator SIEWERT—Does anyone have the breakdown of the National Reserve System funding—how many were Landcare and how many were NRM projects?

Mr Thompson—We do have that breakdown. I do not have it broken down in front of me, but it is not a very hard number to pull together. We could do that.

Answer:

The National Reserve System (NRS) funding element of Caring for our Country all comes from the National Heritage Trust (NHT) appropriation and is separate from the competitive NHT and Landcare elements of the initiative. All decisions on National Reserve System investments are made by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts. As of 11 November 2009, the Minister has approved expenditure of \$11.541 million for various components of the NRS. In addition \$3.059 million has been allocated from Regional base-level funding in various jurisdictions for NRS projects.

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Question: SRM 02

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Caring for our Country - expressions of interest

Hansard Page: 20 (19/10/2009)

Senator Siewert asked:

Senator SIEWERT—Of the \$60 million that was spent this year on projects, how many of them were approved as an expression of interest?

Mr Thompson—My recollection is that we called for expressions of interest only for the large projects, and the camels one was the only one.

Senator SIEWERT—It was the only large project?

Mr Thompson—It was the only large project funded and the only one that was to be progressed through the expression of interest process.

Senator SIEWERT—How many expressions of interest did you receive?

Mr Thompson—I cannot recall the exact number of expressions of interest we received for large projects, but there were a number of them. There certainly were not hundreds. It was around the order of nine or 10, to my recollection, but we can give you that answer on notice, Senator.

Answer:

18 expressions of interest in large-scale proposals, seeking total funding of \$652.2 million, were received through the 2009-10 Caring for our Country business plan. Three proposals addressed feral camel management and 15 proposals addressed other issues. The successful feral camel management project being undertaken by Ninti One Ltd (the financial management company for the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre) will receive a total Australian Government investment of \$20 million.

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Question: SRM 03

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Caring for our Country - Northern and Remote Australia Funding

Hansard Page: 21 (19/10/2009)

Senator Siewert asked:

Senator SIEWERT—Did you receive a project concerning the possible causes of the decline in the number of fauna in Northern Australia?

Mr Thompson—We may have. I do not recall that project. There were a lot of projects, quite a number for Northern Australia and quite a number relating to biodiversity, land management, fire management and invasive animals in Northern Australia. Unless we had more details, I could not comment on that one in particular.

Senator SIEWERT—Do you have a breakdown of the expenditure in Northern Australia?

Mr Thompson—I do not have a breakdown of the expenditure in Northern Australia that I can lay my hands on right now, but we can do that analysis. I do not recall us doing a specific one for Northern Australia, but it is one of the records we track for reporting purposes and we are in the process of doing that now for our annual report card.

Answer:

Details of expenditure up to 30 September 2009 under the Northern and Remote Australia priority area of Caring for our Country are provided in the attached spreadsheet. As of 17 November 2009 there is \$52.2 million of approved investments for 2009-10 under the Northern and Remote Australia priority area.

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Question: SRM 04

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Caring for our Country - Northern and Remote Australia Funding

Hansard Page 21 (19/10/2009)

Senator Siewert asked:

Senator SIEWERT—I just wanted to follow up on that last point. Will you report against the six nominated priorities under Caring for our Country in your annual report?

Mr Thompson—Yes.

Senator SIEWERT—When is your annual report due?

Mr Thompson—We are expecting that to come out quite shortly.

Senator SIEWERT—So I am better off waiting for that than putting a question on notice. Were you taking it on notice?

Mr Thompson—Whether or not you wish to put it on notice, that information will be made available to you.

Answer:

See response to SRM 03.

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Question: SRM 05

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Caring for our Country - assessment panel process

Hansard Page: 22 (19/10/2009)

Senator Siewert asked:

Senator SIEWERT—Thank you. I will go back to the assessment panel. You were saying that you are reviewing the process. So that I do not have to wait until the next estimates to find out what the process will be, I ask you on notice to supply an explanation of what the new process will be once you have finalised a review of the current assessment process?

Mr Thompson—Yes.

Answer:

The Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry will supply Senator Siewert with an outline of the revised assessment process for Caring for our Country proposals as quickly as possible after it is completed.

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Question: SRM 06

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Project funding under the Caring for our Country 2009-10 Business Plan
Hansard Page 22-24 (19/10/2009)

Senator Siewert asked:

Senator SIEWERT—How many of the 1,300 projects that were allocated and applied for through the last competitive round were funded out of the \$152 million?

Mr Thompson—As I said, we would have to take on notice the breakdown of the projects against those amounts, because I think I would possibly confuse you by trying to do it here. I do not have the number. In the open competitive component 56 projects and 56 Landcare projects were funded and there were—

Senator SIEWERT—Fifty-six Landcare projects separate to the 56 other projects?

Mr Thompson—Yes, in addition. Landcare is included within Caring for our Country. There were 56 projects that covered a range of activities such as sustainable agriculture and biodiversity, but there were also 56 Landcare projects.

Senator SIEWERT—That was under a separate process?

Mr Thompson—It is a similar process in terms of assessment, but they came through the same application process. The 1,300 applications included Landcare applications as well as broader Caring for our Country and Reef Rescue applications.

Senator SIEWERT—So the 112 projects comprised 56 projects that come under Caring for our Country, the more general bracket, and 56 Landcare projects?

Mr Thompson—Yes.

Senator SIEWERT—And that makes up the \$60 million?

Mr Thompson—That does not make up the whole \$60 million. In addition—and this is the bit that I wanted to take on notice—there are the World Heritage area and National Reserve projects. I do not have that breakdown with me. These numbers get a little confusing, so I think it would be easier to set them out for you in a table.

Senator SIEWERT—But the \$60 million will not be increased. That includes the National Reserve System applications. So an indicative allocation has been made against those projects?

Mr Thompson—I think it would be fair enough to say yes. There is an indicative allocation against them, yes.

Senator SIEWERT—That is what you are going to provide on notice?

Mr Thompson—That is what we would provide on notice, yes.

Senator SIEWERT—So out of the 1,300, which includes all national reserve projects et cetera, 112 have been funded?

Mr Thompson—One hundred and twelve, plus a few more that were going to be included in that notice where they include national reserves, because there are all the Indigenous protected areas. The Reef Rescue ones would be included in that number as well. It is a number that is a little larger than 112 but it is probably smaller than 200.

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SRM 06 (continued)

Senator SIEWERT—Is it possible to provide a table setting out from the total of \$407,920,000 how many projects were funded, how many you think will be funded and the proportions for Reef Rescue, the National Reserve System and the 56 Landcare projects?

Mr Thompson—It is possible to do that, Senator.

Answer:

Details of the value and numbers of projects and other investments made under the Caring for our Country 2009-2010 Business Plan are detailed in the attached spreadsheet. Many projects and other investments were funded on a multi-year basis and the announcements made by Ministers included the total funding being provided.

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Question: SRM 07

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Caring for our Country - Regional body funding

Hansard Page: 24 (19/10/2009)

Senator Siewert asked:

Senator SIEWERT—Thank you. In terms of the money that is being funded for regional groups into the future, is the \$106.8 million for next financial the 60 per cent guaranteed baseline funding?

Mr Thompson—The \$106 million is the baseline funding, yes. Most regions sought at least two years funding for their regional baseline.

Senator SIEWERT—Have all regions been given two years or some only one?

Mr Thompson—Regions had programs approved, depending on what their applications were. Some regions sought 12 months funding, most sought two or three years funding, some sought four. Some like to keep a little bit of flexibility for future years, so it varies.

Senator SIEWERT—Is it possible to give us a breakdown of the projects that regional groups sought from the competitive bid process? Fifty-six seems to be a figure that pops up all over the place. Is it possible to tell me how many of the 56 regions also received competitive projects approvals?

Mr Thompson—Yes, Senator, that is possible.

Senator SIEWERT—If you could take that on notice, that would be appreciated, and the value of each project would be appreciated as well.

Answer:

Under the 2009-2010 Caring for our Country business plan 13 regional natural resource management organisations received funding for 14 competitive projects. The total value of these projects was \$19,032,244. Table 1 in Attachment A below provides further information on the nature and value of these 14 projects.

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ATTACHMENT A

TABLE 1:
REGIONAL NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ORGANISATIONS –
COMPETITIVE PROJECTS APPROVED UNDER
THE 2009-10 CARING FOR OUR COUNTRY BUSINESS PLAN

Regional Natural Resource Management organisation	Project Title	Financial Value
Southern Gulf Catchments Ltd	Biodiversity Enhancement – WoNS targeted across north-west Queensland	\$1,020,000
North East Catchment Management Authority	Improving Landscape Scale Conservation of Threatened Grassy Woodland Ecosystems in the Greater Murray-Goulburn Catchment	\$3,000,000
Northern Gulf Resource Management Group Limited	Community Capital: Enhancing biodiversity and land management practices in the Northern Gulf region through investing in community engagement, skills and knowledge	\$136,610
Northern Gulf Resource Management Group Limited	Local Indigenous Solutions for a Global Problem in Northern Australia	\$2,800,000
South Cape York Catchments Inc.	Community Solutions for Managing Natural Resource Challenges in South Cape York	\$217, 250
Natural Resource Management Board (NT)	Coordinated response to on-ground control of <i>Mimosa pigra</i> in the Daly and Moyle catchments.	\$1,420,000.00

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TABLE 1 (Cont.)

Regional Natural Resource Management organisation	Project Title	Financial Value (\$)
Fitzroy Basin Association Inc	Addressing Threats Posed by Invasive Plant and Animal species on Shoalwater/Corio Bay Ramsar wetlands	\$600,000
Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority	Meeting multiple targets through Increased Coastal Community Engagement along the New South Wales coastline.	\$3,457,394
Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority	The Hunter Coastal Hotspot and Ramsar Improvement Project	\$1,470,000
Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority	Improving Water Quality in the Botany Bay 'Hot Spot'	\$1,580,000
Burdekin Solutions Limited trading as NQ Dry Tropics	Protecting the Ramsar wetland of Bowling Green Bay	\$2,000,000
South Coast Natural Resource Management Inc.	Protection of Ramsar values of Lake Warden and Lake Gore on the South Coast of Western Australia	\$460,806
SA Arid Lands Natural Resource Management Board	Understanding and managing critical refugia in the arid lands of central northern Australia	\$673,834
NRM South, Tasmania	Protecting the Environmental Values of the Pitt Water-Orielton Lagoon - a RAMSAR Wetland and Coastal hotspot	\$196,350
Total financial value of regional competitive projects		\$19,032,244

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Question: SRM 08

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Camels – Estimate of numbers

Hansard Page: 24 (19/10/09)

Senator NASH—I just have a couple of questions. I want to talk about camels and Caring for our Country. Am I in the right place? There is \$19 million allocated for eradicating camels. How many camels are there?

Mr Thompson—It is not \$19 million to eradicate camels, Senator; it is \$19 million to reduce camels to manageable numbers in those parts of Australia where camels are having a significant detrimental impact on biodiversity in the rangelands.

Senator NASH—How many camels are there and by what level do you want to reduce the number? How many of the million do you want to get rid of?

Mr Thompson—Someone else may have that number, Senator. We have an estimate of the number of camels in that part of Australia. The project is aimed at reducing the number of camels to a level—

Senator NASH—Obviously if you are going to kill them, you are going to reduce them.

Mr Thompson—No, it is to reduce them to a level where their natural increase is such that they can be controlled. We would have to take the detail of that on notice. It is not to eradicate them; it is to get them down to a level where their impact is manageable.

Answer:

The best estimate for the number of feral camels in Australia (Saalfeld and Edwards 2008, Chapter 2: Ecology of feral camels in Australia in: **Managing the impacts of feral camels in Australia: a new way of doing business**. Desert Knowledge CRC) is around 950,000 camels as of mid-2008 - often rounded to 1 million for ease of communication. Saalfeld and Edwards estimated that this population will double in 8 years, based on analysis of past population data, if the population is not controlled.

The \$19 million has been allocated to reduce feral camel populations to a manageable level, with a focus on reducing camel density around priority biological refugia. The best estimate is that the \$19 million will enable the removal of approximately 300,000 camels over the 4 years of the project, with a target of a further 300,000 camels to be removed if the states and Northern Territory match the Australian Government's \$19 million.

Total eradication of feral camels is not practical given the extent of the country they are known to habit (over 3.3 million sq km), the limited access to much of this land, and the generally dispersed nature of feral camels (often living as small family groups around a dominant female).

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Question: SRM 09

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Camel reduction planning

Hansard Page: 25 (19/10/09)

Senator Nash asked:

Senator NASH—How will the camels be eradicated?

Mr Thompson—I believe the camels will be culled by shooting, Senator.

Senator NASH—It seems an awful lot of money to reduce an unknown number of camels. It is a lot of bullets.

Senator Sherry—It is pretty hard terrain where some of those camels are.

Senator NASH—I am fairly sure they would probably use a helicopter, Minister.

Senator Sherry—The first Senate committee of which I was a member 20 years ago was animal welfare. We spent months looking at how to cull introduced camels, horses, goats and pigs. The transcript is well worth reading, because the terrain is extremely difficult.

Senator NASH—You obviously did not do a good enough job at the time given the problem we now have.

Senator Sherry—It is really an extraordinarily difficult job in the Australian terrain.

Senator NASH—Mr Thompson, seriously, could you supply the committee on notice with the existing numbers, the target to reduce the number to a manageable level, what the funding will go to and the breakdown, as you were just referring to, of how it was assessed that \$19 million was an appropriate figure?

Answer:

Total eradication of feral camels is not practical, given the extent of the country they are known to inhabit (over 3.3 million sq km), the limited access to much of this land, and the generally dispersed nature of feral camels (often living as small family groups around a dominant female).

Project planning to date is taking into consideration a variety of techniques for camel removal:

- ground based ‘shoot-to-leave’;
- aerial ‘shoot to-leave’;
- muster or opportunistic ground-based shooting for on-site processing for pet meat;
- muster for off-site processing for human consumption;
- muster for live export;
- muster for off-site farming; and
- enclosures/exclosures (fences and other mechanical exclusion devices).

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SRM 09 (continued)

In the more remote and inaccessible areas, aerial ‘shoot-to-leave’ may be the only practical technique – the options are broader in more accessible areas.

The 1991 report of the Senate Select Committee into Animal Welfare *Culling of large feral animals in the Northern Territory*¹ (referred to by Senator Sherry) concluded that feral animals posed a major environmental problem in the Northern Territory and that large feral animals (buffalo, donkeys and horses at the time) must be controlled. Having heard much evidence, the Committee accepted that helicopter shooting of feral animals should continue, but recommend tighter control in the interests of reducing animal suffering.

The \$19 million has been allocated to reduce feral camel populations to a manageable level, with a focus on reducing camel density around priority biological refugia. The best estimate for the number of feral camels in Australia is around 950,000 camels as of mid-2008 - often rounded to 1 million for ease of communication. It is estimated that this population will double in 8 years, based on analysis of past population data, if the population is not controlled.

The \$19 million of Australian Government funds will enable the removal of at least 300,000 camels over the 4 years, with a target of a further 300,000 to be removed if the states and Northern Territory match the Australian Government’s \$19 million.

The proposal prepared by Ninti One Ltd (the commercial arm of the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre, based in Alice Springs) is for expenditure of the \$19 million on

- Camel Removal \$14,728,000
- Monitoring and evaluation \$642,000
- Communication \$197,000
- Administration \$2,882,000
- Operations/implementation \$551,000

The 2009-10 Caring for our Country business plan sought expressions of interest for large projects with a budget in the order of \$20 million over four years. Following an assessment of these expressions of interest, selected proponents, in this case Ninti One Ltd, received feedback and were invited to develop a full proposal.

¹ http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/Committee/history/animalwelfare_ctte/culling_feral_animals_nt/report.pdf

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Question: SRM 10

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Cane Toads

Hansard Page: 25-26 (19/10/2009)

Senator Nash asked:

Mr Thompson—But what I can tell you is the range of projects that we have, some of which clearly involve community days. For example, managing the cane toad menace is \$23,000. I have the projects but I do not got them reconciled against which ones have got the days.

Senator NASH—Would you take on notice for the committee what funding goes to the volunteer days? That would be very useful. What is actually done? Is it some kind of whacking day festival or something where everybody whacks a cane toad on the head with a big stick? How does it actually work? I am fascinated by the thought of 600 people in the community with a big stick whacking cane toads-

Dr Troy—We have two community control projects approved for this year. One is the Stop the Toad

Foundation for \$204,000. The second is for the Kimberley Toad Busters, \$200,000.

Senator NASH—And how much was that for the Kimberley Toad Busters?

Dr Troy—Two hundred thousand dollars. There will also have been some funding in some of the regional baseline, the money to regional bodies, that would have gone to cane toad control with community volunteer days, but I do not have those figures.

Senator NASH—Are those projects ongoing or are these individual community days? How do they actually work?

Dr Troy—My understanding is that that funding is just for this year. They are not necessarily funded into the out years.

Senator NASH—If we just briefly take the Kimberley—sorry, what were they?

Dr Troy—The Kimberley Toad Busters and the Stop the Toad Foundation.

Senator NASH—Specifically what is that \$200,000 going towards?

Dr Troy—For the Kimberley Toad Busters, it is going for community control activities, community research and a cane toad forum in 2010.

Senator NASH—So how many people is that funding to go and whack a toad?

Dr Troy—I do not have those figures to hand.

Senator NASH—Sorry, I should not say ‘whack’ a toad; I mean to eliminate the toad. Could you provide for the committee, for both of those projects, exactly the breakdown of that funding and where that is going in terms of the cane toad elimination? That would be extremely useful. Could you also tell us how much per day each volunteer gets paid and how this money actually get utilised out in the community for those projects for the eradication of the cane toads? Finally, are the community volunteer days reducing cane toad numbers?

Senator NASH—Dr Troy, if you could come back with information on notice as well about the numbers by which those two projects expect to reduce the cane toad population, that would be extremely useful. Thank you.

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SRM 10 (continued)

Answer:

The Kimberley Toad Busters and the Stop the Toad Foundation undertake a wide range of activities related to cane toad control. The funding will be used in providing support and training for volunteers and will include expenditure on logistics such as communication equipment, camping supplies, transport, food, and fuel.

Volunteers do not get paid. The funding provided to the groups is used to pay non volunteer staff to assist with coordination and logistics and to equip the operation involving large numbers of volunteers undertaking activities in a remote area.

As an example of the impact of volunteer efforts to reduce cane toads, there has been collection of over 490,000 mature and juvenile cane toads and the destruction of millions of eggs and tadpoles by the Kimberley Toad Busters since 2006. This has reduced the potential number of toads in the colonising population.

The Caring for our Country program will fund the groups to deliver community volunteer days to locate, monitor and collect cane toads and the number of toads collected depends on whether the groups operate in areas of high toad numbers or at the absolute cane toad front, where numbers of toads are lower. Operations to reduce both numbers and impact in high value areas and at the front to slow colonisation are being undertaken in 2009-10. It is estimated that the two groups will collect more than 90,000 mature and juvenile cane toads in addition to tadpoles and eggs.

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Question: SRM 11

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Damage by camels

Hansard Page: 26 (19/10/09)

Senator Sterle asked:

CHAIR—I want to come back to camels. One very quick question: what extensive damage do camels do?

Mr Thompson—In an agricultural sense, because they are big animals they smash fences, they smash fixed watering points. When they want water and the water is not available in a trough, they have the capacity to break off taps, seals and whatever, so water ends up flowing freely. In the biodiversity sense, they do quite a bit of damage particularly around waterholes, both to the vegetation and to the watering point itself in terms of fouling it, using the water and trampling damage.

CHAIR—You may want to take it on notice, but it would be helpful to the committee if there were any figures around the damage that they do and around projected damage.

Mr Thompson—We do have that information. I can take that on notice.

Answer:

The Desert Knowledge CRC 2008 report *Managing the impacts of feral camels in Australia: a new way of doing business*² includes several statements of the impacts of camels on the arid and semi-arid parts of Australia:

“Camels appear to use most available habitat, with use reflecting seasonal influences related to food availability and breeding. Habitat types not used to any measured extent include mountain ranges and salt pans/lakes, although camels have been reported from both of these habitats. Camels use almost all available food sources with a clear suite of preferred species and are subject to limited mortality other than natural mortality associated with age and perhaps prolonged drought events.

Few of the resources needed by camels appear to be limiting at current population densities, with the possible exception of water. Increased water stress during hot dry summers is proposed as the causal factor for the encroachment of camels into remote central Australian communities in recent years. Camels were reported trying to obtain access to water by entering communities and damaging water-related infrastructure including bores, taps, and air conditioning units.

² http://www.desertknowledgecrc.com.au/publications/downloads/DKCRC-Report-47-Managing-the-impacts-of-feral-camels-in-Australia_A-new-way-of-doing-business.pdf

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SRM 11 (continued)

In Australia, the harmful impacts of pest animals fall into three main categories: economic, environmental, and social/cultural. The negative impacts of feral camels cut across all three of these damage categories and are of national importance as they affect rare and threatened species, ecosystem services, and the Australian economy."

"Negative economic impacts of feral camels mainly include:

- *Direct control and management costs: assessed in this report as \$2.35 million per year (over the period July 2005–June 2007).*
- *Impacts on livestock production through competition with stock for food and other resources assessed in this report as \$3.42 million per year (over the period July 2005–June 2007).*
- *Damage to infrastructure, property, and people. Pastoral lands suffer major damage to fences, yards, and water troughs; government agencies and remote settlements suffer major damage to buildings, fixtures, fences, and bores; individuals suffer damage primarily through vehicular collisions involving feral camels: assessed in this report as \$5.51 million per year (mainly over the period July 2005–June 2007).*

Negative environmental impacts of feral camels include:

- *Damage to vegetation through feeding behaviour and trampling and subsequent erosion: no quantifiable dollar value has been determined in this report but the impacts are thought to be moderate.*
- *Suppression of recruitment in some plant species. It is considered that camels have the ability to cause the local extinction of highly preferred species like the quandong (*Santalum acuminatum*), curly pod wattle (*Acacia sessiliceps*), and bean tree (*Erythrina vespertilio*): no quantifiable dollar value has been determined in this report but the impacts are thought to be significant.*
- *Damage to wetlands through fouling, trampling, and sedimentation. The ability of wetlands to act as refugia for many types of aquatic and terrestrial wildlife, particularly during droughts, is being undermined by the impacts of feral camels: no quantifiable dollar value has been determined in this report, but the impacts are thought to be significant.*
- *Competition with native animals for food and shelter: no quantifiable dollar value has been determined in this report, but the impacts are thought to be significant.*
- *Contribution to greenhouse gas emissions and hence impact on global climate change: assessed in this report as \$3.73 million per year, assuming a value of \$15 per ton of CO₂ emitted."*

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SRM 11 (continued)

Negative social/cultural impacts of feral camels include:

- *Damage to sites that have cultural significance to Aboriginal people. Water places in particular (water holes, rock holes, soaks, springs, etc.) are special places for desert Aboriginal people and many, but not all, are sacred sites. Thus, the negative impacts of camels on wetland areas also have a very important social/cultural dimension: no quantifiable dollar value has been determined in this report, but the impacts are thought to be significant.*
- *Destruction of bush tucker resources: no quantifiable dollar value has been determined in this report, but the impacts are thought to be moderate.*
- *Reduction of people's enjoyment of natural areas: no quantifiable dollar value has been determined in this report, but the impacts are thought to be significant.*
- *Causing a general nuisance and creating dangerous driving conditions in residential areas of remote settlements: no quantifiable dollar value has been determined in this report, but the impacts are thought to be significant."*

On the basis of their detailed studies, two researchers (Dörge & Heucke) who lived in the desert in close proximity to the camels over a period of 12 years concluded:

- camels are capable of utilising some 83 per cent of the available plant species, with only 7 per cent of the species contributing nearly 73 per cent of the total food intake.
- trees and shrubs comprised 53 per cent, forbs 43 per cent, and grasses less than 5 per cent, of the volume of vegetation consumed.

Dörge & Heucke listed 342 species of observed food plants in central Australian. Peeters *et al.* identified a smaller suite of species consumed by camels in the Great Victoria Desert in SA, with a number of species common to those of Dörge & Heucke.

Damage to all values has a density/damage relationship.

- environmental damage, on the basis of prior observations, can be maintained at tolerable levels if the density of camels is maintained at less than 0.1 head per sq km;

there are real gains to be made in maintaining camel densities on pastoral leases at <0.3 camels/sq km. The amount of damage tends to flatten out at densities between 0.1 - 0.2 camels/ sq km, at levels of about \$5000–6000 over two years. For most pastoralists, this may be a tolerable level of damage. Camel densities also need to be kept at or below 0.3 camels/sq km in order to

- safeguard the survival of tree species that are extremely susceptible to high levels of camel browsing; and
- any 'tolerable' density will inevitably be a compromise between the costs of the damage and the costs of its prevention.

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SRM 11 (continued)

Damage to the environment can be considered on two levels:

- a relatively low level but on-going grazing pressure on a variety of plant species in the broader landscape with regular partial defoliation of mature trees and shrubs and high mortality on young plants (including seedlings) likely to lead to premature death of individual plants and local extinction of highly preferred species like the quandong (*Santalum acuminatum*), curly pod wattle (*Acacia sessiliceps*), and bean tree (*Erythrina vespertilio*), and
- a high and catastrophic impact in drier periods on the all vegetation in and around water resources, on the physical condition of the water resource (trampling and pugging), leading to fouling and depletion of the water resource itself, to the detriment of all values (environmental, social, cultural and economic) that are dependant on or associated with the water.

The Desert Knowledge report provides ample anecdotal evidence of the impact of feral camels on remote Indigenous communities:

- damage to sites that have cultural significance to Aboriginal people - water places in particular (water holes, rock holes, soaks, springs, etc.) are special places for desert Aboriginal people and many, but not all, are sacred sites;
- damage to water infrastructure (taps, showers, air-conditioners, toilets, etc.), interruption to routine social and family activities, once camels enter communities;
- damage to bush tucker – plants commonly said to be impacted by camels include quandongs (*Santalum acuminatum*), bush banana (*Leichhartia*), bush currants (*Solanum centrale*) and bush potato (*Ipomoea costata*); and
- interference with cultural activities, with fear or wariness of camels beginning to impact on use of country and patterns of exploitation - male camels in the rutting season give well substantiated cause for concern for personal safety.

Feral camels are also a human safety hazard, particularly road and to a lesser extent, rail safety. Road accidents and fatalities are now an increasing occurrence in these regions, with camels being difficult to see on the roads, particularly at night, and in the early morning and late afternoon when camels are most active. Concern has also been expressed about camels wandering onto unfenced airstrips.

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Question: SRM 12

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Lowland Native Grasslands of Tasmania

Hansard Page: 27 (19/10/2009)

Senator Colbeck asked:

Senator COLBECK—With regard to the application from NRM North in Tasmania for management of native grasslands, particularly the area that was recently listed by Minister Garrett as critically endangered, what interaction did the department have with respect to that application, which was rejected?

Mr Thompson—I would have to take that on notice. As has been pointed out, there were quite a large number of applications, and I do not have the detail of every application with us. The general process was that every application was considered on its merits, in terms of both the quality of the project and the magnitude of the problem that was being addressed. Quite a number of the projects were not rejected; they were assessed as quite okay projects but unable to be funded because of limitations on money. Some were placed on reserve lists; some just scored too low to be funded. The major reason for projects not being funded was budgetary, not necessarily the quality of the project. If you want more information on that particular project, I would have to take it on notice.

Senator COLBECK—I do. I am specifically interested given that, when the listing was made, Minister Garrett recommended that the farmers apply under Caring for our Country to assist them with management of those areas and then a week later the application that they had in to do just that was rejected. As you might imagine, that left them somewhat nonplussed as part of that process. There is \$11 million for camels, but farmers who have had their land effectively restricted in its use cannot get assistance to manage it when the recommendation from the minister associated with that says, ‘Apply to this program.’ I would appreciate that information if you could provide it. Mr Thompson, would it be possible to get hold of the reserve list that you referred to, on notice?

Mr Thompson—I would have to take that on notice. I think it is possible

Answer:

NRM North submitted a funding proposal seeking \$9,453,167 from a competitive funding pool of almost \$58 million available from Caring for our Country in 2009-2010. As the proposal from NRM North was for more than \$250,000 it was subject to a primary assessment by government officials, followed by an independent assessment by the scientific advisory panel. The proposal was then considered by the Executive Panel which comprised senior executive of the two departments and recommendations put to the Natural Heritage Ministerial Board. The NRM North project was not recommended to the Ministerial Board.

A listing of reserve projects as at 11 December 2009 is attached.

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Question: SRM 13

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Caring for our Country - Tilapia

Hansard Page: 27 (19/10/2009)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—There is \$19 million for camels. How much is there for tilapia out of the national projects for Caring for our Country? Tilapia is the fish that is destroying most of the rivers in Queensland and Western Australia.

Mr Thompson—I do not recall the tilapia project, so I would have to take it on notice to check.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—I can help you: there is nil; nothing for tilapia

Answer:

No national level proposals were submitted through the 2009-2010 Caring for our Country business plan to address tilapia fish.

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Question: SRM 14

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Barrier Reef wetlands

Hansard Page: 28 (19/10/2009)

Senator Ian Macdonald asked:

Mr Thompson—There was a target in Caring for our Country for RAMSAR listed wetlands and high-value aquatic ecosystems.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—None of the Barrier Reef wetlands received any funding at all. Are they not considered high value?

Mr Thompson—As to the Barrier Reef, I would have to check. I thought there was one wetlands project that was funded in the Barrier Reef, or one project that has benefits for Barrier Reef wetlands. The Barrier Reef wetlands are considered high value. While the wetlands themselves may not have received many projects, there is the \$200 million Reef Rescue program, which is targeted at improving the water quality of the reef over all

Answer:

The importance of wetlands, which include those on the Great Barrier Reef, is acknowledged within Caring for our Country's national priority area: coastal environments and critical aquatic habitats. Targets have been developed to help conserve and protect wetlands and other priority high conservation aquatic ecosystems including rivers, floodplains and estuaries.

In 2009-10 the Government has funded two major wetland projects on the Great Barrier Reef. The first project (\$600 000) seeks to address threats posed by invasive plant and animal species on Shoalwater/Corio bay Ramsar wetland. The second project (\$2 million) will focus on the control and ongoing management of weeds of national significance and pest animals that threaten the ecological character of the Bowling Green Bay Ramsar site.

Many other Caring for our Country projects within Queensland in 2008-09 and 2009-2012, including Reef Rescue and regional base level funded projects will also contribute to the protection and restoration of wetlands and other priority high conservation aquatic ecosystems.

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Question: SRM 15

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Caring for our Country

Hansard Page: 29 (19/10/2009)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—That is fine. Can you tell me on notice how many staff are required to undertake the assessments for Caring for our Country and the amount of time taken in the assessment process? Then you can tell me that all the recommendations have been accepted, as I understand it. Can you do that?

Mr Thompson—We can provide the number of staff that were involved, and an estimate of the amount of time involved.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Okay. Can you also tell me how important wetlands are to the goals of Caring for our Country, how many applications were received for funding for wetlands, and how many actually received funding, including both RAMSAR and non-RAMSAR listed wetlands?

Mr Thompson—We could take that on notice.

Answer:

1. 42 Australian Government Land and Coasts Team staff were engaged in the assessment of regional base-level, competitive, and landcare proposals under the 2009-10 Caring for our Country business plan. We estimate that these staff were each engaged for an average of 12 working days on the assessment of proposals. An additional 12 Senior Executive Service officers were engaged for the equivalent of one working day on the development of recommendations to Ministers. (These estimates exclude reading time and preparation.)

The final recommendations provided to Ministers were accepted by them.

2. The government has made a commitment through Caring for our Country to deliver specific outcomes for Ramsar wetlands and priority high conservation value aquatic ecosystems which include non-Ramsar wetlands, rivers, floodplains and estuaries. Targets, articulated within the coastal environments and critical aquatic habitats national priority, have been developed to help achieve the Government's outcomes and include addressing the threats posed by invasive plant and animal species to the ecological character of Ramsar wetlands and non-Ramsar high conservation value aquatic ecosystems.

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107 applications identified that they would contribute to achieving the Caring for our Country Ramsar wetland target. Although there is no specific Caring for our Country target for non-Ramsar wetlands, 125 applications identified that they would contribute to achieving the Caring for our Country high conservation value aquatic ecosystem target. This included some wetlands, estuaries and rivers.

Six competitive projects that are specifically addressing the Ramsar wetland target were successful and 25 regional natural resource management organisations are investing their Caring for our Country base-level funding in protecting and improving Ramsar wetlands.

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Question: SRM 16

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Reef Rescue Indigenous Land and Sea Country Partnerships program

Hansard Page: 32-33 (19/10/2009)

Senator Hutchins asked:

Mr Thompson—There is an amount for \$10 million for land and sea Indigenous partnerships over five years. That is to involve them in training programs for looking after reef resources in the way they can and using their traditional knowledge in an around the reef lagoon itself. Some of that relates to managing harvests of animals, but it is a reasonably flexible sort of tool. They are called traditional use management arrangements for Indigenous involvement in managing the land and sea country.

Senator HUTCHINS—So that is an agreement between an Indigenous group—

Mr Thompson—It will be an agreement between the Australian government and the traditional Indigenous people in the reef area.

Senator HUTCHINS—Are there any existing now, or is it the plan for this money to assist in that project commencing?

Mr Thompson—It is in an early stage of negotiation. The Indigenous groups in that area have received assistance through previous programs, so groups exist, but the details of the current land and sea partnerships are being developed. We spent about \$1 million last year, and we estimate to spend about \$1.3 million this year on Indigenous partnerships.

Dr O'Connell—From my recollection, at least a couple of the agreements that are in place through the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority are pre-existing. So this builds on an established practice, I guess.

Senator HUTCHINS—So there is the traditional use agreements and also the sea country management plans?

Mr Thompson—Yes. There is traditional use of marine resource agreements, there are sea country management plans, and there are some Indigenous training programs to build the skills of Indigenous people in implementing those plans.

Senator HUTCHINS—How many Indigenous people may have gone through the skills program?

Mr Thompson—I do not have that detail with me.

Senator HUTCHINS—If that could be supplied at some stage, that would be comfortable.

Mr Thompson—Yes.

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Answer:

The ongoing Reef Rescue Indigenous Land and Sea Country Partnerships Program (The Program) is the primary mechanism to engage Indigenous communities in the management and protection of the Great Barrier Reef's marine resources and cultural diversity. The Program is designed to: strengthen communications between local communities, managers and reef stakeholders and build a better understanding of Traditional Owner issues about the management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park; and expand the use of sea country management tools.

A Sea Country Partnerships Training strategy is currently being developed by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA). The strategy will aim to build capacity of Traditional Owners to implement sea country planning initiatives and will build on existing programs carried out on the Great Barrier Reef. Specifically, Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement (TUMRA) holders will have the opportunity to be trained in various skills such as administration, communications, compliance support and ecological monitoring. To date approximately 60 Traditional Owners have been supported to attend meetings, courses and conferences to facilitate skills in the development of sea country management tools.

The GBRMPA has accredited four TUMRAs with Traditional Owner Groups in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. GBRMPA is also working with the Kuuku Ya'u peoples who are signatories to an Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) to support management of their sea country. It is envisaged that over the next four years the Program, subject to ongoing funding, will build greater capacity amongst TUMRA holders to effectively implement existing TUMRAs and to develop at least an additional three TUMRAs.

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Question: SRM 17

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Landcare

Hansard Page: 34 (19/10/2009)

Senator Williams asked:

Senator WILLIAMS—Thanks, Dr O’Connell. I might just put something to you. Can you say why, under the functioning criteria, GWYMAC, based at Inverell, this year has a \$40,000 budget out of which comes rent, office running expenses, wages for a Landcare coordinator and programs? Last year the budget was \$80,000. How can Landcare programs be effective when some coordinators and staff are reduced to working two or three days a week because they are not being funded?

Mr Thompson—The amount of money available to individual Landcare groups or networks of Landcare groups varies across the country. They receive their funding sometimes through a direct application to us. They might receive some funding where their coordinator is acting as a project officer. They also receive funding from state bodies and others—and that money does vary. As was pointed out earlier, regional bodies have had some reductions in funding, so their capacity to support some Landcare groups has diminished a little. Also, some state governments have reduced resources as well. As Dr O’Connell said, the Commonwealth is doing what it can by saying there is another 56 facilitators that it will support, and I think Minister Burke has made it very plain that there is nothing to stop people when they are putting forward an application for assistance, if that involves some staff to help deliver that project which is addressing one of the Caring for our Country targets, they can employ some people with that money if it is part and parcel of the project.

Dr O’Connell—We can certainly take that specific case that you raise on notice and provide some information.

Answer:

The Gwydir and Macintyre Resources Management Committee (GWYMAC) is an ‘umbrella’ organisation for Landcare groups in the Inverell area. GWYMAC works closely with the Inverell Shire Council and the Border Rivers–Gwydir Catchment Management Authority (CMA).

The GWYMAC’s budget is not sourced directly from Australian Government funding. It is provided by the Border Rivers–Gwydir CMA. The Border Rivers–Gwydir CMA received base funding of \$2.26 million in 2008–09 and will receive \$2.12 million each year for the 2009–2013 period. These funds may be used to employ local community coordinators who work on grassroots Landcare

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activities, provided these relate to delivering the desired Caring for our Country outcomes. Under the Caring for our Country 2009–10 Business Plan, funds could only be used for community skills knowledge and engagement if they supported a biophysical target, such as sustainable farm practices. However, Border Rivers–Gwydir CMA was unable to allocate any funds for community skills knowledge and engagement for sustainable farm practices projects because the Business Plan did not list that region as a priority for sustainable farm practices. As a result, the Border Rivers–Gwydir CMA's community skills knowledge and engagement activities focussed on projects related to biodiversity and coastal and aquatic priority areas.

The Australian Government is currently working with the Border Rivers–Gwydir CMA to address this anomaly. The reduction in GWYMAC's budget was a decision of the Border Rivers–Gwydir CMA. We understand that in 2009–10 the Border Rivers–Gwydir CMA provided \$60 000 for the GWYMAC Community Support Officer position.

Caring for our Country encourages regional NRM organisations to support and establish partnerships with landholders, community groups, Indigenous communities and industry within their regions. Mechanisms used are the Caring for our Country Business Plan and specification and management of contracts for regional base-level and competitive projects.

The Australian Government has continued to provide funding for Landcare activities. It has committed \$189.2 million to Landcare over five years (2009–2013). In June 2009, the government allocated \$33.6 million to a National Landcare Facilitator initiative. This will fund up to 56 Landcare facilitator positions in each of the NRM regions.

In addition to their base funding regional NRM organisations may also employ additional facilitators and coordinators using substantial supplementary funds from state and territory governments and other sources, such as local fundraising, private grants and sponsorship.

In 2009–10 other funding for Landcare activities included:

- a. \$25.9 million will be provided for 56 Landcare projects to be funded under the 2009–2010 Caring for our Country Business Plan.
- b. \$5 million (2009–2010) for Community Action Grants of between \$5 000 and \$20 000 to support smaller, local projects.

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Question: SRM 18

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Swan and Canning - Caring for our Country

Hansard Page: 35 (19/10/2009)

Senator Back asked:

Senator BACK— I want to draw attention to some concerns associated with Caring for our Country in the Swan and Canning catchments, which I guess about 75 per cent of the population of Western Australia would be involved in, particularly the Canning wetlands and the work done by the Perth NRM over some time. In recent years, their regional base funding has reduced from a figure of about \$4.2 million annually to \$3.2 million last year and now down to \$2.3 million per annum for the next four years. Could you give us an indication as to what they did wrong to cause them to have such a severe reduction in their funding base?

Mr Thompson—It is not what the group did wrong, Senator. The regional base level allocations were made on the basis of a number of considerations, but a significant one was the number of Caring for our Country targets in that region. The Caring for our Country targets do differ from the ones under previous programs. As a result of that, the amount of money may have gone down for some regions. From the numbers that I have, historically, their average was \$3.6 million. In 2008-09 they got \$3.2 million and \$2.3 million will be their ongoing one. It is broadly the numbers you were talking about. The major figure there will be the fewer Caring for our Country targets in that region. The region is able to apply for competitive funding, and I think in this year's business plan, regions in the competitive component got about 25 per cent of the funding. So they are very competitive at seeking additional funding.

Senator BACK—Could you check that? The figure that is available to me under the competitive process is that they did not receive anything in 2009-10.

Mr Thompson—I was using the 25 per cent across the board. Swan-Canning may well have missed out altogether. I would have to take that on notice.

Answer:

The region responsible for the Swan-Canning area is Perth Region NRM and they did not receive any of the competitive funding under Caring for our Country in 2009-2010.

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Question: SRM 19

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division
Topic: Caring for our Country - Regional body funding
Hansard Page: 36-37 (19/10/2009)

Senator Sterle asked:

CHAIR—In conclusion, would the department like to make it very clear what source of funding the regional bodies have?

Mr Thompson—The regional bodies have regional baseline funding that is guaranteed. They are also able to apply on the same basis as anybody else for competitive funding. Because of their access to regional base funding and their existence in the regions, they are well placed to put in quite competitive bids. Were you seeking the numbers again?

CHAIR—If you could table them, that would be good.

Senator SIEWERT—I have already asked you, I think, to provide the funding that each region got under the competitive process? I have already asked for that, haven't I?

Mr Thompson—If you have not, we understand that that is what you are after.

Answer:

See answer to SRM 07.

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Question: SRM 20

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Caring for our Country - Investment Merit Assessment Tool

Hansard Page: 37 (19/10/2009)

Senator Siewert asked:

Senator SIEWERT—Also, on notice, could you provide us with a copy of the assessment form that was used by the assessment panels. I mean both the questions that they were looking at in their assessment process and the numerical system that was used to assess the projects?

Mr Thompson—I understood on notice we had provided you with a copy of the assessment tool. We will check. If we have not provided it, we should be able to do that.

Senator SIEWERT—Okay; that would be appreciated. Thanks.

Mr Thompson—You are just asking for the tool itself?

Senator SIEWERT—I would ask for the projects, but I know I would not get them

Mr Thompson—Could I just make one comment? Senator Siewert, we did provide you with a copy of the 2009-10 investment merit tool in response to a question on notice.

Senator SIEWERT—Yes, okay. What I am specifically after is an explanation of how the scoring process was used. It is unclear to me how you then used the scoring process.

Mr Thompson—I would have to take that on notice.

Senator SIEWERT—If you could take that on notice, that would be appreciated. I should have been clearer. That is what I am specifically after.

Answer:

The overall process used to assess proposals was as follows:

- Projects are submitted
- *Phase 1:* Registration and processing of proposals
- *Phase 2:* Merit Assessment by internal Primary Assessment Panels
- *Phase 3:* Advice and consideration by External Advisory Panels
 - Community Advisory Panels to consider small-scale projects
 - Scientific Advisory Panel to consider medium and large-scale projects
 - State/territory investment coordination panels to consider regional allocated funding

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- *Phase 4:* Executive Evaluation Panel
- *Phase 5:* Decisions by Ministers Burke and Garrett

Under Phase 2 of this process, each proposal was scored using the Investment Merit Assessment Tool against the five assessment criteria of achievement against Caring for our Country targets; the extent to which proposals were based on the best available science; the public benefit offered by proposals; the value for money offered by proposals; and the delivery risk associated with proposals.

Each assessment criterion was divided into sub-criteria (e.g. ‘technical feasibility’ and ‘on-ground achievement of targets’ sub-criteria for the ‘best available science’ criterion). Scores were assigned to each of these sub-criteria within set ranges – which varied between the sub-criteria. This scoring system allowed for differential weightings.

This scoring process allowed for an overall comparative ranking of proposals to be developed. Scores were subsequently reviewed and rankings moderated where judged appropriate by the External and Executive Panels (phases 3 and 4 above).

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Question: SRM 21

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Caring for our Country – Metropolitan projects

Hansard Page: 37 (19/10/2009)

Senator BACK—Finally, would it be possible, please—if you could take this on notice—to confirm that there were no metro projects funded at all under the competitive process this last financial year around Australia? Is that correct?

Mr Thompson—I would have to take that on notice

Answer:

Two projects were approved in metropolitan areas. A \$1.580 million project developed by the Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Authority for improving water quality in the Botany Bay Hotspot was approved under the competitive component of the 2009-10 Caring for our Country business plan. A \$315,470 project developed by Landcare Queensland Ltd for improving farmers' soil and natural resource management, and involving a pilot project in the greater Brisbane area, was approved under the Landcare component of Caring for our Country.

In addition, in the 2008-09 financial year projects located in metropolitan areas with a financial value of more than \$6.55 million were approved under the Community Coastcare component of Caring for our Country.

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Question: SRM 22

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: ANAO review of Caring for our Country and previous programs

Hansard Page: 37 (19/10/2009)

Senator Sterle asked:

CHAIR—On the last one, Caring for our Country—and correct me if I am wrong—just so I have this clear: the ANAO reports were critical of the lack of transparency. When were those reports put out?

Mr Thompson—There have been a couple of those reports put out. Up until about 2007 there were critical ANAO reports. I can recall a couple of them.

Dr O’Connell—In terms of Caring for our Country, to be absolutely clear, my understanding is that there are none that are of Caring for our Country; it is previous programs.

CHAIR—I should have made that clear. Thanks, Dr O’Connell.

Mr Thompson—The last ANAO review of previous programs I think was in 2006 or 2007. We will confirm that on notice. It is when the ANAO did a review of Caring for our Country.

Dr O’Connell—I think it was 2008 and it was done of the previous program, but we will take it on notice.

Answer:

The last ANAO audit of the previous programs, titled *Regional Delivery Model for the Natural Heritage Trust and the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality* was tabled in February 2008. The ANAO has not yet conducted a review of the Caring for our Country initiative.

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Question: SRM 23

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Number of meetings between DAFF and DEWHA about the Coral Sea Conservation Zone

Hansard Page: 42 (19/10/2009)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—I expect you would need to take this on notice, but could you tell me how many times officers of your department have met with Environment or fishermen or anyone else in relation to that specific proposal? Is that possible to do?

Mr Pittar—We can look at that. Would you want to include phone conversations? Would it be formal meetings?

Senator IAN MACDONALD—No, formal meetings. If there are none, you could perhaps say, ‘We have a record of 15 phone conversations’, without going into too much detail. I am just curious as to how involved the department is in that proposal.

Answer:

The department participated in an inter-departmental meeting to discuss the Coral Sea Conservation Zone, hosted by the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) on 15 December 2008.

Records of all phone conversations between DEWHA and the department have not been kept. However, prior to the declaration of the Conservation Zone, there were several phone conversations between senior departmental officers and DEWHA.

Given the declaration was a matter for the Hon. Peter Garrett AM MP, Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, the department was not able to discuss the declaration with stakeholders. Key stakeholders, including the Commonwealth Fisheries Association and Recfish Australia were informed that the declaration would not diminish existing fishing access arrangements and that the Coral Sea would continue to be considered as part of the East Marine Bioregional Planning process.

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Question: SRM 24

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Training requirements and programs for vessels

Hansard Page: 42-43 (19/10/2009)

Senator Colbeck asked:

Senator COLBECK—Training requirements and programs for vessels. I have been talking, for example, to the pearl guys in the last three or four weeks and I have had some discussions with the mussel guys in South Australia. I just wondered what interaction there has been as part of that process.

Mr Thompson—I am aware that they sought advice from us. They have also sought advice from AFMA, and I think that issue is still ongoing. I do not have the details of anything more other than they have consulted with us in the normal manner. I think AFMA has been playing a more significant role than us in that one.

Senator COLBECK—Why would AFMA have a more significant role than the department?

Mr Thompson—AFMA has had a more significant role because of their operational issues relating to the fishing industry. We have some perspectives on the broader consideration about the need for training in the fishing industry from a policy point of view, but I think the issue that has caused some concern in the industry from my understanding is how that translates when you start to look at both sides and what that means for actual numbers of fishermen and those sorts of things, and AFMA have those numbers. My recollection was that AMSA were chasing information about what this actually means for the fishing industry as such, because they did not have a really practical handle on the sizes of boats and the number of boats in particular areas, and they were seeking our advice in that area. They were more familiar with larger scale vessels.

Senator COLBECK—So there has been no discussion about length of training programs and minimum training requirements and things of that nature as part of the interaction with you?

Mr Thompson—I would have to take that on notice. I am not familiar with the detail of that. As I said, we have had some correspondence with AMSA that I cannot recall at the present time. Other people have been involved over a period of time.

Senator COLBECK—The concerns that I am getting are the practicalities of what has been proposed in the draft arrangements at this point in time for first time trainees and things of that nature. There is a strong understanding of the need for adequate safety training and initial training programs, but given the ratio of people going through training to actually starting or continuing a career in the industry, there is some concern about that.

Mr Thompson—There are two issues there. One is our discussions with the industry have indicated that, like a lot of industries, they are seeking employees, and training is important, so there is no issue there. My understanding was that AMSA was seeking advice from us on those practical issues, and those discussions are still ongoing. But I can confirm that on notice.

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SRM 24 (continued)

Answer:

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) is responsible for the administration of Marine Orders Part 3 - Seagoing Qualifications (MO3), under the *Navigation Act 1912*, which gives effect to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW Convention).

The department is aware that AMSA is currently reviewing MO3 with the objectives to:

- a) Achieve complete integration under the STCW Convention between the training and certification requirements for commercial vessels operating within existing state/Northern Territory maritime safety jurisdictions and for international trading.
- b) Better align sea time requirements, which remain a vital part of the training system, to the STCW Convention standards and recognise sea service on smaller domestic commercial vessels.
- c) Simplify the certificate structure for the deck and engine streams on smaller vessels and across trading and fishing vessels.
- d) Rationalise the definitions for near-coastal operating areas.
- e) Provide for approved Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) to deliver training and assess competencies for smaller vessels within the near-coastal area, and for AMSA to issue qualifications that meet a consistent standard across all commercial vessels engaged in the Australian maritime industry.
- f) Support RTOs in implementing options for providing open education including; distance learning, modularisation of courses and adopting procedures for recognition of prior learning and recognition of current competency in line with Australian Qualifications Training Framework (AQTF) requirements.
- g) Apply a national approach to quality assurance of RTO training and ensure coordination of audit programs of recognised RTOs between AMSA and the relevant state registration and course accreditation authorities.

The MO3 review incorporates consultation with industry stakeholders and is expected to be available for public comment in early 2010.

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Question: SRM 25

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Southern Bluefin Tuna

Hansard Page: 44 (19/10/09)

Senator Siewert asked:

Senator SIEWERT—I have some follow-up questions on southern bluefin tuna. I am not trying to be sarcastic but if it is appropriate, because the talks are going on this week, could you tell us what position the Australian delegation is taking to those talks?

Mr Quinlivan—I cannot disclose that, Senator. It is a matter of government policy. We will be handling that negotiating brief very carefully and we will be doing our best to deliver it in the commission meeting, but it is certainly not a public matter.

Senator SIEWERT—What are the numbers in your delegation that you are taking to the talks? Are you taking the normal number?

Mr Quinlivan—I am not sure, to be honest. I know from the government side the numbers are about what they normally are, I think there will be a strong industry delegation, and I think that the NGOs chose to participate as observers rather than as members of the delegation. As observers, as I understand it, they have an opportunity to make a presentation to the commission meeting and they chose to take that option rather than be part of the delegation. We will take on notice your question about numbers.

Senator SIEWERT—If you could take on notice whether the delegation is the same in numbers as you have taken every year, that would be appreciated.

Answer:

In 2009, the Australian delegation to the annual meeting of the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna was 13 individuals, comprising eight government officials and five industry representatives. This compares with previous delegation numbers of 18 in 2008 and 20 in 2006. In 2007, 33 people participated in the meeting, however, this was due to the meeting being held in Canberra.

The response to question SRM 51 (1) refers to the names of the 13 individuals in the Australian delegation.

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Question: SRM 26

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Southern Bluefin Tuna

Hansard Page: 44 (19/10/09)

Senator Siewert asked:

Senator SIEWERT—Are you considering any alternative strategies against non-compliance beyond what you have just mentioned?

Mr Quinlivan—There were meetings of the compliance committee of the commission yesterday and today. We were seeking further action in that area and more credible reporting, particularly by the distant water nations where we have always been concerned about some levels of leakage. So yes, we do have some proposals in that area.

Senator SIEWERT—I appreciate at the moment it is difficult for you to answer the answer the questions because you are in the middle of the talks this week. Chair, I am wondering if it is possible for the committee to ask for a briefing subsequent to the meeting.

Mr Quinlivan—We would be happy to ask the minister about the timing and process for that. I am not sure when commission documents will be released—clearly that would be necessary—but soon after that I think it would be fine, if the minister agrees, so we would be happy to ask him.

Answer:

Arrangements are underway to provide Senator Siewert and the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee with a briefing.

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Question: SRM 27

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Country-of-origin labelling for fish sold in restaurants

Hansard Page: 45-46 (19/10/2009)

Senator IAN MACDONALD asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—I have a fisheries question. Mr Quinlivan, perhaps you will recall that some years ago the Australian government initiated a program where every fish shop and supermarket in Australia that you go to will clearly label fish, what it is and, most importantly, its state of origin. I have been told that the Northern Territory has recently introduced regulation or done something that requires restaurants in the Northern Territory to indicate on their menus whether the fish that is being offered at that restaurant is from Australia or where it is from. The Barramundi Farmers Association, indeed Australian fishermen generally, appreciate the success of the original initiative in labelling in the supermarkets. But they are now approaching us in relation to getting restaurants to do the same thing—not, of course, banning where restaurants access their fish but at least letting people know. I recall it was principally a state regulatory issue, but it was the Commonwealth's encouragement that got that to be adopted Australia wide. Is there any way that the Commonwealth can again exert some leadership in that area to assist the Australian fisheries industry by having restaurants clearly label where the fish that they are offering comes from?

Mr Quinlivan—I think you are mainly referring to development of the fish name standard, which was adopted—

Senator IAN MACDONALD—It was really more where it was coming from. The fish name standard was important but it was about where it was coming from.

Mr Quinlivan—Then the states applied it to the extent they could. I think the short answer to your question is no, unless the labelling of product in restaurants reached a point where it was potentially in breach of the Trade Practices Act. Desirably, that is something that would be done nationally as part of the food-labelling arrangements. I do not think we have got any particular levers we can pull to achieve this.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Could I perhaps ask the minister if he would encourage Minister Burke at his next meeting with state fisheries ministers to look at the issue of ensuring that fish sold through restaurants, on restaurant menus, is clearly labelled to show whether it comes from Australia or elsewhere? Could I ask you to raise that with Minister Burke?

Senator Sherry—I will pass that on.

Answer:

Country-of-origin labelling is a requirement for sale of seafood through the wholesale and retail sectors. Only the Northern Territory has formally extended country-of-origin requirements for the seafood service sector (restaurants) by regulation. The Fisheries Research and Development Corporation recently funded a study of the regulatory approach in Northern Territory. The study conducted by the Northern

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Territory Seafood Council, called “Tracking the impacts on seafood consumption at dining venues arising from the Northern Territory’s seafood labelling laws”, is due to be completed in June 2011. This study will improve the understanding of the effectiveness of the Northern Territory regulation.

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Question: SRM 28

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: National Weeds and Productivity Research Program

Hansard Page: 56 (19/10/2009)

Senator IAN MACDONALD asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—As we all know, weeds cost Australia in excess of \$4 billion every year. It seems to be that it is in a bit of haphazard limbo at the moment. We are not quite sure who is running it and where the funds are coming from?

Mr Thompson—As I said, there were 39 projects funded last year for \$35 million.

Senator HEFFERNAN—Can we have the details of the project?

Mr Thompson—Yes, I could—

ACTING CHAIR—Senator Heffernan, you are just a bit disorderly.

Senator HEFFERNAN—I will fit in as we go.

ACTING CHAIR—Yes, but you have not got the call.

Mr Thompson—We could provide a list of the projects

Answer:

Project Title	Proponent	Funding (GST excl)
Overcoming paraquat resistance: The potential for herbicide mixtures to reverse paraquat resistance.	The University of Western Australia	\$71,000
Using UAVs and Innovative Classification Algorithms in the Detection of Cacti	University of Sydney	\$108,575
Biological control of weedy sporobolus species by the fungus Nigrospora oryzae	Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology	\$94,391
Developing Best Practice methods to manage invasion pathways of gamba grass	Northern Territory Department of Natural Resources, Environment, the Arts and Sport	\$163,317

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Managing weeds and herbicides in a genetically modified farming system	NSW Department of Primary Industries	\$140,417
Implementation of Biological Control of Chilean needle grass and Serrated Tussock	Victorian Department of Primary Industries	\$115,500
Protecting agricultural production and iconic Australian grasslands from herbicide resistant serrated tussock	Victorian Department of Primary Industries	\$158,200
Best practice for making strategic decisions about weeds of commercial value	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)	\$84,123
Molecular Control of Reproduction in Weeds	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)	\$116,870
Ecological approach to landscape restoration of wetlands degraded by invasive grasses	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)	\$60,072
Quantifying aquatic weed impacts and reducing herbicide use through seasonal efficacy trials.	Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries	\$26,500
Pollen-mediated gene flow in weed species from adjacent farms into organic farms.	The University of Western Australia	\$34,753
Developing Novel Diagnostic Tools for weed identification	Victorian Department of Primary Industries and the EH Graham Centre for Agricultural Innovation	\$177,652
Fencelines and roadsides as invasion sites for problematic weed species	Birchip Cropping Group Inc.	\$42,400
Integrating Adaptive Weed Management and Biodiversity Conservation in the Blue Mountains	Blue Mountains City Council	\$5,628
Predicting ecosystem invasibility: towards spatial prioritisation of weed management	The University of Melbourne	\$102,530
Livestock grazing: a practical tool to control exotic grasses in remnant vegetation?	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)	\$76,110

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Lippia biological control	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation	\$165,166
Biological control and ecology of cabomba and alligator weed	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation	\$240,920
Field host range of high priority potential biocontrol agents of Parkinsonia aculeata	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation Entomology	\$189,702
Seed banks of weed-invaded wetlands: implications for biodiversity and restoration	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation	\$41,550
Weed response to cyclones in the Wet Tropics rainforests: impacts and adaptation	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation	\$57,928
Web-enabling the National Weed Incursion Toolkit for Coordinated weed management	Bureau of Rural Sciences	\$200,000
Does clonality facilitate rapid invasion of the aquatic weed Sagittaria platyphylla?	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation	\$57,282
Introduction of lacy-winged seed fly for Chrysanthemoides monilifera biological control	Victorian Department of Primary Industries	\$23,187
Maximising knowledge for adoption on recent weeds research	Land and Water Australia	\$93,900
Phytotoxins produced by phomopsis spp. With potential herbicidal activity against Carthamus lanatus	Charles Sturt University	\$25,000
Management of Creeping Lantana - Stage 2	The University of Queensland	\$31,160
Improved detection and eradication of Hieracium: experiments and 2nd generation dispersal models	The University of Melbourne	\$53,065
Overcoming and avoiding metabolism based herbicide resistance in Lolium rigidum	The University of Western Australia	\$51,410
Weed seed retention at crop maturity of major south-eastern Australian weed species	Birchip Cropping Group Inc.	\$53,793
Web-enabling the National Weed Incursion Toolkit for Coordinated weed management	Bureau of Rural Sciences	\$95,335

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Question: SRM 28 (continued)

Summer weeds - counting the costs for a climate changed future	Birchip Cropping Group Inc.	\$70,893
Identifying the basis of dual glyphosate and paraquat resistance in <i>Lolium rigidum</i> selected at reduced rates of glyphosate	The University of Western Australia	\$39,470
National bellyache bush (<i>Jatropha gossypifolia</i>) best practice manual.	Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries	\$67,216
Host testing of the gorse pod moth, <i>Cydia succedana</i> , for the biological control of gorse in Australia	The University of Tasmania (Tasmania Institute of Agricultural Research)	\$119,478
Estimation of investment required to achieve weed eradication	Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries	\$27,434
The impact of boneseed invasion on biodiversity	University of Wollongong	\$155,137
Web-enabling the National Weed Incursion Toolkit for Coordinated weed management	Bureau of Rural Sciences	\$148,173

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Question: SRM 29

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Australian Weeds Committee

Hansard Page: 57 (19/10/2009)

Senator Ian MACDONALD asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Could you, on notice, just give me details of who constitutes the Australian Weeds Committee and, where changes have been made, can you indicate to us what is the procedure for changing those personnel?

Mr Thompson—Yes, we can do that.

Answer:

The Australian Weeds Committee is a technical sub-committee of officials from the Australian, State and Territory Governments established under the National Biosecurity Committee as part of the National Resource Management Ministerial Council system.

The Chair is a representative of the National Biosecurity Committee and has historically been a State Government official. Membership is made of a representative from each State and Territory Government, three representatives for the Australian Government (two from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, and one from the Department Environment, Water, the Arts and Heritage) and a representative of CSIRO. Plant Health Australia has observer status. Each agency determines who will be their representative and changes can occur depending on the agencies priorities and workload.

The current members are:

Members Name	Agency	State
Mark Ramsey	Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation	SA
Michael Askey-Doran	Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment	TAS
John Burley	Department of Primary Industries	VIC
Richard Carter	Department of Industry and Investment	NSW
Michael Cole	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	Australian Government

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Question: SRM 29 (continued)

Kathleen Davis	Department of Natural Resources, Environment, the Arts and Sport	NT
Jon Dodd	Department of Agriculture and Food	WA
Gail Stevenson	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	Australian Government
Nigel Routh	Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts	Australian Government
John Scott	CSIRO	
Kerrin Styles	Environment ACT	ACT
John Virtue	Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation	SA
Bruce Wilson	Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation	QLD
Jo Slattery	Plant Health Australia	

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Question: SRM 30

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Southern Bluefin Tuna

Hansard Page: 5 (27/10/09)

Senator Colbeck asked:

Senator COLBECK—Can you tell me about the proposal that Australia took to the meeting as far as our position?

Dr Kalish—Your question, I believe, goes to the issue of negotiating tactics. We had a framework that we negotiated under, and that is what we did. We sought to reduce the global catch of southern bluefin tuna and to ensure—

Senator COLBECK—What proportion of catch reduction was Australia's position going into the meeting?

Dr Kalish—That goes to negotiating tactics.

Senator COLBECK—Are you not prepared to tell us that?

Dr O'Connell—We would have to take that on notice and have the minister potentially make an assessment as to whether or not that would have public interest immunity. That goes to the overall negotiating position of Australia in this forum, which of course is still a live issue over time.

Senator COLBECK—It is very much a live issue. There has been media reporting that I have seen that Australia's position was to cut the quota by 50 per cent. I would be interested to know whether that was in fact the position we took into the meeting. I think it is reasonable that we have some sense of what our position going in was given where we came out, and we will come to some of the results of that shortly.

Dr O'Connell—I am quite happy to take that on notice and get advice from the minister.

Answer:

Please refer to the attached letter from Minister Burke to Senator Glenn Sterle.

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Question: SRM 31

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Statutory Fishing Rights (SRM) & Oceanic Viking (AFMA)

Hansard Page: 112-13 (19/10/2009)

Senators Colbeck and Macdonald asked:

Senator COLBECK—Yes. You can take this on notice. I am happy with that. Dr O'Connell might have to comment on this too, because it might be in a different part of the agency. As I understand it, there is some work being done at the moment on the status of statutory fishing rights—where and how they stand and what their overall legal standing might be at the end of the day. It is an issue that has been raised with me in the context of the MPA process, because fishermen are concerned about potential recourse should their fishery be significantly impacted by the MPA process and what they believe the statutory fishing rights are. Could you give us some advice on what is happening with respect to that process. In respect of your efforts on protection of Commonwealth fisheries with the use of the *Oceanic Viking*, how is that going at the moment, given that it is full of asylum seekers?

Prof. Hurry—The *Oceanic Viking*?

Senator COLBECK—Yes.

Prof. Hurry—Yes, it is operating up north at the moment, but it operates on a regular patrol. It was used up north for a patrol last year too, I think. It is not the first time that it has been used in the north of Australia.

Senator COLBECK—I understand it has a reasonable range, but currently it is an accommodation vessel, rather than doing another job.

Prof. Hurry—You have got me on that one. I will have to check for you, but I am unaware that it is holding asylum seekers.

Mr Quinlivan—What is the actual question you are asking?

Senator COLBECK—What is the impact on the vessel's ongoing role as a policeman for the fisheries, given that it is obviously—and it is very recent information, so I am happy to let you off the hook on that—

Senator COLBECK—currently holding 78 asylum seekers.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Transporting them from one to the other, or holding them?

Senator COLBECK—Taken them off the *Armidale*.

Dr O'Connell—The ship was transporting them.

ACTING CHAIR—There are 78 asylum seekers on board the *Oceanic Viking*, according to the ABC website.

Senator COLBECK—Yes.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Perhaps the question to take on notice would be how long is it spending doing—

Senator COLBECK—Other duties.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Not only that, but is it being used as a house rather than a transport vessel? We are running out of room on Christmas Island. Now we know what they are going to do. They are going to live on board the *Oceanic Viking*.

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SRM 31 (continued)

Answer:

Statutory Fishing Rights

The department is not currently undertaking any work with respect to Statutory Fishing Rights (SFRs). The Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts has engaged a consultant to review the legal basis of property rights as part of its process to establish a new policy for managing activities displaced by the implementation of marine protected areas. This report has not been made public. DAFF is involved to the extent of its participation in a steering group guiding the development of this policy. The steering group has met once.

Oceanic Viking

The Southern Ocean Patrol and Response Program was funded in the 2008-2009 financial year for the Oceanic Viking to undertake a number of patrols in the Southern Ocean to a total of 200 sea days. The Oceanic Viking delivered exactly 200 sea days for fisheries patrols in the Southern Ocean in 2008-2009 financial year.

For the 2009-10 financial year Customs and Border Protection again received funding to deliver 200 sea days in the Southern Ocean and received additional funding for a further 80 sea days to undertake patrols in Australia's northern waters as part of the governments anti-people smuggling measures. This current operation in Indonesia relates to this further funding.

Details in relation to specific timings for patrols are not released in advance for operational reasons. The information regarding the Oceanic Viking has been provided by the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service who manage the patrols conducted by the *Oceanic Viking*.

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Question: SRM 32

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Southern Bluefin Tuna

Hansard Page: 8 (27/10/2009)

Senator Siewert asked:

Dr O'Connell—It is probably worth Dr Kalish just explaining the full set of decisions, because it goes to the issue of putting in place a management procedure into the future. The current allocation decision is a two year decision, and there is an additional component of the decision that agrees to put in place a management procedure to go to the recovery with a default position in the event that that does not come through. The management procedure is really the key thing here in due course.

Dr Kalish—The intent is to work on the management procedure in 2010 for implementation in 2011. The management procedure would be used to determine harvest rates starting in the 2012 year. As Dr O'Connell said, if that management procedure is not agreed, there is a default and that default is between 5,000 and 6,000 tonnes for the total allowable catch in 2012.

Dr O'Connell—The sequence of events is one of developing the management procedure and getting agreement to it. The allocations in due course will depend on the calculations made as to the time to recovery and against the reduction in take.

Senator SIEWERT—That is to 2012, and then those cuts are implemented if those management procedures are not put in place?

Dr O'Connell—If the management procedure is in place there will be trigger points built into the management procedure, which will automatically bring in measures. That is the way management procedures work.

Dr Kalish—There will be a series of decision rules, including rules that determine the rate at which increases or decreases in total allowable catch might be taken, the rate of recovery and other factors.

Senator SIEWERT—I am aware that I will get pinged in a minute. Would you be able to take on notice the process that you are going to undertake to develop those management procedures?

Answer:

The Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT) Strategy and Fisheries Management Working Group will meet in April 2010 to formally discuss the development of the CCSBT Management Procedure (MP). Thereafter, intersessional work will occur in order to finalise the MP for agreement by the CCSBT at its annual meeting in 2010. The MP should be implemented in 2011 and be used to determine harvest rates in the 2012 year and beyond. In the event that an MP cannot be finalised by 2012, the CCSBT shall adopt a reduction of the global total allowable catch for the 2012 fishing season to a level of 5000–6000 tonnes unless the CCSBT decides otherwise based upon the new stock assessment.

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Question: SRM 33

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Monitoring and evaluation

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Macdonald asked:

1. How does the Department intend to meet its commitment to invest 10 % of funding to monitoring and research and how does it intend to involve regional organisations and land managers who are ultimately responsible for delivering investment outcomes?
2. Why is the Commonwealth implementing a national groundcover monitoring program based on MODIS imagery at 500m that may be of use for identifying hotspots within western regions, but has little value beyond that? It has very little relevance to decision-making at the property level?
3. Why is the Commonwealth not building on the work done by State agencies that have made significant investments to develop proven groundcover products?

Answer:

- 1 The Department does not have a commitment to invest 10 per cent of funding in monitoring and research.

The Department has, as part of the Caring for our Country program, developed and implemented the Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement (MERI) Strategy for Caring for our Country. This strategy sets out the MERI processes for the program over its first 5 years, 2008-2013.

Regional organisations and proponents receiving Caring for our Country funding to undertake activities against the program's targets are required to develop and implement a MERI plan. This plan sets out the information to be collected by the proponent, evaluations they will undertake to test project assumptions and measure and report against progress, and processes to use this information to improve project delivery to achieve the agreed targets. The states, regions, community groups and science sectors were consulted in developing the MERI strategy.

The MERI strategy advises proponents that the cost of MERI activities can be up to 10 per cent of the project cost. This will vary from project to project depending on number of targets being addressed, duration, scale and complexity of on ground activities.

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Question: SRM 33 (continued)

- 2 The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry is currently investigating the use of a MODIS product recently developed by CSIRO to improve Australia's capacity to monitor wind erosion and to contribute to reporting on the effectiveness of improved agricultural land management practices funded through Caring for our Country.

The MODIS 500m ground cover product is comparatively cheap to produce and it provides a high frequency (every 16 days) time series data set for the three major cover types (green actively growing vegetation, brown/dead vegetation and bare ground) needed as input to wind and water erosion modelling. These data are suitable for monitoring properties where paddocks are around one square kilometre in extent. Techniques for producing these data at the finer levels of resolution needed for monitoring small properties will need to be developed, along with cost effective methods for processing the large amounts of data needed.

- 3 The Australian government is aware of the work done by state agencies. The MODIS project may contribute to existing State agency remote sensing programs by helping to establish an Australia wide network of ground based reference sites for calibration and validation of remotely sensed data from a range of satellites, including MODIS and Landsat. The current state products do not include the brown/dead vegetation cover component which is needed to improve the accuracy and reliability of wind and water erosion modelling.

The MODIS project may also provide the Australian government and state agencies with new information on the frequency, extent and severity of wind erosion.

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Question: SRM 34

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division
Topic: Caring for our Country Assessment process
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Macdonald asked:

Could you please provide an analysis of where the competitive projects were actually located.

Answer:

Table 1 below details the successful proposals under the competitive component of Caring for our Country. The seven successful proposals being undertaken in Queensland include two separate proposals combined into the one project.

**TABLE 1: CARING FOR OUR COUNTRY 2009-10 BUSINESS PLAN
SUCCESSFUL COMPETITIVE COMPONENT PROPOSALS
BY JURISDICTION**

State/Territory	Number of Successful Proposals
NSW	5
VIC	15
QLD	7
WA	8
SA	4
TAS	8
NT	2
ACT	None
National	11
Total	60*

* Note: This total includes an additional three projects approved subsequent to the Ministers' announcement of July 2009.

Further information on these projects is available on <http://www.nrm.gov.au/business-plan/funded/index.html>

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Question: SRM 35

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Caring for our Country - Quality of applications

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Macdonald asked:

1. Could you please explain to the committee whether the quality of applications was high or low, and any theories for why the applications tend to be of that quality?
2. How does the quality of applications or project proposals if you like compare with the quality of project proposals under the regional approach to NRM operating under the NHT 2.
3. Did applications generally meet with the Government Targets outlined within the business plan?
4. Were any projects approved that did not meet with a strict interpretation of the business plan?

Answer:

1. There was a significant variation in the applications developed in response to the 2009-10 Caring for our Country business plan. Approximately one-third of proposals addressed the assessment criteria well or very well; one-third addressed these criteria adequately; and one-third insufficiently addressed these criteria. This distribution is consistent with the normal range of results expected from an investment program.
2. The proposals developed by regional NRM organisations under Caring for our Country have a different character to those developed under the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) as they responded to a more targeted set of priorities with a clearer identification of outcomes to be achieved. There was no general public call for proposals under the NHT directly comparable to the investment call undertaken through the Caring for our Country business plan. It is therefore not possible to make a direct comparison between the quality of general applications submitted under the NHT and Caring for our Country.
3. Around two-third of proposals received under the 2009-10 business plan addressed the Caring for our Country targets either adequately, well, or very well.
4. No, all projects approved met the assessment criteria published in the business plan. The assessment process used under the 2009-10 business plan - which included the moderation of assessments between the primary, external and executive panels – was designed to ensure that successful projects were those that could best contribute to achieving targets.

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Question: SRM 36

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Caring for our Country - Volunteer burnout

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Macdonald asked:

Is the Department anticipating that volunteers may stop submitting project proposals given the relatively high number of projects that were not successful?

Answer:

No. The Australian Government is conscious of the need to provide opportunities for volunteer groups within Caring for our Country. The government has introduced a \$5 million Community Action Grants program, as an element within Caring for our Country, to address this need. Grants of between \$5 000 to \$20 000 are provided directly to Landcare, Coastcare, Indigenous, environmental and community groups who were unsuccessful in receiving funding from the 2009-10 Caring for our Country Business Plan. Eligible activities include tree planting, revegetation, dune rehabilitation and field days. 673 proposals from community groups are currently being assessed and successful proponents are expected to be advised in December 2009.

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Question: SRM 37

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division
Topic: Local ownership of Caring for our Country outcomes
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Macdonald asked:

Given that the power to match local priorities with government priorities has been taken away from local people through walking away from the regional process, does the Government believe there will be sufficient ownership of NRM outcomes by local people to ensure long term success of projects that require ongoing monitoring or maintenance – beyond the extent of the funding?

Answer:

Yes. Caring for our Country is focused on delivering national priorities. However, opportunities for matching local and regional priorities with national priorities exist when regional base level funding proposals are negotiated. Local and regional priorities are also considered in the consultation process for establishing targets and the funding available for community action grants.

Caring for our Country contracts make provision for communication of project results and in relevant cases recipients are also asked to outline the long term arrangements to ensure the project legacy is maintained. For example, proponents of projects over \$80 000 are required to develop a plan for monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement of their project. In the current round of Community Action Grants, applications for projects that included infrastructure construction needed to explain how the asset would be maintained.

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Question: SRM 38

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Caring for our Country - Regional Investment Strategies

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Macdonald asked:

1. Could you explain how regional investment strategies are being integrated with national targets through the Caring for our Country program? Is there any reason for communities to engage with a regional planning process and the development of an investment strategy?
2. Would people not be better off just chasing the money?

Answer:

- 1 & 2. The focus of all Caring for our Country investment is on the achievement of the national outcomes the government has set for the initiative. This approach is continued in the outcomes statement and the business plan. The government acknowledges the importance of the strategic planning undertaken by the regional natural resource management organisations and the engagement of communities in this process. The government encourages the regional organisations to draw on this work in their preparation of proposals under Caring for our Country, especially where the priorities identified in regional strategies and plans correspond with Caring for our Country targets.

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Question: SRM 39

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Caring for our Country Election Commitments

Hansard Page : Written

Senator Macdonald asked:

1. How many election commitments have been funded by direct announcement or through “competitive processes” through the Caring for our Country program?
2. How much funding has been allocated to those commitments so far?
3. How much is left for Caring for our Country work in other areas?

Answer:

Details of Caring for our Country election commitments and funding are detailed below.

Name	Scope of Commitment (\$ million)	Total Funding Approved as at 11 Dec 2009 (\$ million)
Cane Toads	\$2 million over 2 years	1.970
Community Coastcare	\$100 million over 5 years	41.511
Gippsland Lakes and Eastern Creek Wetlands	\$5.25 million over 3 years	5.250
Indigenous Emissions Trading Scheme	\$10 million over 5 years	10.000
Indigenous Protected Areas	\$50 million over 5 years	29.832
Indigenous Rangers (Working on Country)	\$90 million over 5 years	74.223
Reef Rescue	\$200 million over 5 years	99.254
Tasmanian Devil	\$10 million over 5 years	10.000
Tuggerah Lakes	\$20 million over 5 years	8.660
Total Election Commitments	487.250	280.699

Total Caring for our Country Budget	2112.468
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Balance Available	1831.769
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Question: SRM 40

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Caring for our Country design

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Macdonald asked:

1. What have ANAO reports said about previous NRM programs such as NHT said that has influenced the design of the CfOC program?
2. Why are we still measuring kilometers of fence or number of farmers attending a meeting rather than resource condition change?
3. Can projects to monitor resource condition change be funded under CfOC?

Answer:

- 1 In 2008, in its report *The Administration of the Regional Delivery Model for the Natural Heritage Trust and the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality*, the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) found that:
 1. *To strengthen the management of risks to program outcomes, the ANAO recommends that the Departments of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts and Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry give priority to documenting and disseminating information regarding:*
 - (a) *the cost-effectiveness of investments in achieving results; and*
 - (b) *lessons learned or insights into quantifiable benefits or unintended consequences from NRM investments.*
 2. *To provide greater transparency and efficiency in the management of funds for regional investments, the ANAO recommends that the Departments of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts and Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, in developing bilateral agreements for the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT3) or similar programs:*
 - (a) *clearly define the authority of Joint Steering Committees over the release of funds and the management of Single Holding Accounts; and*
 - (b) *streamline payments to regional bodies based on performance requirements set out in the agreed investment strategies.*
 3. *To address compliance with bilateral agreements, the ANAO recommends that the Departments of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts and Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry give greater priority to monitoring compliance with agreements and encouraging State/Territories to:*
 - (a) *provide audited financial statements (acquittals) to indicate that funds have been spent for their intended purposes;*
 - (b) *return unspent funds remaining in State/Territory single holding accounts or offset these against future allocations; and*

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(c) disclose interest earned and its use in accordance with the bilateral agreements.

4. To enable accurate reporting of progress against outcomes to be achieved in the Natural Heritage Trust or similar programs, the ANAO recommends that the Departments of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts and Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry develop and implement a performance measurement framework that includes:

- (a) a finalised list of core performance indicators to measure actual results;*
- (b) clear and consistent business rules supporting the collection and collation of performance data;*
- (c) dissemination of guidance to regional bodies regarding the validation of natural resource management output data; and*
- (d) meaningful intermediate outcomes that may be used to demonstrate the cost effectiveness of natural resource management actions, the conservation of major national assets and behavioural change achieved through the programs.*

These findings, building on and reflecting actions previously taken by the Australian Government to address earlier findings for the Natural Heritage Trust and National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality programs, were specifically addressed in the design of the Caring for our Country program.

- 2 It can be many years between implementation of management actions and the achievement of intended NRM outcomes. Therefore, the Caring for our Country program has been designed with specific and clearly articulated measureable five year outcomes. Shorter term and measureable, one to five year targets, have also been developed to inform proponents of the investment priorities to deliver the outcomes and against which progress towards the outcomes can be monitored.

The targets identify the on ground activities to be undertaken and the condition change sought through these activities. Proponents undertaking projects will

report the amount of activity undertaken and the condition change occurring as a result of the activities.

These details will be used to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of individual projects in achieving the agreed project targets, plan future investment to achieve the outcomes, adjust targets if they are not resulting in the plan for condition change and to monitor and report on the progress of the program.

- 3 Yes. Projects monitoring resource condition change can be funded under the Caring for our Country program.

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Question: SRM 41

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Caring for our Country - Reasons for program design

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Macdonald asked:

1. Could you explain why a competitive grants process was chosen for CfOC?
2. What are the advantages over other models?
3. Are there any disadvantages?

Answer:

1. A competitive approach provides the greatest opportunity for the widest range of proposals to be developed that may make a cost-effective contribution to achieving the targets set for Caring for our Country.
2. The competitive process allows for the comparative assessment of a wide range of proposals. It also encourages proponents to develop and refine the quality of their proposals to maximise their chances of success. This refinement contributes to the overall effectiveness of Caring for our Country.
3. It has been suggested that the competitive approach discourages the formation of cooperative partnerships between different groups. However, the Australian Government considers that the competitive approach has acted to encourage the formation of partnerships, where proponents recognise that the formation of such alliances will maximise their prospects of success.

A competitive approach may involve high transaction costs for proponents if the likelihood of success is low. This risk is being addressed by more clearly defining targets, clear communication with stakeholders, and the use of approaches such as expressions of interest.

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Question: SRM 42

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Caring for our Country - Business plan

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Macdonald asked:

1. Has the business plan been a success?
2. Do NRM groups like the program?
3. Has there been any criticism?
4. Has there been any formal processes for consultation on business plan? And what form did consultation take?
5. Was there participation in these processes?
6. What is the general feedback?
7. Are you going to scrap this approach in favor of engaging local communities through regional planning?

Answer:

1. Yes. Through the business plan investment process projects have been identified which address all the six priority areas for Caring for our Country and which will lead to improved environmental and sustainable management of Australia's natural resources. The process has also maintained investment arrangements for the 56 regional natural resource management regions across Australia. The business plan investment process also produced valuable information that has informed future investment processes.
2. NRM groups have responded actively to the program. They submitted a large number of funding proposals under the 2009-10 business plan and also participated in a range of meetings and other feedback processes. NRM groups have generally been supportive of the Caring for our Country investment approach. As invited by the government, NRM organisations contributed to the review of the Caring for our Country targets and processes undertaken in 2009, and provided suggestions which have directly informed the development of the 2010-11 business plan.
3. Yes. There has been criticism of various aspects of Caring for our Country. The key areas of criticism related to the process for identifying targets for the 2009-10 business plan, and the issues covered within the targets, the process for applying for funds, and the level of information made available to proponents. Some community groups also reported difficulties in engaging with Caring for our Country. These concerns have been taken into account in the development of the 2010-11 business plan, and in related government responses such as the introduction of the Community Action Grants program which provides small grants for community groups.

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Question: SRM 42 (continued)

- 4 and 5. A review of Caring for our Country targets and processes was undertaken involving meetings with key stakeholders (including non-government organisations, regional NRM organisations and state and territory governments) in May-June 2009. An on-line survey open to the public was conducted in June-July 2009. More than 300 responses to this survey were received. In addition to this process, community-based groups have made direct representations to the government about improving their engagement in Caring for our Country, as discussed in the response to Q.3 above.
6. Overall, feedback from the direct stakeholder consultations was supportive of the government's general approach under Caring for our Country. A number of suggestions were received concerning the design of targets for future business plans, and these suggestions have helped inform the development of the 2010-11 business plan.

Feedback from the on-line survey has suggested a number of changes to the Caring for our Country application process, including possible approaches to reducing the proposal development burden for applicants, and these suggestions have also informed the development of processes under the 2010-11 business plan.

7. Caring for our Country remains focussed on national priorities.

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Question: SRM 43

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Diversion of funds from Caring for our Country for emergency environmental recovery

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Ian Macdonald asked:

1. When natural disasters and other emergencies have occurred, have Caring for our Country funds been diverted to aid in the environmental recovery of the landscapes affected by those disasters? e.g. The Victorian Bushfires, Queensland Oil Spill, North Queensland Floods?
2. Has there been underspend of Caring for our Country money that could have been diverted to such projects?

Answer:

1. The Caring for our Country initiative has provided funds in 2008-09 to the following environmental disasters to assist with the recovery:
 - \$8.2 million towards the Victorian bushfires
 - \$1.5 million towards the restoration of the Moreton Bay wetlands and other coastal environments
2. There has not been underspend of Caring for our Country funds that could be diverted to environmental disaster recovery programs. In 2008-2009, the Ministers made decisions about the Victorian bushfire and Moreton Bay projects as part of their decision process for allocating Caring for our Country funding. At the end of the 2008-09 financial year, there was only a minor underspend of about \$0.4 million under Caring for our Country. This primarily related to some landowners not taking up approved stewardship grants before the end of the financial year.

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Question: SRM 44

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Environmental recovery

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Ian Macdonald asked:

1. Does the government have any information on how long the landscape will take to recover from the flood affected areas that suffered inundation for over three months?
2. Is the government doing any work to ensure these landscapes can recover?

Answer:

1. Environmental recovery has already begun to take place. Different elements of the environment will take differing time periods to be restored, such as the water quality of some aquatic habitats which will take time to recover from the algal blooms.

Ground cover is expected to recover progressively, seeded from adjacent recruitment areas that are unaffected by the floods.

2. The Australian Government has provided funding to assist in the management of weeds that are expected as a result of the floods and provided variations to existing project contracts to allow for more appropriate activities or timelines.

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Question: SRM 45

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division
Topic: Matters of National Environmental Significance
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Ian Macdonald asked:

1. Have any matters of national environmental significance been affected by the floods?
2. How would you know?
3. Was there monitoring done?

Answer:

1. The assets identified as ‘Matters of National Environmental Significance’ under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* that may have been affected by the floods are a small number of species. These are species with widespread modelled³ distributions (such as the Red Goshawk) that are far greater than this particular region. As a result the impact on these listed species, as a whole, is expected to be minor. We have received advice from the local community suggesting that the impact has primarily been on freshwater habitats and native grasslands. Listed migratory shore birds and marine species would have been minimally affected.
2. The savanna floodplain environment is well adapted to periodic inundation, even to severe events such as occurred in early 2009. Any assets of National Environmental Significance occurring in this environment are understood to be resilient or (in the case of bird species) capable of migration to unaffected areas.
3. The Northern Gulf Resource Management Group (NGRMG) has commissioned some preliminary water quality and biodiversity surveys that have identified localised loss of native savanna habitat and some associated ground dwelling fauna.

The Queensland Department of Employment Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI) and Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM) have collaborated on pasture growth impacts of the flood events, and have produced two papers reporting on the current situation and recommendations on how best to monitor the recovery phase of the woodland pastures. In addition, DEEDI has conducted Rapid Condition Assessments (RCA) of pasture condition across the inundated area.

³ Distributions of listed threatened species are based on actual records and modelled habitat preferences

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The Queensland Government is intending to expand its monitoring of pasture conditions to assist in observing pasture recovery following this event. This monitoring is also being undertaken as part of the land condition assessments conducted as part of the Delbessie Agreement. This will provide additional information on how pastures may recover from future flood events.

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Question: SRM 46

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Lowland Native Grasslands of Tasmania

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Colbeck asked:

1. What advice has the Department provided to other agencies with respect to the Tasmanian native lowland grasslands and the impact of EPBC Act protection of these farmland areas?
2. When did the Department receive an application for funding through Caring for Our Country from NRM North in Tasmania to help with managing the native grasslands?
3. What was the Department's advice to the Minister or other agencies?
4. What involvement, if any, does the Department have in assisting farmers with identifying and managing the grasslands now that they are protected?

Answer:

1. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry provided advice to the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts regarding the listing of Lowland Native Grasslands of Tasmania recognising sensitivities among relevant landholders with current and future land use practices.
2. An application was received by the closing date of 3 April 2009 for the 2009-10 Caring for our Country Business Plan.
3. The NRM North proposal for integrated conservation of Tasmania's lowland grasslands was subject to primary assessment by government officials and as the proposal was for more than \$250,000 it was independently assessed by a scientific advisory panel. The proposal was supported by the scientific panel. The proposal was then considered by the executive panel which comprised senior executives of the two departments and a recommendation put to the Natural Heritage Ministerial Board. The proposal sought funding of \$9,453,167 from a competitive pool of almost \$58 million available from Caring for our Country in 2009-10. In the context of available funds and direct delivery of targets it was not recommended for funding in 2009-10 by the executive panel.
4. The Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts assists farmers to identify and manage Lowland Native Grasslands of Tasmania, a threatened ecological community listed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). The administration of the EPBC Act falls within the portfolio of the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts.

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Question: SRM 47

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Recreational Fishing Community Grants program

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Colbeck asked:

Can the Department please provide an explanation for the decrease in funding for the Recreational Fishing Community Grants between financial years 2008-2009 and 2009-2010?

Answer:

The Recreational Fishing Community Grants program was originally run for three years, to 30 June 2008. The program was extended until 30 June 2009 and was extended again until 30 June 2010, to allow grant recipients additional time to complete their projects. The budget for 2009-2010 (\$400 000) reflects the outstanding project commitments for this program.

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Question: SRM 48

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Landcare activity and funding

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Williams asked:

As the drought takes hold and less money is given to projects, interest in landcare groups is dropping off or at least not as active as they once were.

1. How many functioning Landcare groups are there in Australia?
2. Is the number increasing or decreasing?
3. How many groups are functioning in the New England region?
4. Is that number increasing or decreasing?
5. How much funding has been given to groups for projects in the New England Area?
6. How does that funding compare with other regions through out New South Wales?
7. How is the success of the projects evaluated?
8. In the current year how many projects through out NSW are funded compared to the number of applications?
9. Is Landcare funding a year to year proposition?
10. How much has been allocated to Landcare managerial positions this financial year?
11. How much has been allocated to Landcare Co-ordinator positions and how does that compare with the previous year?
12. Can you tell me why, under the funding criteria, GWYMAC based in Inverell will this year have a \$40,000 budget out of which comes rent, office running expenses, the wages for the Land care Co-ordinator and programmes? Last year the Budget was \$80,000.
13. How can Landcare programmes be effective when some Co-ordinators and staff are reduced to working 2 to 3 days a week because they are not funded?

Answer:

2. A record of the number of active Landcare groups is not maintained by the department. However, Landcare Australia Limited advise that there are more than 4000 volunteer community Landcare and associated groups operating across the country. The associated groups include Bushcare, urban Landcare, Rivercare, Coastcare and sustainable agriculture groups.
3. It is not possible to accurately assess whether Landcare group numbers are increasing or decreasing as Landcare groups are not required to register with a central body.

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4. The department does not hold records of the number of Landcare groups in the New England area. However, it is estimated that there are approximately 125 Landcare groups. Not all of these groups may be active.
5. As per question two, as Landcare groups are not required to register with a central body it is not possible to accurately assess whether numbers are increasing or decreasing.
6. Groups in the New England area can apply to receive funds from their regional bodies and through competitive rounds under the annual Caring for our Country Business Plan. There are two regional bodies that cover the New England area: Border Rivers-Gwydir and Northern Rivers natural resource management region. These regional bodies receive an annual base level allocation of \$2 120 000 and \$3 410 000 respectively. Since 1 July 2008, the following competitive projects have been funded in the New England area:

2008-09	Granite Borders Landcare Inc	Improving sustainable production in Catchment Headwaters	This project will engage landholders across the region in revegetation, soil erosion rehabilitation and riparian protection activities in the headwaters of the Northern Rivers and Border Rivers-Gwydir catchments.	\$249,055
2009-10	Granite Borders Landcare Committee Inc	Preventing Hillslip erosion through improved grazing management in the Traprock region of Southern QLD	This project will engage landholders in the Traprock region of Southern Qld in activities that reduce the hillslope erosion in the fragile undulating landscape that they manage	\$99,500

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2009-10	Granite Borders Landcare Committee Incorporated	Increasing Native Habitat in Endangered Ecological Communities – Granite Borders	This project will undertake works to engage landholders in increasing native habitats especially in the endangered ecological community of White Box-Yellow Box-Blakely's Red gum Grassy woodland and derived native grassland. This will be achieved by educational activities and smart financial incentives to assist landholders to manage native vegetation for biodiversity outcomes	\$99,500
2008-09	Richmond Landcare Services	Sustainable Fire Management for Landholders using the Hotspots Program	This project will fund the development of fire management plans at a property level protecting large areas of native vegetation from wildfire.	\$57,000
2009-13	Glen Innes Natural Resources Advisory Committee Inc	Implementing sustainable land management practices in the Glen Innes region	This project will provide locally based staff to deliver skills and knowledge to develop and motivate landholders attitudes towards sustainable land management practices. The project will provide the opportunity for on ground works funding for key C4OC targets sustainable land management and biodiversity.	\$146,275

7. It is not possible to compare funding across regions as many projects were multi-regional and some were state-wide. However, in the 2009–10 Business Plan competitive round, applicants in NSW were successful in receiving \$6.38 million of funds. 35 projects were funded in NSW – of these, 22 (5 competitive and 17 Landcare) projects were successful in receiving funding. An additional 13 regional base-level proposals were also funded. Four of these projects were in New England. The NSW base-level regional funding breakdown is as follows:

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Region	Annual Regional Allocation
Border Rivers Gwydir	\$2,120,000
Central West	\$2,943,000
Hawkesbury-Nepean	\$2,917,000
Hunter Central Rivers	\$3,354,000
Lachlan	\$2,804,000
Lower Murray Darling	\$1,843,000
Murray	\$4,015,000
Murrumbidgee	\$4,115,000
Namoi	\$1,659,000
Northern Rivers	\$3,410,000
Southern Rivers	\$2,839,000
Sydney Metro	\$764,000
Western	\$2,468,000
Total	\$35,251,000

8. Regional organisations and proponents receiving Caring for our Country funding to undertake activities against the program's targets are required to report against negotiated milestones and develop and implement a Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement (MERI) plan. This plan sets out the information to be collected by the proponent, evaluations they will undertake to test project assumptions and measure and report against progress, and processes to use this information to improve project delivery to achieve the agreed targets.
9. There were 256 applications (not including regional base-level proposals) received for New South Wales under the 2009–10 Caring for our Country Business Plan. Of these, 22 (5 competitive and 17 Landcare) projects were successful in receiving funding. An additional 13 regional base-level proposals were also funded.
10. Landcare funding may be sought through Caring for our Country business plans and other initiatives such as the Community Action Grants. While the specific eligibility criteria to apply for funding varies, funding is not limited to activities that fall within a single financial year. Of the 56 projects funded under the Landcare component of the business plan, approximately 82 per cent were multi-year projects.
11. The Australian Government has committed \$189.2 million to Landcare activities over five years (2009–2013). We would expect the administration costs for any on-ground Landcare projects funded under Caring for our Country not to exceed 10 per cent. However, funds may be used to employ project officers and local community coordinators who are integral to delivering the desired Caring for our Country outcomes.

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12. The government does not stipulate how much money is allocated to Landcare Coordinator positions. The government provides funding for activities that will deliver the specific targets in the Caring for our Country Business Plan. During 2008, NRM facilitator and coordinator networks were refocused to reflect a new emphasis on Caring for our Country national priorities. During this transition period there was no specific funding allocation to employ coordinators. Regions could have, if they wished, identified coordinators for support in their regional investment strategies where those coordinators were contributing to the delivery of Caring for our Country outcomes and targets. In 2009 the Australian Government allocated \$33.6 million over four years (from 2009 to 2013) to support a national network of up to 56 Landcare facilitators.

13. The Gwydir and Macintyre Resources Management Committee's budget is not sourced directly from Australian Government funding. It is provided by the Border Rivers–Gwydir Catchment Management Authority (CMA). The Border Rivers-Gwydir CMA received base funding of \$2.26 million in 2008–09 and will receive \$2.12 million each year for the 2009–2013 period. These funds may be used to employ local community coordinators who work on grassroots Landcare activities, and whose role may be integral to delivering the desired Caring for our Country outcomes.

Caring for our Country encourages regional NRM organisations to establish partnerships with landholders, community groups, Indigenous communities and industry within their regions. However, each NRM organisation decides on its priorities for funding and staffing to achieve these outcomes.

14. The Australian Government has continued to provide funding for Landcare activities. It has committed \$189.2 million to Landcare over five years (2009–2013). In June 2009, the government allocated \$33.6 million to a National Landcare Facilitator initiative. This will fund up to 56 Landcare facilitator positions in each of the NRM regions.

In addition to their base funding regional NRM organisations may also employ additional facilitators and coordinators using substantial supplementary funds from state and territory governments and other sources, such as local fundraising, private grants and sponsorship.

In 2009–10 funding for Landcare activities included:

- a. \$25.9 million will be provided for 56 Landcare projects to be funded under the 2009–2010 Caring for our Country Business Plan.
- b. \$5 million (2009–2010) for Community Action Grants of between \$5 000 and \$20 000 to support smaller, local projects such as tree-planting, revegetation, dune rehabilitation and field days. Groups could also seek grants for coordination services to help encourage the community to participate in protecting our environment and natural resources.

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Question: SRM 49

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: EPBC Act Review

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Colbeck asked:

1. What has been the nature of the Department's involvement and/or advice with respect to the Department of Environment's review of the EPBC Act?
2. Has the Department provided any particular advice on RFAs?
3. What has the nature of this advice been?

Answer:

1. The department participates in an Inter-Departmental Committee (IDC), convened by DEWHA to discuss policy matters associated with this review. Departmental officers have also met and had correspondence with members of the expert panel to discuss portfolio issues including the relationship between the EPBC Act and proposed new biosecurity legislation. The department has provided input to the review through the IDC process.
2. The department provided advice about the Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) to the Inquiry in its submission in June 2009.
3. The department supported the government's existing RFA policy. It also provided information on the co-operative arrangements within the Australian Government to investigate alleged breaches of the RFAs.

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Question: SRM 50

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division
Topic: Caring for our Country - Perth Region
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Back asked:

Under the Caring for our Country (CFOC) Programme, please provide details of the following:

1. Figures on regional base level funding nationally by round and state?
2. Figures on funding delivered to Perth Region NRM prior to this program being introduced and since?
3. How many people at Perth Region NRM and at NRMs across the country have made cuts to staff as a result of these funding cuts?
4. How many local environmental conservation projects no longer receive CFOC funding?
5. How much has each state / territory received in Open Grants funding?
6. How much has each state / territory received in Community Action Grants?
7. What was the basis for no projects in the Perth Metro area being funded in the 2009-10 business plan 'competitive process'?
8. When will the 2010-11 business plan be released?
9. How much money will be available for the competitive bid process?
10. Will any money be allocated to the Perth Metro Area?

Answer:

1. The allocation of baseline regional funding for the transition year 2008-09, and future years 2009-2010 to 2012-13, together with the total 5 years allocation is outlined in the table below:

Region by Jurisdiction	Guaranteed Regional Allocation 2008-09	Annual Allocation 2009-10 to 2012 -13	Total Allocation Over 5 Years
New South Wales	\$41,010,000	\$35,251,000	\$182,014,000
Queensland	\$25,760,000	\$23,020,000	\$117,840,000
South Australia	\$18,980,000	\$17,346,000	\$88,364,000
Tasmania	\$5,830,000	\$5,714,000	\$28,686,000
Victoria	\$32,375,000	\$27,520,000	\$142,455,000
Western Australia	\$29,420,000	\$24,103,000	\$123,556,000
Northern Territory	\$4,275,000	\$3,687,000	\$19,023,000
Australian Capital Territory	\$1,350,000	\$1,359,000	\$6,786,000
Australia Wide	\$159,000,000	\$138,000,000	\$711,000,000

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2. Perth Region NRM, previously Swan Catchment Council, received the following funding under the Natural Heritage Trust and National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality and from 2008-09 under Caring for our Country:

2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-2009	2009-2010	Total
\$3,246,845	\$1,230,900	\$2,574,276	\$7,998,000	\$4,339,000	\$2,039,000	\$3,230,000	\$2,304,000	\$26,962,021

3. Natural Resource Management regional bodies receive funding from a range of sources including the Australian and state and territory governments as well as investment secured from private corporations and philanthropic bodies in some cases.

In Western Australia the NRM bodies are independent community organisations or corporations and receive further resources from State Government and other sectors.

The Australian Government does not have access to specific details relating to employment. It would not be accurate to say that changes in Australian Government funding in all cases determines number of staff, given the variety of sources of funding.

4. Projects funded under previous NRM programs were funded for a specified period of time to complete the project. All projects funded under the previous NRM projects were funded to their contract completion date. All Caring for our Country funded projects are being funded to completion as per contract arrangements. Many open grant projects funded in the 2008-09 transitional year were funded for one year and most of these are progressively being finalised during 2009-10.
5. Open Grants funding provided to each state and territory is shown in the following table:

Jurisdiction	Expended 2008-09	Expended 2009-10	Committed 2009-10
National	0.00	0.00	0.00
QLD	3,132,407.54	142,816.72	310,095.73
NSW	4,551,754.55	258,453.82	469,118.92
ACT	578,972.91	0.00	126,791.63
VIC	2,450,614.25	25,818.73	125,947.27
TAS	733,411.82	122,670.90	0.00
SA	2,522,813.28	163,560.73	502,295.25
NT	1,367,309.03	69,818.17	122,211.12
WA	1,592,860.34	19,800.00	241,358.01
Total	16,930,143.72	802,939.07	1,897,817.93

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These amounts include the election commitment relating to cane toads. Open grants were offered as one year projects in 2008-09 hence the majority of the funding is expended in 2008-09 with only a small portion of the projects expending funds in 2009-10. New funding for 2009-10 was not provided as Open Grants but was provided under the 2009-10 business plan and is therefore not shown on this table.

6. Community Action Grant applications closed on 22 October 2009 and are currently being assessed. No funding has been approved at this stage.
7. There was a high level of competition for funding in the 2009-2010 Business Plan competitive process and many more proposals for support were received than could be funded. All applications, including those from the Perth Metro area, for the 2009-10 Caring for Our Country funding round were assessed against assessment criteria set out in the Business Plan. Those proposals which presented the best value for money were selected for support and the proposals for the Perth Metro area were assessed as not providing as high a level of value for money as the successful proposals.
8. The 2010-11 business plan will be released in the coming weeks.
9. Detail of the funding amounts available under the 2010-11 business plan will be made available when the business plan is released.
10. There is guaranteed base level funding of \$2,304,000 for 2010-11 allocated to the Perth NRM regional group which covers the Perth Metro area. Funding for competitive grants will be allocated to proposals which demonstrate the best value for money and deliver against targets in the 2010-11 Business Plan.

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Question: SRM 51

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Southern Bluefin Tuna

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Colbeck asked:

1. Which Government officials attended the CCSBT meeting in South Korea last week?
2. What position did the Government take to the meeting of the CCSBT
3. Was it aware of the negotiating positions of other member nations?
4. Trade Minister, Simon Crean said in Tokyo this week that the Government was well aware of the significant overfishing by the Japanese in the past – and inferred that the new Centre-Left Government would crackdown on overfishing. If this was the knowledge of the Government, why has Japan received a smaller quota cut than Australia?
5. Why were the quota cuts inequitably allocated across the various CCSBT members?
6. How is it NZ ended up with 36% MORE quota, while Australia copped a quota cut of 25% (and all other major member nations received quota cuts)?
7. When do the quota cuts begin for Australia?
8. When do the quota cuts (or quote increase for NZ) begin for other member nations?
9. What other key dates are relevant to quota cuts?
10. How does AFMA intend implementing the quota cut across quota holders?
11. Will it be equitable across all quota holders?
12. Does AFMA anticipate further quota cuts?
13. If so, what will be the size of these cuts?
14. And when will they be announced/implemented?
15. What data has AFMA or the Department collected or received on the economic impact of the quota cuts including job losses?
16. What advice has been received from other government agencies?
17. What advice has been provided to the Minister and when?

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Answer:

1. The Australian delegation totalled 13, including eight government officials and comprised the following people:

John Kalish - Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry
Anna Willock- Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry
Ben Playle - Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Megan Watson - Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Robyn Frost - Attorney-General's Department
Nigel Routh - Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts
Karina McLachlan - Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts
Paul Murphy - Australian Fisheries Management Authority
Brian Jefferies - Australian Southern Bluefin Tuna industry
Andrew Wilkinson - Australian Southern Bluefin Tuna industry
Rick Kolega - Australian Southern Bluefin Tuna industry
Yong Man Kim - Australian Southern Bluefin Tuna industry
Ben Hur - Australian Southern Bluefin Tuna industry

2. The department is unable to provide information on the negotiating position taken to the meeting which remains Cabinet-in-Confidence. Negotiations are ongoing to agree and implement a Management Procedure for the Southern Bluefin Tuna fishery through the Commission for the Conservation of the Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT). Providing details of the Australian negotiating position would compromise negotiations on the Management Procedure and future catch levels for Southern Bluefin Tuna (see attached letter from Minister Burke to Senator Glenn Sterle).
3. The department was not aware of the detailed negotiating positions of other CCSBT members prior to the CCSBT meeting. Representatives from the department held bilateral meetings with Japan and New Zealand prior to the meeting to discuss key issues. Representatives from our diplomatic posts met in Seoul, Jakarta and Taipei with senior fishery officials from Korea, Indonesia and the Fishery Entity of Taiwan to raise key issues.
4. Japan did not receive a smaller quota cut than Australia. In 2006, CCSBT cut Japan's national allocation by more than 50 per cent in response to revelations of past overfishing. The decision at this year's meeting resulted in a further cut of 24.6 per cent to Japan's national catch allocation. This means that Japan's national allocation has been reduced by 63 per cent since 2006. Australia's national allocation has been reduced by 23.7 per cent.

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5. The CCSBT decision on member catch allocations was a consensus decision that took into account previous decisions of the CCSBT and the current situation of the members. Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea and the Fishing Entity of Taiwan each received reductions of about 25 per cent from their 2009 member allocations. The majority of commission members accepted cuts to their catch allocations to support recovery of the Southern Bluefin Tuna stock. Indonesia received a lesser cut of 13 per cent in recognition of its status as a developing coastal state and reflecting the practical difficulties of controlling Southern Bluefin Tuna bycatch in their longline fishery. New Zealand received an increase in their national catch allocation of 289 tonnes reflecting, in part, agreements made at previous CCSBT meetings.
6. New Zealand received an increase in national catch allocation of 289 tonnes reflecting, in part, agreements made at previous CCSBT meetings to increase New Zealand's national catch allocation by 580 tonnes.
7. The member's catch allocations decided at the CCSBT meeting apply for the 2010 and 2011 fishing seasons. The Australian fishing season for Southern Bluefin Tuna will commence on 1 December 2009. CCSBT members agreed that catch reductions can be applied flexibly across the years 2010 and 2011 and agreed "Each member's catch in the first year should be reduced as much as possible and members should endeavour to reduce by at least 10 per cent below current levels."
8. The member's catch allocations decided at the CCSBT meeting apply for the 2010 and 2011 fishing seasons. In practical terms these align with the commencement of each Member's fishing season as follows:

Members

New Zealand	1 October 2010
Japan	1 April 2010
Indonesia	1 January 2010
Fishing Entity of Taiwan	1 April 2010
Republic of Korea	1 April 2010

Cooperating non-members

Philippines	1 January 2010
South Africa	1 January 2010
European Union	1 January 2010

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9. The decision by the CCSBT allows for each member to decide on how to implement its average member's allocation for the 2010 and 2011 fishing seasons. By 15 November 2009, each Member shall provide formal advice to the CCSBT Secretariat regarding how it will split its allocation between the 2010 and 2011 fishing seasons.
10. The AFMA Commission met on 30 October and agreed to set a single Total Allowable Catch (TAC) of 8030 tonnes for the next two years (1 December 2009–30 November 2011). This TAC will be released in two instalments over the two year period. On 1 December 2009, AFMA will set the value of each Statutory Fishery Right at 0.98884 kilograms and increase this to 1.508145 kilograms on 1 December 2010.

This means that industry can elect to take up to 5265 tonnes between 1 December 2009 and 30 November 2010. However, noting that the overall limit for the two year period is set at 8030 tonnes, catches beyond the nominal level of 4015 t will result in a smaller catch for 2010–11.

Under the previous annual cycle, any catches not taken before the start of the next fishing year were forfeited. Under the two year TAC arrangement, any catch that is not taken by 1 December 2010 will not be forfeited and will remain available to fishers in full until 30 November 2011.

11. Yes, the allocation will be equitable across all quota holders. Under the *Southern Bluefin Tuna Management Plan 1995* there have been 5 324 437 Statutory Fishing Rights (SFRs) allocated in the fishery. All individual SFRs entitle the holder to the same proportion of the TAC each season. While the value assigned to each SFR in kilograms may change from season to season, depending on the agreed TAC, the proportion of the TAC assigned to an individual SFR remains the same.
12. The CCSBT has agreed to develop and implement a formal management procedure in 2010. That procedure will establish rules about the size and timing of changes in the global TAC based on the results of future stock assessments. Hence, further changes in the global TAC will depend on future stock assessments and the management procedure to be adopted by the CCSBT.

In the event that a formal management procedure cannot be finalised in time to set the global TAC for 2012, the CCSBT has decided that it will reduce the global TAC to between 5000 and 6000 tonnes.

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13. Response to question 12 refers.
14. The CCSBT has agreed that the Management Procedure should be finalised for agreement by CCSBT at its annual meeting in October 2010. The Management Procedure would then be implemented for the 2011 season and be the basis for setting the global TAC for 2012 and beyond. CCSBT has agreed that if the Management Procedure cannot be finalised by 2012 it will reduce the global TAC for the 2012 season to between 5000 and 6000 tonnes.
15. The data collected by the department on the economic impact of potential catch reductions informed the Australian Government's negotiating position and is Cabinet-In-Confidence. However, a report, *The Economic Impact of Aquaculture on the South Australian State and Regional Economies, 2007/08* was considered by the government and is publicly available.
16. The department held a series of Southern Bluefin Tuna inter-departmental committee meetings as part of the preparations for the 2009 Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna annual meeting. The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Department of Finance and Deregulation, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, the Treasury; the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, the Attorney-General's Department, and the Australian Fisheries Management Authority were formally consulted in developing the Australian Government negotiating position.
17. Minister Burke was provided with detailed advice on a number of occasions leading up to the annual meeting of the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna.