



STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY
Dr Marisa Paterson MLA (Chair), Mr Andrew Braddock MLA (Deputy Chair),
Ms Leanne Castley MLA

Inquiry into ACT Budget 2021–22
ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE
19 October 2021

Asked by Leanne Castley MLA on 19 October 2021: Tara Cheyne MLA, Minister for Business and Better Regulation, took on notice the following question(s):

[Ref: Hansard Transcript 19 October 2021, Pages 5-7]

In relation to: Budget Outlook 2021-22, pg 315

MS CASTLEY: I do, yes. I was, like Andrew, just looking forward to understanding the budget overall. I note—and the outlook, I think it is page 315 in 2020-21, it was a lot more than it was for this year. Can you explain why the significant reduction in funding?

Mr Pryce: I am just going to the page number.

Ms Cheyne: Ms Castley, are you referring to—so the previous budget?

MS CASTLEY: So in—on page 315 it has dropped by a quarter from my reading of the many lines, so 2020-21 budget and I will just grab that paper B. And it says environmental protection in 2020-21 was nearly 312. And this year it has dropped to 200 and almost—234. I am just wondering why the reduction there? And at the bottom line—

Ms Cheyne: Sorry, Ms Castley, can you—Ms Castley, would you mind just pausing. Could you just let us know which budget paper you are referring to explicitly, is it the budget outlook from 2020 to 2021?

MS CASTLEY: Budget outlook, 2021 to 2022. The current budget outlook paper.

Ms Cheyne: Yes, on page?

MS CASTLEY: 315.

Ms Cheyne: Okay. Yes.

MS CASTLEY: Environmental protection. If you look at the interim outcome for 2020 to 2021 it says, 311 579. And the next—over—for this current year, it shows 233 584, quite a reduction. I am just wondering if you can explain that.

Mr Pryce: So that—if I can do my best, and we might have to take it on notice because as I said, the environment protection agency within Access Canberra is just a team and a branch within the agency. That, as I understand it, relates across the whole budget setting so it is not just a CMTEDD and Access Canberra. And so, there is variables there that are outside my purview.

Ms Cheyne: Yes, Ms Castley, that environment protection heading, you will see underneath that there are functions within Minister Vassarotti's portfolio and Minister Steel's portfolio.

MS CASTLEY: So—but the bottom line in there still says that for environmental protection, last year was 126 631, and this year it is 28 170, that is a 75 per cent decrease. Who can answer me? Is it Minister Steel, is it Minister Vassarotti? It is within Access Canberra, is anyone able to explain the figures to us.

Ms Cheyne: We will take that on notice, Ms Castley, we may need to just have a conversation with our colleagues in the other directorates, in how this is being compiled.

MS CASTLEY: Yes, well I would also like to understand if that is the case, how is the EPA expected to, you know, function as well as it has been, you know, with—what is it? 17 staff, there cannot be that much of a reduction, it is fair on the office of the EPA.

Mr Pryce: Ms Castley, just in the part that I can answer to that is, I can confirm that the EPA's resourcing has not dropped at all over the time that I have been head of Access Canberra. And in fact, you could argue it has been supplemented through some additional resources that we have been applying across the agency to support our regulatory efforts more broadly and—but we will have to take the broader question on notice because it does comprise the whole environmental protection. Our arm is actually just to uphold the regulatory elements of environment protection and we continue to do that.

MS CASTLEY: Thank you, Mr Pryce. But with a 75 per cent decrease, I imagine it is going to have to affect something, somewhere.

Ms Cheyne: Ms Castley, I just—I just recommend just having a closer look as well, but NEC represents funding that is not classified elsewhere. So it may have been that—how the funding is presented but it is just captured under another line item in that table. But we are not directly responsible for preparing this table, so we will seek some advice. But you can be assured from Mr Pryce that there has not been a reduction in the EPA's functions or staffing.

MS CASTLEY: Thank you, you have taken it on notice, can I just confirm?

Ms Cheyne: Yes, I have taken it on notice.

MS CASTLEY: Thank you.

MINISTER CHEYNE: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:—

The decrease in expenses in the environmental protection function between the 2020-2021 interim outcome and the 2021-2022 Budget is largely due to the creation of a provision in 2020-21 to surrender future Large-scale Generation Certificates.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity

Signature: 

Date: 26/10/21

By the Minister for Business and Better Regulation, Tara Cheyne MLA