



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
22 October 2021

Asked by Ms Castley on 22 October 2021: Ms Vassarotti took on notice the following question(s):

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In relation to: Output 2.1

MS CASTLEY: In February's budget, you allocated more than \$15 million towards output 2.1 in terms of controlled recurrent payments. In this budget, the actual spend was around 12 million. I am just wondering why there was an underspend? What happened?

Ms Vassarotti: Can you just provide a bit more detail, Ms Castley, in terms of the output? This might go across a number of ministerial portfolios, so it might actually be something that—

MS CASTLEY: I am referring to the 2020-21 budget, page 17. Then budget paper E for this budget, 2021-22, page 17. I see that there is almost \$23 million allocated for this budget, which is a huge jump from \$15 million when there was an underspend. I am just wondering if someone can talk me through the figures.

Mr Rutledge: I do not have the 2020-21 budget in front of me, but I have this year's budget, so I will talk you through it as best I can. There have been a couple of challenges this year. Budget papers generally are difficult to read, for all of us, and they are written for different purposes. But a unique challenge in this calendar year is that, because we had the budget after the end of the financial year and we also had a February supplementary appropriation for the last financial year, getting the reconciliation through the budget documents is a bit difficult to convey. The other thing I would add is that now that we are post the last financial year, we are actually reporting the interim outcome, which is the financial statements of the previous financial year, in this year's budget. So we have had a few unprecedented challenges this year.

I think you are referring to the allocation between output 2.1 and output 2.2. I think that we have just had a shift of resources. The environment portfolio takes account of both the environment, heritage and water elements of the directorate and the parks and conservation parts of the directorate. In lining up our programs with ministerial responsibilities, we have shifted some funds from environment output 2.1 and output 2.2. I think that is the shift that you are pointing at. It was not actually an underspend in either of those areas; it is a shift between those two output classes.

If that is not the answer, Ms Castley, perhaps you can put the question on notice and I can do a reconciliation for you. But there has not been a significant underspend. I think it is a shifting between the two subclasses within that output class that you are asking about.

MS CASTLEY: Okay, yes. If you could take that on notice, that would be great. There is output 2.1, budgeted payments—what the actual payments were with that one. Also, there is the increase, to \$23 million, if you could talk to me about that.

Mr Rutledge: We will have to take that on notice, because I am trying to reconcile your question with the papers in front of me and I am not able to do that.

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

The 2020-21 Controlled Recurrent Payments Budget for Output 2.1 - Environment was \$15.4 million, with an interim outcome of \$12.4 million, the variance to Budget was due mainly to timing of payments at 30 June 2021 and utilisation of independent revenue.

The 2021-22 Budget allocated to Output 2.1 – Environment, increased from \$15.4 million to \$22.9 million reflecting the following changes:

- new initiatives allocated in 2021-22 and the growth in prior year announced initiatives. This is focused on Natural Resource Management; and
- a realignment of outputs during the year, including altering the range of output 2.2 changing from Conservation and Land Management to Parks and Conservation Services. This involved movement of several functions from output 2.2 to output 2.1 to align with the administrative arrangements of government and for delivery efficiencies

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

Signature: 

Date: 29/10/2021

By the Minister for the Environment, Rebecca Vassarotti