



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

BILLS

Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2012-2013

Consideration in Detail

SPEECH

Wednesday, 30 May 2012

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

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Questioner
Speaker Burke, Tony, MP

Source House
Proof No
Responder
Question No.

Mr BURKE (Watson—Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities) (19:09): I will deal with the issues in reverse order. I thank the honourable member for the question and in particular for the tone in which the last issue has been put, and I take it completely in good faith.

I remember getting quite a shock when I was presented with a brief called 'Commemorating Eminent Australians'. I was very excited about it and asked what it did, and then discovered it was entirely dedicated to cemeteries. Given the particular sensitivity of this one, I am very conscious of making sure that any of the projects are run through the department, because I think that is the right way to do it. I do not want to get personally involved in the judgment calls on this. I have signed off on some issues within this program quite recently. Whether the one that was referred to by the member was included in those or not I do not recall. If it was not, then let us have a conversation and look at whether or not there are deficiencies within the guidelines. I am very happy to have that conversation in good faith, but I do not want to provide any particular level of expectation on the current round.

On the council heavy vehicles issue I think the nearest correct fit would be the answer that was given in question time today by the Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency and I am not proposing to go beyond my portfolio in answering that.

On the issue of synthetic greenhouse gases, the figure when referred to by tonne does sound like an extraordinary figure but what also needs to be remembered is that these gases, while potentially having an extraordinary impact, are used in very, very small quantities in refrigerants. For example, the rough bench mark that has been given to me is in the order of \$4 for a fridge. I asked the question specifically and that is the advice that came back to me from the department. So the issue of dealing with their value under the carbon price per tonne needs to be taken in the context of how many grams of the gas are in fact being used within any individual item. As I say, there are some refrigeration projects massively bigger than a domestic fridge, but in terms of a benchmark, I think it does give a slightly different lens to the figures that the member put forward.