



Senator Glenn Sterle
Chair
Senate Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator Sterle

On 14 February 2023 I appeared as a witness before the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee Estimates hearing.

During the hearing Senator Faruqi said in relation to independent observer deployments

"From when the independent observer program restarted in May 2022 and then up to 30 September 2022, only five voyages were accompanied by an independent observer. From 30 September 2022 to now, how many voyages have independent observers been on out of how many?"

In response I said

".....I have some numbers to 31 December 2022. Of the 78 voyages that met the criteria, 11 had independent observers on board. The next question would be which ones don't have them on. The reason why we only had 11 observers on board rather than 78 was that 20 of them went to China and there were COVID restrictions about access to China at the time. For 33 there was insufficient space. Insufficient space means that we have to make sure there is lifesaving equipment and everything on board for the independent observer. One was because we received travel advice that it was unsafe to travel to that country. In one we had no observer available. In 13, it was too short notice to actually get an independent observer ready to go"

I wish to correct this answer.

For the period 1 May to 31 December 2022, a total of 68 voyages met criteria for independent observer deployment at the time of departure. Of the voyages that met independent observer deployment criteria during this period, 10 voyages were accompanied by an independent observer. An independent observer was deployed on an additional voyage during this period.

Observers were not deployed on 58 voyages that met criteria, the reasons being:

- 20 voyages were to China*
- 26 voyages, the vessel could not accommodate an observer due to insufficient space*
- 1 voyage due to DFAT travel advice that it was unsafe to travel to that country*

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- *2 voyages there were no observers available*
- *9 voyages there was insufficient time to deploy an observer*

The remainder of my answer to the question, given at the hearing, is correct.

I apologise for the error in my answer and trust this further information will be of assistance to the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Matt Koval
A/g Deputy Secretary
Agricultural Trade Group
28 June 2023