

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications**  
**Legislation Committee**  
Answers to questions on notice  
**Environment portfolio**

**Question No:** 49  
**Hearing:** Budget Estimates  
**Outcome:** Outcome 1  
**Programme:** Wildlife Heritage and Marine Division  
**Topic:** MARINE DEBRIS  
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**Question Date:** 27 May 2014  
**Question Type:** Spoken

**Senator Whish-Wilson asked:**

Senator WHISH-WILSON: But there is no money going into studies such as collating data around marine debris? I think Shell might be funding a study at the moment that some CSIRO scientists are doing.

Mr Sullivan: Some of the funding that goes towards ghost nets has had a massive data collection component which has been used by others in terms of further research on where marine debris is originating and whether it can be addressed at the source. There is a long history of addressing that with Indigenous rangers working with ghost nets and in terms of not just clean-up activities but also extent data collection in terms of point of origin.

Senator WHISH-WILSON: Is there any specific work going on around cetaceans—whales and dolphins—and marine debris?

Mr Sullivan: I would have to take that on notice.

**Answer:**

Reef 2050 Plan: Under the Government's Reef 2050 Plan election commitment, \$700,000 over two years has been committed for marine debris clean-up activities. This funding will be delivered through the Reef Trust.

The marine debris clean-up activities will improve the quality of coastal and marine habitats along the Great Barrier Reef. Activities will include the physical removal of marine debris, including ghost nets (abandoned fishing nets), and community engagement and awareness-raising. Activities will be selected and undertaken in accordance with the Reef 2050 Plan, the Reef Trust principles and objective, the Dugong and Turtle Protection Plan and the *Threat abatement plan for the impacts of marine debris on vertebrate marine life*.

Details on the delivery arrangements will be finalised following consultation with relevant groups and community organisations.

International Whaling Commission: Australia is participating in the International Whaling Commission's (IWC) work to better understand and mitigate the impacts of marine debris on whales and other cetaceans, including ongoing research under the Scientific Committee and a two-stage workshop process during the 2012-14 intersessional period. The two marine debris workshops, jointly led by the IWC's Scientific and Conservation Committees, were guided by an informal Steering Group of which Australia is a member. The workshops are bringing together world leading scientists, technical experts, and representatives from national governments and international organisations, including from Australia and our region.

The first IWC scientific preparatory workshop was held in May 2013 that identified actual and potential threats to cetaceans from marine debris. The report is available at:  
<https://events.iwc.int/index.php/scientific/SC65a/paper/view/277/267>

The second IWC workshop will be held in August 2014 and will identify a range of marine debris impact mitigation measures that can be applied locally, regionally and at a global level through IWC-led actions and partnerships. The report of the second workshop will be submitted to the IWC's 65th meeting in September 2014.

The IWC also supports a large whale entanglement adviser and trainer who coordinates the IWC's Global Whale Entanglement Response Network and capacity building programme. Information on the IWC's entanglement response work is available at:  
<http://iwc.int/entanglement>

Convention on Migratory Species: At the 10th Conference of Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) in 2011, Australia proposed a resolution, which was subsequently adopted, on marine debris and its impacts on migratory marine wildlife including birds, turtles, sharks and marine mammals. Following adoption of Resolution 10.4 – Marine Debris, Australia provided a \$AU75,000 voluntary contribution to the CMS to implement three key actions outlined in the resolution, mainly:

- identify knowledge gaps in the management of marine debris and its impacts on migratory species;
- identify best practice strategies for waste management used on board commercial marine vessels, taking into account the extensive work being undertaken by the International Maritime Organization, FAO and the International Standards Organisation to avoid duplication, identify existing codes of conduct and determine the need for the improvement and/or development of new codes of conduct; and
- facilitate an analysis of the effectiveness of current public awareness and education campaigns to identify gaps and areas for improvement.

The reports arising from the three projects will be presented to the CMS Scientific Council meeting for consideration meeting (1-3 July 2014) with a view to submitting the reports to the 11th Conference of Parties for endorsement. The reports will then be available for wider circulation.

Arafura and Timor Seas Ecosystem Action Program: In 2012-13 and 2013-14, the Department provided funding of \$60,000 to GhostNets Australia to support work involving GhostNets Australia, CSIRO, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Indonesian Ministry for Marine Affairs and Fisheries, with the aim of reducing the incidence of derelict fishing gear in the Arafura Sea. The project has engaged fishers, port authorities, local communities and stakeholders within key fishing communities in eastern Indonesia to identify the reasons for fishing gear loss and to identify potential solutions. This work has fed into the development of an Indonesian Government Arafura Sea Fisheries Management Plan, with implementation of identified solutions to be taken forward in that context. This work is being done in the context of the Arafura and Timor Seas Ecosystem Action Program – a Global Environment Facility project involving collaboration among Australia, Indonesia and East Timor on the conservation and sustainable management of the coastal and marine resources of the Arafura and Timor Seas.

CSIRO: Shell Australia is funding the CSIRO and Earthwatch 'TeachWild' program, a 3 year multifaceted research and education project to identify and understand the threat marine debris poses to our wildlife and ecosystems, by mapping where and how it is accumulating along Australian coastlines. More information is at <http://www.csiro.au/Organisation-Structure/Flagships/Wealth-from-Oceans-Flagship/marine-debris>