

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

**Question No:** 94  
**Hearing:** Budget Estimates  
**Outcome:** Outcome 3  
**Programme:** Australian Antarctic Division  
**Topic:** COOPERATION IN THE SOUTHERN OCEAN  
**Hansard Page:** N/A  
**Question Date:** 10 June 2014  
**Question Type:** Written

**Senator Whish-Wilson asked:**

How is the relationship between Australia and France managed in regards to cooperation in the Southern Ocean?

- a. Is it managed by DFAT?
- b. How involved are the Department of Environment?
- c. How often are there formal meetings in regards to these arrangements?

**Answer:**

- a. Australia's cooperation with France in the Southern Ocean has many aspects, different elements of which are managed as appropriate by various Australian agencies, including DFAT, the Customs and Border Protection Service, the Department of Agriculture, and the Department of the Environment. At the strategic level, Australia-France bilateral relations are broadly and comprehensively defined by the bilateral Joint Statement of Strategic Partnership signed by the French and Australian Foreign Ministers in January 2012.
- b. The Department of the Environment, through the Australian Antarctic Division (AAD), has worked closely with French counterparts, particularly from the French Polar Institute Paul-Emile Victor (IPEV) over many years on collaborative science activities, logistical support and policy initiatives in relation to Southern Ocean and Antarctic activities. These arrangements were given a more formal status in a 2012 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Antarctic Cooperation signed by the Directors of the AAD and IPEV.

Australia and France has developed a close cooperative relationship around the common interest of both countries to protect the marine ecosystem, including fishery resources, in the subantarctic zone, especially in their neighbouring exclusive economic zones (EEZs) around Heard Island and McDonald Islands and the French territories of the Kerguelen Islands, Crozet, Saint Paul and Amsterdam. This relationship is pursuant to a 2003 Australia and France treaty that creates a framework to enhance cooperative surveillance of both countries' subantarctic EEZs and encourage scientific research on marine living resources in the area of cooperation (the Agreement)<sup>1</sup>. A further agreement aimed specifically at tackling illegal fishing inside the French and Australian subantarctic EEZs was signed in 2007<sup>2</sup>. Since 2004 Australia and France have been cooperating on

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<sup>1</sup> Treaty between the Government of Australia and the Government of the French Republic on cooperation in the maritime areas adjacent to the French Southern and Antarctic Territories (TAAF), Heard Island and the McDonald Islands done at Canberra on 24 November 2003

<sup>2</sup> Agreement on Cooperative Enforcement of Fisheries Laws between the Government of Australia and the Government of the French Republic in the Maritime Areas adjacent to the French Southern and Antarctic Territories, Heard Island and the McDonald Islands done at Paris on 8 January 2007

surveillance and enforcement activities and have undertaken joint patrols on the Kerguelen Plateau.

- c. No formal mechanism exists under the MOU between the AAD and IPEV for regular meetings in relation to the operation of the MOU. Informal meetings and dialogue with IPEV and other areas of the French Government with an interest in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean occur frequently as required, usually in Hobart or via teleconference, and within the margins of the annual Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting, the meetings of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources, and the Annual General Meeting of the Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programmes.