

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

Question No: 160
Hearing: Supplementary Budget Estimates
Outcome: Agency
Programme: Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
Topic: Crown-of-thorns starfish control
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Question Type: 41

Senator McLucas asked:

Ms Parry: Senator McLucas, I confirmed with the executive officer of AMPTO over lunchtime today that in fact there are two vessels. The vessel Hero is currently doing COTS control; the vessel Venus is doing the surveillance work. They are targeting the higher value tourism sites off the coast of Cairns. Currently, there are 12 crew doing control on the Hero. AMPTO is currently running five crew doing surveillance. That is a snapshot as of today. Some of those crew numbers may shift according to where the pressures emerge, and that is a decision for AMPTO. We also have a table, which I am getting printed off now, that we will table for the committee, which breaks down the COTS funding per year and the number of COTS culled per year, as well as the total investment in R&D, both in control and in R&D. The total Australian government investment in COTS control and in R&D is \$17.5 million from 2012, and I will have that full breakdown for you. I would also like to point out that, as you are aware, the government is investing significantly in COTS prevention through water quality control in the catchment. So the Australian government has taken quite a holistic approach to COTS in prevention, control, surveillance and R&D.

Senator McLUCAS: Thank you. Did AMPTO indicate when the Venus started its surveillance activity?

Ms Parry: For surveillance, they did not indicate when it had started, so I do not have the starting dates. There are 90 days of dedicated surveillance undertaken over the first three months of the program, but the field schedules are decided by the delivery partner, obviously, on the ground. I do not have that information but I can get that for you, if you like.

Senator McLUCAS: For surveillance, did you say 30 days? I did not catch that figure.

Ms Parry: I am sorry; 90 days of dedicated surveillance and 24 voyages of 10 days scheduled for control.

Senator McLUCAS: Ninety days over what period of time?

Ms Parry: Field schedules are developed annually.

Senator McLUCAS: So that is 90 days per year.

Ms Parry: Within the first three months of the program I have here. But again, I would need to clarify with AMPTO how they break that down. I do not have that level of specificity; that tends to be up to the delivery partner.

Senator McLUCAS: Thank you very much; I really appreciate that.

Answer:

The vessel Venus has operated as both a cull vessel and a surveillance vessel within the Control Program since 2013. The contractual arrangements with AMPTO include 90 days of local surveillance over the 3 year period of the contract, 30 days are proposed per year.

The local surveillance activities are supported by a co-contribution from the GBRMPA Field Management Program of 60 days per year over a Reef wide scale.

The vessel Venus has been dedicated solely to surveillance activities since 1 September 2015, operating 10 days on and 4 days off.