

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee**

Answers to questions on notice

Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities portfolio

Additional Estimates, February 2011

Program: Division or Agency: 5.2/7.1: HD

Question No: 71

Broad Topic: Bait used on Macquarie Island

Proof Hansard Page and Date 114-115 (21/2/11)
or Written Question:

Senator Abetz asked:

Senator ABETZ—So the \$1.3 million worth of bait, which is what I have been told, on Macquarie Island will continue to be used?

Dr Terrill—I will have to check that. I am not sure of the number.

Senator ABETZ—Take the dollar value on notice, please.

Dr Terrill—Yes.

Senator ABETZ—So we believe that that which is currently on Macquarie Island can continue to be used, it is not out of date.

Dr Terrill—Again I will check the details of the baiting for you.

Answer:

305 tonnes of bait was purchased in New Zealand at a cost of NZ\$1,135,820. The bait was taken to Macquarie Island and approximately 25 tonnes was used in 2010.

Due to spoilage it is expected that about 70 tonnes of the bait left on the island will be used in 2011.

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Additional Estimates, February 2011

Program: Division or Agency: 5.2/7.1: HD

Question No: 72

Broad Topic: Macquarie Island pest
eradication program

Proof Hansard Page and Date 115-116 (21/2/11)
or Written Question:

Senator Abetz asked:

Senator ABETZ—Did you write a letter to a Mr Ian Rist on 12 October 2010 in which you said: “While some undesired deaths of birds were anticipated as an unavoidable consequence of the Macquarie Island pest eradication program, the level of deaths was higher than expected ... Baiting ceased in June 2010 and will not recommence until a review of bird deaths is complete.”

Mr Murphy—That sounds like a letter I wrote to Mr Rist.

Senator ABETZ—Nowhere in that have you mentioned the weather as the rationale for stopping the program. Why not?

Mr Murphy—I imagine the response was to do with the bird deaths rather than the cessation of the program per se, but I would have to look at Mr Rist’s letter and my response.

Senator ABETZ—Or at your letter to Mr Rist, because that is what it tells us. If you could please take the following on notice: provide some detail as to when ‘the level of deaths was higher than expected’ was first noticed, when the program stopped, when the review was completed, when it was decided to recommence and when the program recommenced—if it has by the time you deal with those. I would be much obliged if you could answer those questions for us. ...

Answer:

A decision was taken by the project steering committee, comprised of officials of the Australian, Tasmanian and New Zealand governments, to stop the aerial baiting program on 21 July 2010 due to on-going adverse weather. This was announced by the then Tasmanian Minister for Environment, Parks and Heritage the following day.

The first bird deaths were reported to the department on 8 July 2010 when 17 birds were reported to have died from bait poisoning. The department decided that the number of non-target bird deaths had reached a higher than expected level on 27 August 2010 when it was reported that 300 birds had died.

The review was completed on 20 October 2010.

The Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities and the then Tasmanian Minister for Environment, Parks and Heritage announced on 19 November 2010 that the project would continue in 2011 (incorporating changes to reduce the numbers of bird deaths and subject to any required approvals). The project was then reconsidered under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. On 9 February 2011 the continuation of aerial baiting was approved with conditions.

It is anticipated that the baiting program will recommence in May 2011.

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Program: Division or Agency: 5.2/7.1: HD

Question No: 73

Broad Topic: Koongarra uranium site

Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Birmingham asked:

Have there been any timeframes set for acting on the Government's 2010 election commitment to apply to the World Heritage Committee to amend boundaries of Kakadu World Heritage Area to include Koongarra? If not, why not?

Answer:

The Australian Government made an election commitment to incorporate the Indigenous lands of Koongarra into Kakadu National Park and the Kakadu World Heritage Area. This honours the wishes of the traditional owners to protect the lands' environmental and cultural values forever.

The Government made a submission earlier this year to the World Heritage Committee requesting that it agree to include Koongarra within the Kakadu World Heritage Area. A decision is expected at the Committee's next meeting in June of this year.