

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee**
Answers to questions on notice
Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities portfolio
Budget Estimates, May 2012

Program: Division or Agency: 3.1: AAD **Question No:** 057

Topic: Antarctic Ocean Alliance marine reserve proposal

Proof Hansard Page and Date 104-105

or Written Question: (22/5/12)

Senator Birmingham asked:

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Senator BIRMINGHAM: Noting that there is not necessarily a reference that even comes to the parliament for an amendment or an annexure to an existing treaty or the like, would a decision to support such an MPA at least require cabinet or ministerial approval? What sort of public consultation and engagement could there be that may at least provide scope for comment for any fishers affected or anyone else with an opinion?

Dr Fleming: At the moment the procedure is that, as I have said, we have an interdepartmental committee which considers proposals for each CCAMLR meeting. We also have the consultative forum, where we talk with fishing industry representatives and conservation group representatives and we discuss the proposals coming forward at CCAMLR. Those proposals will be discussed through that forum. I am quite new in the job, so I do not have the history of running many CCAMLR meetings. But CCAMLR has only adopted one marine protected area in the past and that was south of the South Orkney Islands. I do not know the procedure that the Australian government worked through to adopt a position on that marine protected area. I suspect Australia was quiet in the discussion because that is in an area distant from Australia.

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Senator BIRMINGHAM: Perhaps if you could take on notice if there is anything that can be added in regard to especially the opportunity for some degree of public consultation or comment should there be any impact on Australia's interests aside from just the preservation interests—that would be appreciated.

Answer:

Approval of the Australian Convention of the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) Strategy is developed through a whole of government process, ultimately being approved by the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities and the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry given the cross portfolio responsibilities. The CCAMLR Strategy highlights the Australian priorities and the negotiating positions for the Australian Government on CCAMLR agenda items.

In developing the whole of government strategy, the Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) undertakes consultations not only with the key commonwealth agencies but also the conservation Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and fishing industry that have interests or operate in the Southern Ocean through the CCAMLR Consultative Forum. The Australian delegation to the annual meetings of CCAMLR includes at least one representative from AAD (the Australian Commissioner), the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Australian Fisheries Management Authority, the Attorney-General's Department, Customs, State and Territory governments, fishing industry and NGOs. The two fishing companies that operate in the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CAMLR) Convention Area within Australia's Heard Island and McDonald Island's exclusive economic zone are consulted on issues that may have an impact on them as are conservation NGOs.

Fishing and conservation interests are represented at each CCAMLR meeting through formal observer status for the Coalition of Legal Toothfish Operators and the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition.

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Program: Division or Agency: 3.1: AAD **Question No:** 058

Topic: Removal of asbestos from Mawson, Casey and Davis stations

Proof Hansard Page and Date 107

or Written Question: (22/5/12)

Senator Singh asked:

Senator SINGH: When asbestos is removed, I presume it is removed by a qualified asbestos removalist who is either on staff or brought down to the station. Is that correct?

Dr Wooding: I would have to take that on notice, Senator. I believe so, but I will give you some confirmation on how that is done.

Senator SINGH: When it is removed, where is it taken? Is it taken to McRobies in South Hobart or is it taken to somewhere else?

Dr Wooding: ...I would have to take that on notice as to where we would take it as a general rule.

Answer:

The Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) complies with Work (Occupational) Health and Safety Laws. The AAD ensures that the necessary qualified personnel are available to undertake any works involving Asbestos Containing Material (ACM).

Disposal is by deep burial at the Landfill Disposal Facility at Glenorchy, Tasmania. The AAD utilises the services of a licensed organisation to dispose of the asbestos once returned to Australia. The disposal of any asbestos waste returned from Antarctica is in accordance with the local authority and Tasmanian legislative requirements.

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Program: Division or Agency: 3.1: AAD **Question No:** 059

Topic: Submission to the Chief Scientist's state of science in Australia report

Proof Hansard Page and Date 107

or Written Question: (22/5/12)

Senator McKenzie asked:

Senator McKENZIE: ... Did the division make a submission to the Chief Scientist's examination of the state of science in Australia around the education and higher education aspects?

Dr Fleming: That was preceding my appointment and preceding Nick's appointment, but I understand that we did make a submission to the Chief Scientist. I do not have knowledge of what was in that submission.

Senator McKENZIE: If you could just provide that on notice that would be great.

Answer:

The Australian Antarctic Division did not make a submission to the Chief Scientist's examination of the state of science in Australia around education and higher education.

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Program: Division or Agency: 3.1: AAD **Question No:** 060

Topic: Number of scientists active in Antarctica

Proof Hansard Page and Date 107-108

or Written Question: (22/5/12)

Senator McKenzie asked:

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Senator McKENZIE: Absolutely. Okay. Of the 90, how many are student researchers completing their doctorates or postdoctoral work?

Dr Gales: To give you the exact numbers I would have to take that on notice.

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Senator McKENZIE: That would be great.

Dr Gales: I am very happy to provide those. In general terms, we do have a lot of students going down as part of PhD projects in particular. It tends to be at that level that they are participating in the fieldwork and there is a lot of student work back here, of course, in dealing with the data. But we can provide those figures for you.

Senator McKENZIE: Yes, can I have a breakdown of the 90 on page 57. Also, I am assuming that there would be another whole program of visitations down there that would involve a lot of young, budding scientists—in addition, that would be fantastic. Then if we could look at domestic versus international for those postgrads, that would be great.

Dr Gales: We can provide you with information on that. We are building up new PhD programs on quantitative Antarctic science as well, so we can provide you with that information.

Senator McKENZIE: It sounds very exciting. I look forward to reading it. Around the institutions collaborating, I presume the majority of those are international universities?

Dr Gales: It is mostly university-based. There are some other research based organisations, but they are mostly—

Senator McKENZIE: If we could have a breakdown of those as well, that would be great. Thank you.

Answer:

Of the 90 scientists active in Antarctica, the sub-Antarctic and the Southern Ocean during the 2011/12 financial year a total of 19 students were involved. 14 research students travelled to Antarctica and five participated in marine science during the season. This figure comprised seven PhD students, seven MSc, two Honours, one graduate and two post-doctorates.

Of the 19 students, nine were Australian and ten were international. All students were affiliated with Australian institutions.