

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities portfolio
Budget Estimates, May 2013

Program: Division:	1.2 PCD/International	Question No: 034
Topic:	International Treaties	
Proof Hansard Page and Date	76	
or Written Question:	(28/05/13)	

Senator Birmingham asked:

Senator BIRMINGHAM: Some treaties have a notice period built into them or the like. Does the whaling convention have that?

Ms Petrachenko: I will have to take that on notice, Senator.

Answer:

Article XI of the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling provides for the withdrawal of Contracting Parties. Any Contracting Party wishing to withdraw must give notice to the depository Government (the United States of America) on or before 1 January. This withdrawal takes effect on 30 June of the same year.

If one Contracting Party gives notice in this manner, other Contracting Parties may also give notice withdrawing with effect from the same date (30 June), within one month of receiving notice of withdrawal from the first Contracting Party.

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Program: Division:	1.2: PCD/International	Question No:	035
Topic:	Funding reduction – implications for international whale research		
Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question:	77 and 78 (28/05/13)		

Senator Birmingham asked:

The departmental program support budget in this area takes a fairly significant nose dive over the three years going from this year into 2013-14 into 2014-15 from \$26¹/₂ million to \$13.39 million. I assume this is one of those parts of the department where you face significant challenges in terms of realigning staff. What does that reduction in funding mean for how this area of the department operates? What functions or services will be reduced as a result?

Mr Thompson: The footnote against that line item, Senator, refers to other revenue in addition to appropriation. I think a large part of the explanation for that drop is due to the decline in the international whale science initiative, or the cessation or termination of that line item. That initiative, which you see in the line above under administered expenses includes an amount there, also includes a fairly substantive amount—I do not have the number on me, sorry—in departmental funding which we use for supplier expenses to commission the research that Ms Petrachenko referred to before and to provide some funding to the Antarctic Division to commission work from them. So the end of that program, at least as it is portrayed in the budget papers, is behind a fair amount of the decline between 2013-14 and 2014-15.

Senator BIRMINGHAM: Are you able to quantify that at all, Mr Thompson?

Mr Thompson: I do not have those numbers on me, Senator, but we can provide that answer to you on notice, if that is okay

Answer:

As set out on page 36 of the Portfolio Budget Statements, Departmental Program Support expenses for Program 1.2: Environmental Information and Research are forecast to reduce by \$13.078 million over three years from 2012-13 (rather than 2013-14). The forecast reduction is from \$26.470 million in 2012-13 to \$13.392 million in 2014-15.

Of this reduction, the most significant single amount is \$7.033 million for the International Whale and Marine Mammal Conservation Initiative (IWMMCI) - a \$32 million six year program which commenced in 2008-09 and is scheduled to terminate at the end of 2013-14.

On 24 July 2013, subsequent to the Portfolio Budget Statements, the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Water, the Hon Mark Butler MP, announced extra funding of almost \$6 million over two years (2013-14 to 2014-15) for the IWMMCI. This funding is in addition to the original \$32 million investment, effectively maintaining existing funding levels over the period in question for the IWMMCI.

The Departmental Program Support budget includes expenses that are funded by Section 31 Revenue. Between 2012-13 and 2013-14 the Section 31 Revenue allocated to Program 1.2 is forecast to reduce by approximately \$2 million as responsibility for some items of expenditure such as Indigenous Protection Areas and the Australian Biological Resource Study will be managed in other divisions of the department or Portfolio.

The remaining amount of the reduction is associated with a decrease in the allocation of the department's corporate overheads to the program. These are indirect costs that are notionally allocated across all programs in the Portfolio Budget Statement.