

Senate Standing Committee on Economics

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Resources, Energy and Tourism Portfolio
Budget Senate Estimates
31 May 2011

Question: BR21
Topic: Scallop Deaths
Proof Hansard Page: 42

Senator Colbeck asked:

Dr Foster: We are part of the Environmental Assessors Forum—the group of people in the department. The Petroleum and Marine Division go along to APPEA meetings and so on, so they are engaged in that activity.

Senator COLBECK: So who sits around the table at that forum?

Dr Foster: For Geoscience Australia, specialists from the Petroleum and Marine Division—the group leader, for example, in that area.

Senator COLBECK: Who would bring expertise in marine science to that forum? These people, I assume, largely have expertise in the science of exploration.

Dr Foster: No, they are marine scientists in their own right. For example, we have benthic ecologists who work in Geoscience Australia in the marine group.

Senator COLBECK: Is it an established, formal group or is it a group that is brought together on an as-needs basis?

Dr Foster: In what connection is the question, Senator? Are you talking about the environmental aspect?

Senator COLBECK: The environmental aspect to maintain your connection with the latest science such as the paper I just discussed, for example.

Dr Foster: The Catalonia—

Senator COLBECK: The Technical University of Catalonia, in Barcelona.

Dr Foster: The group meet regularly, and they meet with APPEA and the department as well.

Senator COLBECK: Has there been any discussion within that forum on the concerns about the scallop deaths in Bass Strait?

Dr Foster: Not that I am aware of. I will take that on notice.

Senator COLBECK: You might have to do this on notice too. I understand that. Is it a formal membership that comes together or is it brought together on an as needs basis, this discussion group?

Dr Foster: They are formal meetings, but I think the best thing is to take that on notice.

Senator COLBECK: Again on notice, could you give me advice as to the membership of the group and how it is made up?

Dr Foster: Yes.

Answer:

There have been no discussions within the Environmental Assessors Forum on the concerns about the scallop deaths in Bass Strait.

The Environmental Assessors Forum meets formally, at a minimum, biannually. In addition, teleconferences are held as required to discuss specific matters. The Forum reports to the Upstream Petroleum and Geothermal Subcommittee.

The Environmental Assessors Forum was established to discuss issues in the regulation of offshore petroleum activities under the *Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage (Environment) Regulations 2009*. These regulations are made under the *Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006*. Attendees at meetings of the Environmental Assessors Forum consist of:

- Chair and Secretariat – from Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism.
- Other Members – representatives of agencies responsible for the day to day administration of the *Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage (Environment) Regulations 2009*.
- Invited Observers – representatives of agencies that provide advice on environmental issues affecting the current and future petroleum environment.

Member agencies are:

1. Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism – Commonwealth
2. Department of Mines and Petroleum – Western Australia
3. Mineral Resources Tasmania, Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources – Tasmania
4. Department of Environment and Resource Management - Queensland
5. Department of Primary Industries – New South Wales
6. Department of Resources – Northern Territory
7. Department of Primary Industries and Resources SA – South Australia
8. Department of Primary Industries – Victoria.

Observers with a standing invitation to attend meetings are:

1. Geoscience Australia
2. Autoridade Nacional do Petroleo (The National Petroleum Authority, Timor Leste)
3. Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA)
4. Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities.