

**Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Budget Estimates May 2011

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** 254

**Division/Agency:** SRM – Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Caring for our Country program - Grants

**Proof Hansard Page:** 91 (23/05/11)

**Senator Macdonald asked:**

**Senator IAN MACDONALD:** Okay. Did you say you would come back to me on what checking your department does to the groups that actually apply for these funds?

**Mr Thompson:** Yes, I think we have said we can come back to you on that. As I said, the essential element is that the groups are legally incorporated et cetera, but we will take that on notice.

**Answer:**

The eligibility criteria are included in the business plan each year. To be eligible for Caring for our Country investment the organisation must:

- be a legal entity
- clearly identify in the proposal which targets for Caring for our Country are being addressed
- before agreed commencement, have or be able to obtain, all necessary planning, regulatory or other approvals
- have no overdue reports or acquittals from previous Australian Government funding
- have the agreement of the lead partner organisation and key partner organisations to submit the proposal.

Eligibility is tested by the Australian Government Land and Coasts team based on information provided in completed applications. The team also checks that groups do not have any outstanding acquittals from previous Australian Government funding.

The independent panels that assess the open call component of the Caring for our Country business plans consist of members from the community as well as scientific/technical and departmental experts. Where relevant, and if known, the members contribute information to the assessment panel about the applicant organisations, such as the capacity of a group to undertake a project.

**Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Budget Estimates May 2011

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** 255

**Division/Agency:** SRM – Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Caring for our Country program - Grants

**Proof Hansard Page:** 91 (23/05/11)

**Senator Macdonald asked:**

**Senator IAN MACDONALD:** I am not for a moment suggesting that the head of the CFMEU in Adelaide does not have an interest in Scele Bay, which is a fair way from Adelaide—but perhaps he has a beach house or something up there. I am not suggesting that. But it just seemed to me and to a lot of the locals who have reported this to me that it was a fraction odd. Does the website give an indication of the reasons why this project was selected over others?

**Mr Thompson:** No, the website simply lists the name of the project, the group, the amount of money and a brief description.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD:** Could you, perhaps on notice, give me an indication of the basis on which this project was selected—for example, good for Aboriginal employment, good for fixing the dunes or whatever?

**Mr Thompson:** We do have a record of the basis on which the decision was recommended, yes. We can do that.

**Answer:**

The assessment panel ranked this project very highly among the proposals from South Australia.

The proposal addressed an identified High Conservation Value Aquatic Ecosystem priority site (Chain of Bays) and the proposed on-ground works strongly aligned with the investment guide for this site and the business plan priorities.

The proposed activities were identified in previous plans and strategies for the area and the proposed methods were considered suitable for local conditions.

The proposal built on previous projects and involved partnerships with the Eyre Peninsula Natural Resource Management Board, the then South Australia Department for Environment and Heritage (now the South Australia Department for Environment and Natural Resources), Aboriginal people and local communities.

The proposal included community education and devolved grants for on-ground works that addressed priorities in the business plan.

There was a very strong emphasis on Indigenous involvement and for capacity building to be well integrated into the proposal and the delivery of outcomes. Indigenous involvement was overseen by a project coordinator and Indigenous supervisors.

**Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**  
**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**  
Budget Estimates May 2011  
**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** 255 (continued)

The applicant had a very good track record of project management and delivery. This was recognised through awards the group had received for their past work. The proposal had good risk management and good maintenance of project outcomes.

**Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Budget Estimates May 2011

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** 256

**Division/Agency:** SRM – Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Caring for our Country program - Grants

**Proof Hansard Page:** 93 (23/05/11)

**Senator Macdonald asked:**

**Senator IAN MACDONALD:** But, with regard to Sceale Bay, there is no suggestion in the application or in the department's assessment that any of this money will go towards a particular lobbied outcome in relation to those sorts of issues?

**Mr Thompson:** I do not have the application in front of me, and I do not have the assessment by the various panels, so I could not say whether or not there is any suggestion of that sort.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD:** I have raised those issues and perhaps you can give me information, on notice, about that. I am going to be able to look up for myself how many grants were around that amount of money.

**Mr Thompson:** Yes.

**Answer:**

The application sought funding to revegetate, restore and protect targeted areas within the Chain of Bays, to undertake a variety of tailored capacity building initiatives and to produce two documentary films to highlight Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous and community partnerships in restoring the Chain of Bays. The proposal included Indigenous engagement and Indigenous employment opportunities integrated into proposed activities.

The project was assessed on the basis of how well the proposed activities addressed the targets specified in the 2010–11 Caring for our Country business plan. The panel ranked it highly on this basis.

The proposed on-ground works strongly aligned with the investment guide for this site and with business plan priorities. The proposed activities were identified in previous plans and strategies for the area and the proposed methods were considered suitable for local conditions.

There was no indication in the application that the project or its funding would be used toward any particular lobbied outcome and the panel did not raise this as a concern.

**Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Budget Estimates May 2011

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** 257

**Division/Agency:** SRM – Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Caring for our Country program - Grants

**Proof Hansard Page:** 96 (23/05/11)

**Senator Siewert asked:**

**Senator SIEWERT:** How does a member of the public or an NRM group find out who is making the decisions on the assessment panels?

**Mr Thompson:** We have normally made the membership of the assessment panels public after the process. I am not sure what the timing is this year. The reason we were not in the past making them available before the process commenced was that some of those members said that they were being lobbied quite heavily during the period and that they preferred that their names not be made public. We would normally make them available after, but if someone were to ask for those lists to be made available I am not sure that we could say no.

**Senator SIEWERT:** It just worries me that there is a process here that is spending a large amount of money, and decisions are being made that people do not know about until after the fact. I appreciate the issue around lobbying. Having been on many assessment panels, I understand that. But there are processes you can put in place to ensure that that does not happen or to minimise it and scare people off.

**Mr Thompson:** These panels do not make the decisions; they make recommendations, which go through to ministers.

**Senator SIEWERT:** I appreciate that. We did not make decisions either on the panels that I have been on; we made recommendations to ministers. It is always the ministers in the department that make the decisions. It just seems to me a pretty secret process. If somebody wants to be involved in the assessment process, how do they get involved? In the past it was nominated by the community—and I understand and I have been through the arguments about not being representative anymore, et cetera—but it seems to me you have gone completely the other way now; now you make the decisions and the community is not involved at all.

**Mr Thompson:** Most of the panels have a majority community membership and we recommend them on the basis of their connections and experience with the community.

**Senator SIEWERT:** It still seems pretty in-house to me. If you could table the names of the people who are on the panels, that would be appreciated.

**Mr Thompson:** Okay. We can do that.

**Answer:**

Panel membership has not yet been finalised. We will provide this information to the Senator as soon as possible.

**Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Budget Estimates May 2011

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** 258

**Division/Agency:** SRM – Sustainable Resource Management

**Topic:** Fisheries – All activities and communications of the Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee

**Proof Hansard Page:** Written

**Senator Colbeck asked:**

1. Can DAFF provide a comprehensive update on all activities and communications of the Recreational Fishing Roundtable?
2. What expenditure is available for the Recreational Fishing Roundtable in 2011-12 and beyond?
3. What activities are planned for the Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee from this point forward?
4. Has the Chair of the Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee received any additional remuneration for his position, outside of sitting fees in accordance with the Remuneration Tribunal Determinations?
5. What is the process for the Chair to cover any expenses incurred in the line of performing the role? Have additional expenses been incurred and, if so, can itemised details of the expense amounts and reasons be provided.

**Answer:**

1. The Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee held a meeting on 16 February 2011 to progress the Recreational Fishing Industry Development Strategy, and to receive an update on the progress of the recreational fishing projects funded in support of the Strategy.

The committee's chair provided an update on the development of the Strategy to the Recreational Fishing Roundtable on 17 February 2011.

The committee has since finalised the Strategy, 'Recreational fishing in Australia – 2011 and beyond: a national industry development strategy' and presented it to industry and government on 7 June 2011.

The national data collection project has been approved and contracts have been prepared by the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation. The anticipated start date is 1 July 2011 and completion by June 2013. The proposed outputs include:

- a comprehensive national audit of data sets relating to participation rates, catch, effort, social and economics in recreational fisheries in Australia, which will be published in a publicly available final report

**Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Budget Estimates May 2011

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** 258 (continued)

- identification of gaps in data and mechanisms for the future collection of recreational fisheries data at the national level.

This work concludes the Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee's terms of reference to review the 1994 National Recreational Fishing Policy and to prepare a new Recreational Fishing Industry Development Strategy.

2. Nil
3. None
4. No
5. The Chair is required to submit a properly rendered tax invoice and receipts in order to claim reimbursement of travel, accommodation, meals and incidental expenses in order to perform the role.

All reimbursements and allowances are made in accordance with the financial policies and procedures of the department. No additional expenses have been incurred.

**Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Budget Estimates May 2011

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** 259

**Division/Agency:** SRM – Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Marine bioregional planning

**Proof Hansard Page:** Written

**Senator Colbeck asked:**

1. What involvement has DAFF had with regard to the Marine Bioregional Planning process generally, and with specific regard to the South West Marine Networks proposal, since February 2011?
2. Has the Department provided advice to: (a) the Fisheries Minister, (b) the Fisheries Parliamentary Secretary or (c) the Environment Minister?
3. What was DAFF's role in the development of the Displaced Effort policy recently released by the Government?
4. Did DAFF provide advice to (a) the Fisheries Minister, (b) the Fisheries Parliamentary Secretary, or (c) the Environment Minister with regard to the Displaced Effort policy?
5. What is DAFF's involvement in development of gear assessment guidelines?

**Answer:**

1. Since February 2011, the department has formally met with officers from the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (DSEWPaC) on 1 February 2011, 24 March 2011 and 18 April to discuss the marine bioregional planning process and the south-west marine bioregional plan and reserve network. Informal meetings and discussions have also been held. ABARES was contracted by DSEWPaC in May 2011 to undertake the socio-economic assessment of potential impacts of the draft south-west marine bioregional plan and reserve network.
2.
  - a) Yes
  - b) Yes
  - c) No
3. The Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities was responsible for the development of the fisheries adjustment policy. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry was consulted about this policy as part of the displaced fishing policy working group.
4.
  - a) Yes
  - b) Yes
  - c) No



**Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Budget Estimates May 2011

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** 259 (continued)

5. The department was not involved in the development of gear assessment guidelines.

**Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Budget Estimates May 2011

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** 260

**Division/Agency:** SRM – Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Reduction of FTEs in Fisheries Branch

**Proof Hansard Page:** Written

**Senator Colbeck asked:**

DAFF has previously advised the Fisheries Branch has reduced FTEs from 54 to 34 between 2007-08 and 2010-11.

1. What is the current number of FTEs in the Fisheries Branch? Are there plans for further reductions in FTE numbers during the 2011-12 period?
2. What is the staff turnover rate in the Fisheries Branch now?

**Answer:**

1. There are (as of 31 May 2011) 34.6 full time equivalents (FTEs) in the 2010-2011 Fisheries Branch budget. There are no planned reductions in FTEs in the Fisheries Branch for 2011-2012. The current draft 2011-2012 budget for the Fisheries Branch contains 34.8 FTEs.
2. As of 30 April 2011, there have been four separations from the Fisheries Branch since the beginning of the financial year. Two were ongoing moves to other APS agencies, one resignation and one contract resignation. This makes turnover approximately 10 per cent extrapolated over a 12 month period.

**Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Budget Estimates May 2011

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** 261

**Division/Agency:** SRM – Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Commonwealth Fisheries Harvest Policy

**Proof Hansard Page:** Written

**Senator Colbeck asked:**

1. Have the terms of reference for the review of the Commonwealth Fisheries Harvest Strategy Policy been developed? Are these available publicly?
2. When will the formal review and consultation process commence?
3. Noting former advice that the Review will commence in 2011 and be provided to the Commonwealth government by September 2012, has DAFF actually devised a more detailed timeline for this project? And if so, can it be provided?
4. Has a list of individuals and organisations been determined as yet? If so, can it be provided?
5. Has a process or plan for this review been developed as yet? If so can you outline this?

**Answer:**

1. Terms of reference are currently being drafted. They will be made public after approval by the Minister.
2. The formal review will commence once the Minister has agreed to the terms of reference.
3. A formal timeline and plan for the review will be determined in consultation with the Minister.
4. A list has not yet been prepared.
5. See answer to question 3.

**Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Budget Estimates May 2011

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** 262

**Division/Agency:** SRM – Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Fisheries - Seismic Testing and Bass Strait Scallop Bed Deaths

**Proof Hansard Page:** Written

**Senator Colbeck asked:**

Seismic testing and Bass Strait scallop bed deaths

1. What further action or activity has the department undertaken with regard to this issue since it was raised at the Additional estimates hearing in February 2011?
2. Has DAFF provided advice to (a) the Fisheries Minister or (b) the Fisheries Parliamentary Secretary regarding this matter?
3. Is DAFF aware of media reports in which the Fisheries Parliamentary Secretary indicated he had met with the Tasmanian Scallop Fishermen's association and he agreed that natural environmental factors are not the cause of the scallop bed deaths in Bass Strait?
4. Is the Department aware of any other fisheries concerns related to seismic surveys, either in Australia or international waters? If so, can an outline of these concerns be detailed?
5. Is the department aware of the recently published findings of the Spanish technological University of Barcelona? (as published in *New Scientist*, 16 April 2011)
6. What assessment does DAFF make of the content of this study in relation to the Bass Strait scallop issue?

**Answer:**

1. Parliamentary Secretary Kelly met with the Commonwealth Fisheries Association on 3 February 2011 and with the Tasmanian Scallop Fishermen's Association (TSFA) on 16 February 2011 to discuss the impact of seismic surveys on Bass Strait scallop stocks.

This department has also been in contact with the Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism and the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities who approve seismic testing in Commonwealth waters. This department has also been in regular contact with the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA), which has responsibility for operational aspects of the interactions between proposed seismic surveys and fishing.

Dr Kelly also wrote to the Victorian Government seeking its views on the effects of seismic surveys on the health of scallops.

AFMA's Scallop Resource Assessment Group has identified research into the effects of seismic surveys on scallops as a priority. The Fisheries Research

**Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Budget Estimates May 2011

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question: 262 (continued)**

Advisory Bodies that advise on research, development and extension priorities to the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) have identified research into the effects of seismic surveys on a range of species as a priority. This was included in the priorities for the FRDC 2012 annual competitive round call for applications as a cross jurisdictional priority.

2. (a) Yes (b) Yes
3. Yes.
4. Yes. The Northern Territory Seafood Council has received reports from fishers about their concerns with seismic exploration activities in the Timor Sea. Similarly, the department is aware that concerns have been expressed by Victorian seafood industry stakeholders about the possible effects of seismic surveys not only on scallops but other species such as finfish, squid and krill. The department is also aware of suggestions from the seafood industry that seismic surveys may have impacted larval life stages of lobster.
5. Yes
6. The article indicates that high intensity, low frequency sounds can damage cephalopod statocysts (i.e. the balance organs) of octopus, squid and cuttlefish, but did not analyse the effects on scallops. The department notes that priority is being given to research into the effects of seismic surveys on the fisheries described above (in response to question 1).

**Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Budget Estimates May 2011

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** 263

**Division/Agency:** SRM – Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee

**Proof Hansard Page:** Written

**Senator Colbeck asked:**

1. Can DAFF provide a comprehensive update on all activities and communications of the Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee since February 2011? This request includes a detailed progress report on the national data collection project.
2. What expenditure is available for the Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee in 2011-12 and beyond?
3. What activities are planned for the Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee from this point forward?

**Answer:**

Please refer to 258 (SRM) Budget Estimates 2011.

**Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Budget Estimates May 2011

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** 264

**Division/Agency:** SRM – Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Southern bluefin tuna scientific research program

**Proof Hansard Page:** 114 (23/05/2011)

**Senator Colbeck asked:**

**Senator COLBECK:** You have effectively dealt with my specific question with respect to the potential for buyout, but that process has never been pursued before unless it is a broader industry such as the south-east process that occurred in I think 2005-06. I want to go back to terminated programs. It is my understanding that there were five of those in the budget: the Southern Bluefin Tuna Scientific Research Program, the Recreational Fishing Community Grants Program, the Southern Ocean Surveillance Continuation, the Fishing Structural Adjustment Package and the Illegal Foreign Fishing Vessels—High Seas Taskforce Initiative. What has been the impact of the cessation of the Southern Bluefin Tuna Scientific Research Program?

**Mr Thompson:** I am not sure which program you are actually referring to there. The work we do on southern bluefin tuna is continuing. It is funded through the fisheries research fund. Work done by ABARES and CSIRO is still continuing. Dr Begg seems to have more detail on that.

**Dr Begg:** Just to be clear, are you talking about the CCSBT scientific research program that used to have tag, recapture and things like that?

**Senator COLBECK:** It might go back a little earlier than just the last 12 months. There was funding allocated in the 2007-08 budget. There was nearly \$1 million effectively—\$999,000—according to answer to question on notice No. 157 from February's estimates. In that question I was asking about a range of things including staffing, which we have been through and talked about.

**Mr Thompson:** On the southern bluefin tuna question specifically, we think you are referring to a specific item which referred to funding for the Convention for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna, where we provided research money to them for tagging and other activities. That has ceased. But there has been no termination of any fishing programs in this year's budget other than those that were foreshadowed before the structural adjustment package coming to an end.

**Senator COLBECK:** No, I understand that. The recreational fishing grants program was basically coming to an end as well.

**Mr Thompson:** The Fisheries Resources Research Fund continues. As I said, we are funding work on southern bluefin tuna. The aerial survey and other work will receive some funding from that.

**Senator COLBECK:** It is listed on the second page of your answer to question No. 157—now you have confused me because on the first page you have 157 and on the second page you have 156, unless I have the two questions combined. It says: 'Southern Bluefin Tuna Scientific Research Program, \$999,000'. Perhaps you should take that on notice.

**Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Budget Estimates May 2011

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** 264 (continued)

**Answer:**

Between 2005-06 and 2007-08, funding of approximately \$3 million was provided for the department's Scientific Research Program, which supported Australian research activities aligned with the Scientific Research Program of the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT). The department received \$999,000 each financial year from 2005-06 to 2007-08 to support the program, with the funding expiring on 30 June 2008.

One of the main objectives of CCSBT's Scientific Research Program was to undertake a tagging program to provide better information on southern bluefin tuna (SBT) catch rates, distribution and behaviour. CCSBT suspended its tagging program in 2007 due to the poor rate of tag returns.

The cessation of the Scientific Research Program has not led to a reduction in the SBT research activities supported by the department, with ongoing activities largely funded through the department's Fisheries Resources Research Fund.

The SBT research activities that continue to be supported include the scientific aerial survey of juvenile tuna in the Great Australian Bight, the commercial trial of stereo-video in the SBT farm sector, ongoing stock assessment work and the scientific development of a SBT rebuilding strategy (known as a management procedure).



**Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Budget Estimates May 2011

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** 265

**Division/Agency:** SRM – Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Water quality monitoring

**Proof Hansard Page:** 111 (23/05/2011)

**Senator Colbeck asked:**

**Senator COLBECK:** I am not sure about how constructive they are running just at the moment. I asked some questions at last estimates about the impact of the extreme weather events up the east coast. We talked about some water quality monitoring, particularly in some of the areas outside the estuaries. Do you have any updates on any findings or any work that might have been done on that?

**Mr Thompson:** I have no update on the findings. We would have to take that on notice as to what the results, if there are any, are.

**Senator COLBECK:** As part of that question could you see if there are any particular sectors of fisheries that have been more significantly impacted than others. The work is continuing, is it?

**Mr Thompson:** The water quality monitoring work—there was some done straight after the cyclones. I know some results of that were made available. I am not familiar with all of them. I think some of them showed that, because of the sheer volume of water, some of the impacts were actually less than we might have otherwise expected. There was a dilution effect.

**Answer:**

While the department does not monitor the results of water quality testing and has no updates on test results, it is aware that extensive flooding from the Fitzroy, Burnett and Mary Rivers and Tropical Cyclone Yasi had significant impacts on the Great Barrier Reef that were beyond the normal resourcing of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) for environmental responses.

Caring for Our Country has provided \$700 000 this financial year to GBRMPA for the following activities

- detailed assessments of the impacts on tourism infrastructure and critical habitats, including islands and key dive sites
- dugong and seagrass surveys
- expansion of ‘Eye on the Reef’ monitoring by tourism operators and fishers.

A report on this is expected in the near future.

An additional \$380 000 has also been provided to GBRMPA to fund the following urgent remedial activities:

- works necessary for marine and island restoration and recovery
- crown of thorns starfish outbreaks control

**Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Budget Estimates May 2011

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** 265 (continued)

- special education activities relating to the current increased vulnerability of the reef
- planning, co-ordination and administration of management activities.

The department sought and received situation reports from Queensland Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation during and after the Queensland floods and following Cyclone Yasi. Departmental officers were also in communication with Queensland seafood industry representatives in relation to these matters. The department's understanding is that although there was little damage to vessels, the main direct impacts were felt across Queensland inshore state fisheries, including the Queensland East Coast Trawl Fishery (as the flooding coincided with the beginning of the scallop season) and the River and Inshore Beam Trawl Fishery (where operations were affected by both floodwaters and debris). Queensland reef fishers operating in the area of the path of Cyclone Yasi were also affected, as were crab fishers in Hinchinbrook area (Cardwell / Lucinda) who reportedly lost most of their pots. Indirect effects, such as damage to berthing and unloading facilities, particularly around Bundaberg, and transport disruptions also caused difficulties for fishers and aquaculture operators.