

**Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport**  
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
Additional Budget Estimates February 2009  
**Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government**

**Question No.** AMSA 01

**Division/Agency:** Australian Maritime Safety Authority

**Topic:** Aircraft Availability

**Hansard Page:** 96 (24/02/09)

**Senator Johnston asked:**

**Senator JOHNSTON**—But you do understand what I am looking for? I am looking for a figure that tells us how often we needed or wanted our Dornier aircraft and how often we could not have one because of some reason. The reason may well be service or maintenance—whatever reason—and we get a charter or we get someone else to do it. But also there will be reasons that are not planned, that are extraordinary and that are things that we should know about. Indeed, I think I would be failing in my responsibilities if I did not ask you: is there a system of analysis of availability; what are those figures; and what monitoring is there so that we can get a sense of the reliable availability of the aircraft against the demand?

**Mr Peachey**—Senator, as I said or indicated, I do not have a figure of when we have asked and it has not been available. We can no doubt go back and see if we can get that figure, but—

**Senator JOHNSTON**—I would very much be obliged. The date for questions on notice is 17 April, so by 17 April, I am happy for you to tell me what you can about the system.

**Mr Peachey**—I am happy to do that, but, before we do, I just want to stress that this is not an operation that goes unmonitored or unchecked. As I said earlier, I personally get a report everyday of where the planes are and whether they are available or not. As you quite rightly said, if one was not available for some reason—these are machines, after all; sometimes my car does not work—we do have access to other aircraft to assist the program.

**Senator JOHNSTON**—But I am looking for a figure that gives me comfort and confidence that there is a high level of availability at the times required. That is the essence of our business here.

**Mr Peachey**—Okay.

**Answer:**

After scheduled maintenance and other AMSA requirements, the five Dornier aircraft have been unavailable on average about 19 days each over the last year. Unavailability has been mainly to allow for unscheduled maintenance.

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**Question No.** AMSA 02

**Division/Agency:** Australian Maritime Safety Authority

**Topic:** Aircraft Radar and Incidents

**Hansard Page:** 97 (24/02/09)

**Senator Johnston asked:**

**Senator JOHNSTON**—I hope he has. The radar was a problem. How are we going with that?

**Mr Peachey**—The radar was a problem, Senator. As I understand it now, the radar has been fixed and the aircraft are operational with their new radars installed.

**Mr Young**—Could I add that the radar was certified by the certifying authority late last year and is still being rolled out for a couple of the aircraft. That will be completed this quarter.

**Senator JOHNSTON**—Which of our cities does not have the radar? The search radar on five Dornier 328 turboprop aircraft were temporarily replaced by weather radar. We have two of the five still waiting to be fitted or repaired, or whatever the circumstances were. Which ones are they—do you know?

**Mr Young**—I do not know which ones they are, Senator.

**Senator JOHNSTON**—Okay. I also understand that we have had quite a considerable number of mid-air mechanical incidents, including four engine failures. I am sure this is not new to you. I am simply raising this to give you an opportunity to tell me that that situation has not been beyond what the media have suggested. I am looking at April last year with respect to the performance. Have we had any other incidents since that report in the *Australian* with respect to mid-air incidents, including four engine failures? Have we had a successful resolution of that problem or have there been others?

**Mr Young**—Senator, I am not aware of any incidents of that type.

**Senator JOHNSTON**—Could I be as casual about this and as convenient to you as I possibly can, if there are incidents, could you tell me within the timeframe for the questions on notice. If I do not hear from you, I will take it you have done the work and there are none.

**Mr Young**—Certainly, Senator.

**Answer:**

Three aircraft at Darwin, Perth and Melbourne have been refitted with the search radar. The Brisbane and Cairns aircraft are to be fitted shortly.

The incidents reported in the *Australian* articles occurring in 2007 did not involve “four engine failures”, but were precautionary feathering of an engine in response to warning indicators and in one instance a malfunctioning generator. The incidents were investigated and resolved by the aircraft operator. AMSA is not aware of any other similar incidents involving the aircraft since 2007. There was one mid-air lightning strike in May 2008 and the aircraft landed safely.

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**Question No.** AMSA 03

**Division/Agency:** Australian Maritime Safety Authority

**Topic:** National Search and Rescue Manual

**Hansard Page:** 100 (24/02/09)

**Senator O'Brien asked:**

**Senator O'BRIEN**—What I am asking is: does AusSAR accept that there, perhaps, needs to be some training of officers to attune them to the possibility that they need to take over in circumstances where there is not a direct request but the circumstances are unfolding to them which indicate that perhaps there should be?

**Mr Young**—Yes, Senator, and we have reviewed our training processes and, in fact, working with the National Search and Rescue Council, reviewed the manual to ensure that it is clear and it provides good, clear guidance for both ends of such a conversation.

**Senator O'BRIEN**—You are reviewing it or you have?

**Mr Young**—Have reviewed it, Senator.

**Senator O'BRIEN**—Okay. Could you supply to the committee, on notice, those passages that have been changed or added to the procedures manual, and in any other form, which are relevant to this passage of the coroner's finding?

**Mr Young**—Certainly, Senator.

**Senator O'BRIEN**—Thank you.

**Answer:**

The table below includes the main changes to the National Search and Rescue Manual:

**State and Territory Governments**

**1.1.15** Police are the SAR Authorities in each State and Territory. The Australian Federal Police is the SAR Authority for the Australian Capital Territory, the Jervis Bay Territory and other populated Commonwealth territories.

State and Territory Police Services are responsible for:

- a. coordinating SAR in respect of:
  - i. persons on land;
  - ii. persons and vessels on inland waterways and in waters within the limits of the ports of the relevant State or Territory;
  - iii. fishing vessels, pleasure craft and commercial and charter vessels that fall under the State/Territories jurisdiction; within port limits or at sea and
  - iv. civil aircraft not included on the CASA and Recreational Aviation Australia (RA-Aus) registers including ultra lights, para-gliders and gyrocopters; and
- b. coordinating land searches for missing registered civil aircraft in support of RCC Australia.

**1.2 SAR Coordination**

**Overview**

**1.2.1** There are two levels of SAR response in Australia:

- a. the Commonwealth level through AMSA (RCC Australia) and the ADF; and
- b. the State/Territory level through the Police.

**1.2.2** Volunteer organisations work in close liaison with State and Territory Police and

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the Police retain overall coordination of those organisations within their jurisdiction.

- 1.2.3** It is common for a number of SAR Authorities to contribute to one SAR operation. Therefore it is vital that one SAR Authority is responsible for the overall coordination of the SAR operation and the other Authorities involved will cooperate to produce the best response possible within available resources.

**Determination of SAR Authority responsible for Overall Coordination**

- 1.2.4** The fundamental aim of a SAR system is to provide assistance to persons in distress. To achieve this aim the SAR system has to locate, support and rescue persons in distress in the shortest possible time. The success of the SAR response therefore depends on the speed with which the SAR situation is evaluated and the SAR operation is planned and carried out.

- 1.2.5** To ensure the SAR response is successful there are certain principles of SAR coordination that must be observed

**1.2.6 Initial Response**

The first SAR Authority to become aware of a SAR incident is obliged to respond until overall coordination can be transferred to the SAR authority best placed to coordinate.

**1.2.7 SAR Authority Best Placed to Coordinate**

**Normally**, the SAR Authority best placed to be the Overall Coordinator of a SAR incident will be the SAR Authority identified in **Appendix B** as responsible for the target type.

*NOTE:*

*Appendix B identifies the responsibilities and functions to a SAR Authority based on the type of target that requires assistance from the SAR service and then additionally, in some circumstances, by the location of the SAR incident.*

*Appendix B also identifies the type of support the various Authorities are expected to provide in a SAR operation.*

**However** in certain circumstances, when it becomes apparent, following consultation between the Authorities involved in the incident, that a SAR authority other than the one specified in Appendix B is more favourably placed to assume responsibility, then by **mutual agreement** the best placed SAR Authority will assume or maintain overall coordination responsibility.

The circumstances may include better communications, closer proximity to the area of search, better access to sources of intelligence, expertise in specialised areas or more readily available facilities.

For example, RCC Australia is normally best placed to coordinate wide area air searches and coordinate search and rescue operations at sea at long range. These operations may also involve requests for ADF assistance. Police forces are normally best placed to coordinate local ground searches or inshore boat searches

- 1.2.8** A SAR Authority may not be better placed if it is already engaged in responding to another SAR incident/s or it does not have sufficient resources to be able to coordinate effectively.

- 1.2.9** The SAR authority with overall coordination may request assistance from another SAR authority. In such circumstances the Overall Coordinator may delegate to another SAR Authority responsibility for a specific part of the SAR operation.

**Distress Beacons**

**1.2.21** As the COSPAS-SARSAT Mission Control Centre for Australia, RCC Australia will normally receive distress beacon alerts first. RCC Australia will advise other relevant SAR Authorities of an alert as soon as practicable because they may be:

- a. coordinating a response already and have more information;
- b. the responsible authority in accordance with Appendix B; or
- c. in a position to assist in a SAR response.

**1.2.22** In accordance with the principles of SAR coordination set out in paragraph 1.2.4 (above), RCC Australia will initiate a SAR response and retain coordination responsibilities until intelligence has established the location of the distress beacon, the nature of distress and agreement has been reached on the best placed SAR Authority to assume overall coordination.

**1.2.23** Distress beacon alerts will be prosecuted until the beacon is deactivated to prevent interference with other incidents on the distress frequency.

**Transfer of Coordination**

**Reasons for Transfer of Coordination**

**1.2.24** The SAR authority with overall coordination should evaluate all available information and intelligence and make an initial assessment of the probable search area and assets required. If the required response is assessed as being beyond the capacity of the authority then that authority should request assistance at an early stage. Delaying requests for assistance, may lead to reduced chances of survival and/or significant increase in the size of the search area.

**Transferring Overall Coordination**

**1.2.26** Any transfer of responsibility of overall coordination for a SAR operation between SAR Authorities will be by mutual agreement. Following a transfer of overall coordination, the initial authority will continue to provide support as it is able within its capabilities.

**1.2.27** A transfer of responsibility between SAR authorities may be effected either by the initiating SAR authority inviting another SAR authority to take over or by another SAR authority offering to take over. In either case, the following procedure shall apply:

- a. consultation shall take place between the SMCs of both SAR authorities concerned;
- b. full details of all known information relating to the incident and actions taken or contemplated by the initiating centre shall be passed. If verbally, confirmation will be sent in a message;
- c. if overall coordination cannot be accepted immediately, the initiating SAR authority shall retain responsibility until a mutually agreed time of transfer;
- d. the formal handover/take-over shall be recorded in writing by both SMCs using the Transfer of SAR Coordination form (Appendix D), and
- e. any other assets or authorities concerned shall be advised of the takeover.

**Transfer of Coordination after Suspension of SAR Action**

**1.2.34** When a SAR action is suspended, the authority with overall coordination at the time shall inform all authorities, units and facilities that have been activated and/or alerted.

**1.2.35** If at the time of suspension the search is under the overall coordination of the Authority responsible for the target type, as identified in Appendix B, overall coordination shall not be transferred to another SAR authority. Rather, the Police

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and other agencies involved in the SAR operation, should be informed that the search has been suspended pending the availability of further intelligence. The Police may then instigate further Police (non SAR) actions as appropriate.

**Appendix B: Search and Rescue Responsibilities and Functions**

The title was amended from *Overall Coordinator* as this is covered in paragraphs 1.2.4 to 1.2.9 of the Manual, as described above. The Note T.1 at the end of the Appendix referred to overall coordination responsibility may, if necessary, be transferred to or from Commonwealth and State/Territory authorities, by agreement, during the conduct of a search and rescue operation. This also is covered in the body of the Manual and is not relevant to the intended guidance provided by Appendix B as to general search and rescue responsibilities and functions.

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**Question No.** AMSA 04

**Division/Agency:** Australian Maritime Safety Authority

**Topic:** Distress Beacons

**Hansard Pages:** Written Question

**Senator Williams asked:**

I refer to the changes recently initiated to emergency positioning indicating radio Beacons - the replacement of rescue beacons. As of February 1<sup>st</sup> 2009, analogue 121.5 MHZ beacons can no longer be detected by satellite. Simply a switch is being made from analogue to digital.

Is this correct? *“From 1 February 2009, 121.5 MHz distress beacons are no longer detected by the Cospas-Sarsat satellite system. AMSA has advised boat users not to go beyond 2 nautical miles from shore without a 406MHz distress beacon or they may not be able to locate you if you find yourself in a distress situation”.*

**Answer:**

No. The full quotation from AMSA’s Internet site is: *“From 1 February 2009, 121.5 MHz distress beacons are no longer detected by the Cospas-Sarsat satellite system. The 121.5 MHz signal will only be detected by chance over flight by aircraft that listen on this frequency. There is no guarantee that the signal will be detected – and it may never be heard. Do not risk your life on a 121.5 MHz beacon. AMSA advises boat users not to go beyond 2 nautical miles from shore without a 406 MHz distress beacon or we may not be able to locate you if you find yourself in a distress situation. Please ensure you register your 406 MHz distress beacon with AMSA”.*

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**Question No.** AMSA 05

**Division/Agency:** Australian Maritime Safety Authority

**Topic:** Distress Beacons

**Hansard Pages:** Written Question

**Senator Williams asked:**

I understand that the replacement beacons must be 406 MHz and these should be registered with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority. Can you provide figures as to how many replacements have been registered to date?

**Answer:**

AMSA advises there were 78,500 registered 406 MHz beacons at the end of January 2009. As 121.5 MHz beacons were not registrable, it is not possible to tell how many of the registered 406 MHz beacons are replacements for 121.5 MHz beacons.



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**Question No.** AMSA 06

**Division/Agency:** Australian Maritime Safety Authority

**Topic:** Distress Beacons

**Hansard Pages:** Written Question

**Senator Williams asked:**

Can you estimate how many beacons in Australia still need to be replaced?

**Answer:**

While there are no accurate records of the total number of 121.5 MHz beacons in Australia, it is estimated there were between 150,000 to 180,000.

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**Question No.** AMSA 07

**Division/Agency:** Australian Maritime Safety Authority

**Topic:** Distress Beacons

**Hansard Pages:** Written Question

**Senator Williams asked:**

Reports indicate that it is almost impossible to purchase one of the replacement digital beacons in the country because suppliers have underestimated demand. Is AMSA aware there is a six to eight week wait for the new beacons?

**Answer:**

AMSA is aware of a temporary shortage because of the last-minute rush by consumers to purchase a 406 MHz beacon just before 1 February 2009.

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**Question No.** AMSA 08

**Division/Agency:** Australian Maritime Safety Authority

**Topic:** Distress Beacons

**Hansard Pages:** Written Question

**Senator Williams asked:**

Is AMSA aware that the new beacons are being retailed at 4 times the cost of the old 121.5MHz beacons?

**Answer:**

AMSA is aware that 406 MHz beacons are detected by the satellite system more quickly (within minutes) and more accurately (within five kilometres) allowing a faster and better targeted search and rescue response so improving survivability of people in distress and less risk to emergency response personnel.

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**Question No.** AMSA 09

**Division/Agency:** Australian Maritime Safety Authority

**Topic:** Distress Beacons

**Hansard Pages:** Written Question

**Senator Williams asked:**

I note that the original announcement of the switch off was made in 2000 – what, if any, measures were taken to ensure there would be adequate supply?

**Answer:**

Commercial manufacturers and distributors are responsible for supplying 406 MHz beacons. AMSA's public awareness campaign warned consumers to purchase 406 MHz beacons well before 1 February 2009. Some States regulated mandatory carriage requirements for 406 MHz beacons well before 1 February 2009, which encouraged consumers to make an earlier purchase.

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**Question No.** AMSA 10

**Division/Agency:** Australian Maritime Safety Authority

**Topic:** Distress Beacons

**Hansard Pages:** Written Question

**Senator Williams asked:**

Are there any interim measures in place for the professional fishermen, farmers, bushwalkers, charters and recreational fishermen who are now unable to obtain the new technology and are therefore without potentially life saving equipment?

**Answer:**

Commercial and private sector bodies and state government agencies offer 406 MHz beacons for hire to mariners that are required by state government laws to carry them. Optional users, such as farmers and bushwalkers, also have available alternative tracking and alerting systems other than 406 MHz beacons.

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**Question No.** AMSA 11

**Division/Agency:** Australian Maritime Safety Authority

**Topic:** Distress Beacons

**Hansard Pages:** Written Question

**Senator Williams asked:**

The distress beacons are compulsory on all vessels around 2 nautical miles from shore (slight differences between states). Are there any arrangements in place to cope with the inadvertent breaches?

**Answer:**

This is a matter for state and territory governments, which generally regulated the mandatory carriage of a 406MHz beacon by a vessel operating more than two nautical miles from land.

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**Question No.** AMSA 12

**Division/Agency:** Australian Maritime Safety Authority

**Topic:** Distress Beacons

**Hansard Pages:** Written Question

**Senator Williams asked:**

What means were taken to communicate the February 1<sup>st</sup> switch off date to those parties affected, particularly professional fisherman associations and amateur fishermen?

**Answer:**

For the past eight years, AMSA joined with other agencies in an extensive national public awareness campaign, including:

- Regular advertising and editorial material in specialist magazines with broad circulation to the shipping and fishing industry and recreational boating and land-based vehicle interests.
- Distribution of many thousands of copies of brochures, posters and promotional items at Australia's main boat, air and outdoor recreation shows.
- Production of over 500,000 posters, brochures and flyers for state/territory agencies and the Boating Industry Association and dissemination to beacon manufacturers and distributors for point-of-sale distribution.
- Direct mail campaigns to yacht clubs, boating organisations, bushwalking groups, four wheel drive clubs and aviation companies.
- Several direct mail-outs by state and territory maritime agencies to their 700,000 registered vessel owners.
- Production of segments in nationally- syndicated outdoor and fishing television programs and community service television and radio advertisements.
- A multi-lingual publicity campaign, with assistance from a specialised ethnic communications company, including translation of brochures and beacon registration forms into five languages (Chinese, Vietnamese, Arabic, Italian and Greek).
- A special Internet site (<http://beacons.amsa.gov.au/>) providing distress beacon information. State and territory agencies have similar advice on their Internet sites.

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**Question No.** AMSA 13

**Division/Agency:** Australian Maritime Safety Authority

**Topic:** Distress Beacons

**Hansard Pages:** Written Question

**Senator Williams asked:**

What did the advertising and communications campaign involve?

**Answer:**

For the past eight years, AMSA joined with other agencies in an extensive national public awareness campaign, including:

- Regular advertising and editorial material in specialist magazines with broad circulation to the shipping and fishing industry and recreational boating and land-based vehicle interests.
- Distribution of many thousands of copies of brochures, posters and promotional items at Australia's main boat, air and outdoor recreation shows.
- Production of over 500,000 posters, brochures and flyers for state/territory agencies and the Boating Industry Association and dissemination to beacon manufacturers and distributors for point-of-sale distribution.
- Direct mail campaigns to yacht clubs, boating organisations, bushwalking groups, four wheel drive clubs and aviation companies.
- Several direct mail-outs by state and territory maritime agencies to their 700,000 registered vessel owners.
- Production of segments in nationally-syndicated outdoor and fishing television programs and community service television and radio advertisements.
- A multi-lingual publicity campaign, with assistance from a specialised ethnic communications company, including translation of brochures and beacon registration forms into five languages (Chinese, Vietnamese, Arabic, Italian and Greek).
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**Question No.** AMSA 14

**Division/Agency:** Australian Maritime Safety Authority

**Topic:** Distress Beacons

**Hansard Pages:** Written Question

**Senator Williams asked:**

When did the advertising campaign commence?

**Answer:**

2001.

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**Question No.** AMSA 15

**Division/Agency:** Australian Maritime Safety Authority

**Topic:** Distress Beacons

**Hansard Pages:** Written Question

**Senator Williams asked:**

How much was spent on ensuring that all industry participants were aware of the switch over?

**Answer:**

It is not possible to quantify the total cost over the past eight years of the extensive public awareness campaign conducted by AMSA and state and territory agencies in direct expenditure and "in kind" contributions of staff time and resources. The campaign also involved considerable cooperation and input from the Civil Aviation Safety Authority, Australian Communications and Media Authority, state and territory police, distress beacon retailers and other associated stakeholders.

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**Question No. AMSA 16**

**Division/Agency:** Australian Maritime Safety Authority

**Topic:** Reviews

**Hansard Pages:** Written Question

**Senator McGauran asked:**

1. How many Reviews are currently being undertaken in the portfolio/agency or affecting the portfolio agency?
2. When will each of these reviews be concluded?
3. Which Reviews have been completed since Supplementary Budget Estimates 2008?
4. When will the Government be responding to the respective reviews that have been completed?
5. What is the total number of Reviews both completed and ongoing in the portfolio/agency or affecting the portfolio agency since November 2007?
6. What is the estimated cost of these Reviews?
7. What further reviews are planned for 2009?

**Answer:**

1. Nil.
2. Not Applicable.
3. The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Transport Regional Development and Local Government completed a review of coastal shipping policy and regulation and submitted its report *Rebuilding Australia's Coastal Shipping Industry* on 20 October 2008.

The expert panel report, *Delivery of Coastal Pilotage Services in the Great Barrier Reef and Torres Strait*, was completed in October 2008.

4. The Minister has undertaken to provide a government response to each of the Parliamentary Committee's recommendations in 2009.

The Minister released the report on delivery of coastal pilotage services and AMSA's response to its recommendations in December 2008.

5. 2.
6. The cost of the coastal shipping review process was not borne by AMSA.  
The cost to AMSA of the coastal pilotage services review is estimated to be \$23,000.
8. None.

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**Question No.:** AMSA 17

**Division/Agency:** Australian Maritime Safety Authority

**Topic:** Consultancies

**Hansard Pages:** Written Question

**Senator McGauran asked:**

1. How many consultancies have been undertaken since November 2007?
2. Please identify the name of the consultant, the subject matter of the consultancy, the duration and cost of the consultancy, and the method of procurement (ie open tender, direct source, etc)
3. Please also include total value for all consultancies.
4. Do you stand by Government Tenders website ([www.tenders.gov.au](http://www.tenders.gov.au)) and what changes or corrections have been made to it since 18 February 2009? Are you up to date with reporting requirements?
5. How many consultancies are planned/budgeted for this calendar year?
6. Have these been published in your Annual Procurement Plan (APP) on the AusTender website and if not why not?
7. In each case please identify the subject matter, duration, cost and method procurement as above, and the name of the consultant if known.

**Answer:**

- 1 – 7 Twelve consultancies have been entered into by AMSA at a total cost of \$78,000. Each consultancy is below the APP reporting threshold of \$400,000.