

**Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Budget Estimates May 2006

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** F&F 01

**Division/Agency:** Fisheries and Forestry

**Topic:** Northern Illegal Foreign Fishing – AFMA funding

**Hansard Page:** 48-49 (25/05/06)

**Senator O'Brien asked:**

Again, you have increased vessel disposal over the period of \$25.94 million. Then you have the vessel destruction number announced on 31 January 2005 and a vessel destruction increase announced on 11 October 2005. If I add those three numbers together, will I get a total number or will I have to find another number as well?

**Mr Hurry**—If it helps, Senator, it might be easier if we pulled these together as a composite table for you, if you like, and take it on notice and provide the figures that way.

**Answer:**

Table enclosed.

[F&F 01 attachment]

**Question:** F&F 02

**Division/Agency:** Fisheries and Forestry

**Topic:** Recreational Fishing Community Grants program-applications

**Hansard Page:** 50 (25/05/06)

**Senator O'Brien asked:**

I note from the web site that, of 166 applications received in round 1, 71 were successful. I understand that a panel assessed the applications and made recommendations to the minister. Can you tell me whether any projects were recommended by the panel and not approved by the minister?

**Answer:**

Under Round 1, the Assessment Panel recommended 71 projects to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry approved all of the 71 recommended projects.

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**Question:** F&F 03

**Division/Agency:** Fisheries and Forestry

**Topic:** Recreational Fishing Community Grants program-applications

**Hansard Page:** 50 (25/05/06)

**Senator O'Brien asked:**

Could you tell me whether the minister approved any projects against recommendations of the panel? If so, can you tell me which projects?

**Answer:**

Refer to question on notice F&F 02

**Question:** F&F 04

**Division/Agency:** Fisheries and Forestry

**Topic:** Contracts for Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna Scientific Research Program

**Hansard Page:** 51 (25/05/06)

**Senator O'Brien asked:**

In last year's budget the government announced a \$3 million program to support the scientific research program of the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna. Who is managing the program and who is doing the work?

**Answer:**

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (the Department) manages the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT) Scientific Research Program (SRP) SRP of \$1M a year for 3 years (ending fiscal year 2007-08).

The Bureau of Rural Sciences (BRS) has been commissioned to provide scientific advice to support development of Australian policies on Southern Bluefin Tuna

The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, (CSIRO) is undertaking two scientific projects on the Department's behalf, namely the '*Aerial Survey of the Great Australian Bight*' and the '*Indonesian Catch Monitoring programme.*'

The Aerial Survey project uses scientific and commercial aerial spotting operations to continue to develop a fishery-independent index of relative abundance of juvenile

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Southern Bluefin Tuna (SBT) in the Great Australian Bight. This information is collected to be used as an indicator for determining trends in the recruitment of the species.

The Indonesian Catch Monitoring project monitors the Indonesian longline fishery operating out of Benoa (Bali) to determine the species composition of landings. This project is particularly important given Indonesia's proximity to the only known SBT spawning ground in the World.

The Department makes an annual contribution to a tagging program managed by the CCSBT, whereby the Commission coordinates a range of tagging activities with the cooperation of all CCSBT member countries. This work includes longline tagging in the Indian Ocean and east coast of Australia, an extensive surface fishery tagging program off the southern coast of Australia, a longline tagging program in New Zealand and a large scale spatial dynamics archival tagging program conducted by Australia across the SBT range.

The Department has also engaged scientific and market experts to undertake independent reviews of the Japanese SBT market operation and the Australian SBT farming operations.

**Question:** F&F 05

**Division/Agency:** Fisheries and Forestry

**Topic:** Contracts for Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna Scientific Research Program

**Hansard Page:** 51 (25/05/06)

**Senator O'Brien asked:**

Thank you. Where is the program up to?

**Answer:**

The Scientific Research Program (SRP) is fulfilling its main objective, which was to improve the quality of the data used for the stock assessment and to contribute to the development of reliable indices to monitor future trends in Southern Bluefin Tuna (SBT) stock size. The continuation of the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT) Scientific Research Program supports the Australian Government's commitment to ecologically sustainable development of the SBT fishery.

The projects which have been funded this year include the Aerial Survey, Indonesian SBT Catch Monitoring, contributions to the CCSBT tagging program and the Independent Reviews of the Japanese SBT market and the Australian SBT farming operation.

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**Question:** F&F 06

**Division/Agency:** Fisheries and Forestry

**Topic:** Contracts for Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin  
Tuna Scientific Research Program

**Hansard Page:** 51 (25/05/06)

**Senator O'Brien asked:**

Have any findings or results been released as yet?

**Answer:**

Results from this year's Aerial Survey, Indonesian Southern Bluefin Tuna Catch Monitoring projects and the Independent Review will be available once they have been considered by the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna. Reports are generally available following consideration by the Commission at its annual meeting (October 2006).

These 3 years are a roll-on of previous work that we have done on science in the commission. Results from previous years of the SRP have been used to construct Australia's scientific papers and assist with our engagement in the CCSBT scientific committee meetings. Previous results of the Aerial Survey, Indonesian SBT Catch Monitoring and tagging programs have been disseminated through the SBT Management Advisory Committee and are publicly available.

**Question:** F&F 07

**Division/Agency:** Fisheries and Forestry

**Topic:** Contracts for Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin  
Tuna Scientific Research Program

**Hansard Page:** 51 (25/05/06)

**Senator O'Brien asked:**

How much was spent in 2005-06?

**Answer:**

The full \$1M for 2005-06 will be expended.

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**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** F&F 08

**Division/Agency:** Fisheries and Forestry

**Topic:** Northern Illegal Foreign Fishing – use of rapid response helicopters

**Hansard Page:** 54 (25/05/06)

**Senator O'Brien asked:**

It is an over land thing rather than an over water thing? You are not going to winch people down to boats in the water?

**Answer:**

The rapid response helicopter facility will provide Customs, the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service (AQIS) and other agencies with the ability to respond to landings by foreign vessels. There is no intention to winch people down to boats in the water.

**Question:** F&F 09

**Division/Agency:** Fisheries and Forestry

**Topic:** Dismissal of charges relating to illegal fishing

**Hansard Page:** 55 (25/05/06)

**Senator O'Brien asked:**

What sorts of grounds do people get off on – if you apprehend them out at sea, you cannot prove they were in the waters or something?

**Senator Abetz:** There is a celebrated West Australian case that I do not think anybody really knows, other than the jury, as to why they got off.

**Mr McLoughlin:** That was an Antarctic toothfish pirate –

**Senator Abetz:** Yes.

**Senator O'Brien:** Apprehended near South Africa as I recall it.

**Senator Abetz:** Yes. There were two trials in relation to that.

**Mr McLoughlin:** The only case I can recall, although I am happy to check for you, is where a magistrate in a Darwin court dismissed the charges against an Indonesian crew. The Indonesian crew that were apprehended came from a particular ethnic group within Indonesia, essentially Indonesian gypsy marine people who spoke their own dialect. There was cause for concern that they may not have understood the Bahasa Indonesian cards that were provided as they were apprehended. There was enough doubt, in the absence of absolute proof, that they could speak Bahasa Indonesian as opposed to their own language. The magistrate declined to accept the charges and they were let off.

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**Answer:**

In some instances charges are withdrawn when the matter is not in the public interest, such as the case referred to above, or where insufficient evidence is available to sustain a successful prosecution.

**Question:** F&F 10

**Division/Agency:** Fisheries and Forestry

**Topic:** Northern Illegal Foreign Fishing – public information campaign for foreign fishers

**Hansard Page:** 56-57 (25/05/06)

**Senator O'Brien asked:**

Do you know what medium will be used, given that there are significant illiteracy problems with some of the communities?

**Answer:**

Planning for the public information campaign is underway by the Australian Government, working in consultation with the Indonesian Government and with the assistance of an Indonesian public relations company to ensure the messages and modes of delivery are appropriate to the target audiences, including local fishing communities. While some details of the campaign are yet to be finalised, it is expected that the campaign will utilise a wide range of media and other means to convey its messages.

**Question:** F&F 11

**Division/Agency:** Fisheries and Forestry

**Topic:** Northern Illegal Foreign Fishing – sightings

**Hansard Page:** 59 (25/05/06)

**Senator O'Brien asked:**

Do we know how many sightings there were within the three- to 12-mile zone last year? And within the three-mile zone? As a proportion, do we have any idea how many get that close and how many are merely in the EEZ?

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**Answer:**

In 2005, Coastwatch made 117 reports of sightings of illegal foreign fishing vessels (IFFVs) between three and 12 nautical miles from the Australian coastline. There were 92 sightings of IFFVs from the Australian coastline up to and including the three nautical mile zone. These numbers may include multiple sightings of the same vessel by different flights. Coastwatch are currently working with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) to come up with a proportional figure of those sightings of IFFVs within the three to 12-mile zone and those within the Economic Exclusion Zone (EEZ). However at this point in time they cannot give an accurate figure due to uncertainties involved with multiple sightings.

**Question:** F&F 12

**Division/Agency:** Fisheries and Forestry

**Topic:** Northern Illegal Foreign Fishing – apprehensions

**Hansard Page:** 59 (25/05/06)

**Senator O'Brien asked:**

Where there are apprehensions, I take it it is known at which point they are apprehended, and we would know now how many would be apprehended in those zones? Could we get those figures on notice? Within three miles, three to 12 miles and outside that. Could we get the same figures for administrative seizure?

**Answer:**

From 1 January 2005 to 31 December 2005, 281 vessels were apprehended (one vessel apprehended in the southern ocean) and 327 legislative forfeitures were conducted. The table below provides details of the locations of where these occurred.

Locations of apprehensions and legislative forfeitures for 2005.

<b>Apprehension Point</b>	<b>Apprehensions</b>	<b>Legislative Forfeitures</b>
<b>Within 3 miles</b>	34*	10
<b>3-12 miles</b>	31	14
<b>Outside 12 miles</b>	216	303
<b>Total</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>327</b>

\*Twelve of the 34 boats were apprehended within 3m of islands such as Ashmore, Cartier, Scott and Browse off north-west Australia and islands in the Torres Strait and Great Barrier Reef.

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**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** F&F 13

**Division/Agency:** Fisheries and Forestry

**Topic:** Western Australian Department of Fisheries report on fish stocks

**Hansard Page:** 61 (25/05/06)

**Mr McLoughlin provided:**

I have a copy of that report with me and I am happy to organise a copy of the relevant pages for you today, Senator, if you would like to take them with you.

**Answer:**

The relevant pages were provided to Senator Webber on 25 May 2006. A copy of the Northern Shark Fisheries Status Report is attached for the consideration of the full Committee.

**[F&F 13 attachment]**

**Question:** F&F 14

**Division/Agency:** Fisheries and Forestry

**Topic:** Northern Illegal Foreign Fishing – cost of detaining vessels

**Hansard Page:** 61 (25/05/06)

**Senator Webber asked:**

Can you outline what proportion of the total expenditure relates to the costs incurred after illegal fishing vessels are detained, as compared with the amount expended on apprehending the vessels at sea?

**Answer:**

For 2006-07 the total Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) budget for northern illegal foreign fishing is \$29,187,143.

The AFMA expenditure relating to costs incurred apprehending illegal fishing vessels is \$7.5m or 26%, which includes the costs of AFMA's participation in at-sea programs.

The AFMA expenditure relating to costs incurred after illegal fishing vessels are detained is \$21.6m or 74%. This includes costs related to caretaking, disposal and destruction of vessels, Horn Island transitory facility and the preparation of briefs for prosecutions.



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**Question:** F&F 15

**Division/Agency:** Fisheries and Forestry

**Topic:** Local work creation in Indonesia to deter illegal foreign fishing

**Hansard Page:** 62 (25/05/06)

**Senator Webber asked:**

Indeed. Has the department given any consideration to or taken any steps towards working with other agencies, like AusAID, to address the issues of local work creation in Indonesia, to encourage people to stay at home?

**Senator Abetz**—That is part of the package as well—through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, is it?

**Mr Hurry**—AusAID.

**Senator Abetz**—Do you have the details?

**Mr Hurry**—I do not have the figures on that, Senator Webber. Can I take that on notice? We started work some years ago on a project in Roti, I think it was, that was funded through DEH, and we worked with AusAID to try to build some alternative livelihood projects. They will work in some areas of Indonesia. But in others, where this is a well-organised shark finning activity, you cannot build the base of income from these types of projects to make people stay away from illegal fishing. You have quite a resource of unemployed labour who are quite happy to do some trips on boats into the Australian zone. It is one of the planks of this approach that will end up being a useful alternative source of income for Indonesian fishermen, but it is not the answer in itself.

**Answer:**

Australia and Indonesia have an ongoing program of cooperation to combat illegal foreign fishing. This cooperation has involved AusAID and other agencies, and has included work on alternative livelihoods for Indonesian fishers and efforts to deter them from participating in illegal fishing activities.

In July 2005, AusAID approved an expansion to the alternative livelihood project managed by the Department of the Environment and Heritage in the eastern Indonesian island of Roti. This project began in 2001-02 and aims to develop aquaculture as an alternative income generating livelihood for traditional Indonesian fishers.

At the 8th Australia-Indonesia Ministerial Forum on 29 June 2006, Ministers noted work underway to further expand alternative livelihood projects for Indonesian fishing communities.

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**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** F&F 16

**Division/Agency:** Fisheries and Forestry

**Topic:** Northern Illegal Foreign Fishing – use of *Oceanic Viking* in northern waters

**Hansard Page:** 63 (25/05/06)

**Senator Webber asked:**

Can you tell me—feel free to take it on notice, because you will have to check with Customs—how much additional cost that was for the work?

**Answer:**

The northern patrols by *Oceanic Viking* were cost neutral to Customs and were met from within the existing budget.

**Question:** F&F 17

**Division/Agency:** Fisheries and Forestry Division

**Topic:** Fisheries Structural Adjustment Port Visits

**Hansard Page:** 64 (25/05/06)

**Senator O'Brien asked:**

**Mr Talbot**—There were 14 port visits. To decide on the number of port visits, we took advice from industry associations as to which ports we should visit. They recommended that we reduce the number to those specific ports that are stated in the tender document.

**Senator O'BRIEN**—Which ones missed out?

**Senator Abetz**—It depends on how many ports there are around the country.

**Senator O'BRIEN**—From the original list.

**Mr Talbot**—I would have to take that on notice. One of the ports that missed out in the end was Sydney, for example. The industry preferred to have the sessions in other places. I do know that one of the other ones was Fremantle. You are testing my memory here. There was also one in Tasmania that industry decided on—St Helens.

**Answer:**

The following ports, which were on the original list, were later removed after consultation with peak fishing industry organisations: Sydney, Fremantle, Mount Gambier and St Helens.

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**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** F&F 18

**Division/Agency:** Fisheries and Forestry

**Topic:** Northern Illegal Foreign Fishing – meeting of joint fisheries surveillance forum

**Hansard Page:** 65 (25/05/06)

**Senator Webber asked:**

During the last hearings we were advised that the head of Coastwatch, Rear Admiral Crane, was planning a meeting with his counterpart in Indonesia to map out a way for the two surveillance agencies to cooperate. Is anyone aware whether that meeting took place and, if so, what was the outcome?

**Answer:**

A bilateral fisheries meeting between Australia and Indonesia was held in Jakarta in August 2005. At that meeting it was agreed that officials from relevant agencies would meet to further develop initiatives for enhancing cooperation about fisheries surveillance and response in the respective Economic Exclusion Zones. A number of invitations have been made to Indonesian officials to meet with Rear Admiral Crane but that has not yet occurred. The matter will be followed up at the next meeting of the Australia-Indonesia Working Group on Marine Affairs and Fisheries.

**Question:** F&F 19

**Division/Agency:** Fisheries and Forestry

**Topic:** Northern Illegal Foreign Fishing – meeting of joint fisheries surveillance forum

**Hansard Page:** 66 (25/05/06)

**Senator Webber asked:**

At the same time there was reference to discussions between Mr Downer, then Minister Macdonald and the Indonesian ministers, just before Christmas, where it was agreed that ways of cooperating on enforcement measures should be investigated. Where is the enforcement cooperation between the two countries up to, or do you want to take that on notice, too?

**Answer:**

Refer to F&F 18 and 21.

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**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** F&F 20

**Division/Agency:** Fisheries and Forestry Division

**Topic:** Joint Study on Illegal Foreign Fishing

**Hansard Page:** 66 (25/05/06)

**Senator Webber asked:**

Has the joint Indonesian-Australian study into illegal foreign fishing in our region commenced?

**Mr Hurry**—As far as I understand, Senator, it has. I would have to take that on notice and come back to you.

**Answer:**

Following agreement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon Alexander Downer MP and Indonesian Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda on 10 December 2005, cooperation by Australia and Indonesia on a joint study on illegal fishing in South-East Asia is ongoing.

At the 8<sup>th</sup> Australia-Indonesia Ministerial Forum, held in Bali on 29 June 2005, Australian and Indonesian Ministers reiterated their commitment to the joint study.

**Question:** F&F 21

**Division/Agency:** Fisheries and Forestry

**Topic:** Northern Illegal Foreign Fishing – meeting of joint fisheries surveillance forum

**Hansard Page:** 66 (25/05/06)

**Senator Webber asked:**

Perhaps you could also take on notice who is doing the work on it and what the time line for the project is.

**Answer:**

Customs officials will pursue progress on this issue at the next meeting of the Australia-Indonesia Working Group on Marine Affairs and Fisheries. This meeting is expected to be held in Indonesia in mid 2006.

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**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** F&F 22

**Division/Agency:** Fisheries and Forestry

**Topic:** Eden Region Adjustment Package (ERAP)

**Hansard Page:** 66 (25/05/06)

**Senator Webber asked:**

I presume that work will be in the form of a report. Will that be able to be made available to the committee when it is completed?

**Mr Hurry**—Can we consider that and come back to you, Senator? Can we take that on notice?

**Senator WEBBER**—Yes, you certainly can take it on notice. Perhaps you could also take on notice the value of the consultancy.

**Mr Hurry**—If you bear with me until we get to forestry, I can probably find that in my notes and give you the details of it. I am happy to do that.

**Answer:**

The report, when finalised, can be made **available** to the committee.

The consultancy was not completed at the time the answer to this question was prepared but will cost no more than \$31,625 (including GST).

**[F&F 22 attachment – not included. Available from the committee secretariat on request]**

**Question:** F&F 23

**Division/Agency:** Fisheries and Forestry

**Topic:** Eden Region Adjustment Package (ERAP)

**Hansard Page:** 67 (25/05/06)

**Senator Webber asked:**

If we can provide them with a continental breakfast when they book their accommodation. Can you tell me when that money was paid to the company?

**Mr Hurry**—I would have to take that on notice, Senator. I am not sure what the time of finalisation of the grants was, but I am happy to take that on notice and provide you with the information.

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**Answer:**

Five separate payments were made: \$17,127 was paid in May 2001; \$22,500 in November 2002; \$181,468 in June 2003; \$184,405 in May 2004 and \$46,000 in June 2004.

**Question:** F&F 24

**Division/Agency:** Fisheries and Forestry

**Topic:** Eden Region Adjustment Package (ERAP)

**Hansard Page:** 67 (25/05/06)

**Senator Webber asked:**

Okay. Within that program were there milestones that had to be met and periodic inspections undertaken?

**Mr Hurry**—It may be in my notes on forests, Senator Webber. I am happy to have a look then.

**Senator WEBBER**—You can take it on notice, and perhaps take on notice whether those milestones were met.

**Mr Hurry**—Okay.

**Senator WEBBER**—And when the inspections took place and what flowed from them.

**Mr Hurry**—Yes.

**Answer:**

Yes, there were three main milestones and a final ‘completion’ milestone, as detailed below. Due to the reimbursement nature of the ERAP grant funding there was no specific requirement for inspections to be carried out, companies were required to provide invoices and receipts proving that they had completed the appropriate milestone and spent the required funds before they were paid the milestone grant.

Original Target Date	Milestones
31 March 2001	Completion of work on the verandah
30 June 2001	Completion of the building work on the balconies.
31 August 2001	Completion of the building work on the new suites
30 Nov 2001	Completion of all stages of the building work

Due to delays caused by changes to State Government planning policy the then Minister (Minister Macdonald) approved a time extension for the project funds until 30 June 2004.

Some, but not all, projects have been visited, over time. The Seahorse Inn was inspected on 14 April 2006 (the day after it opened for business following all the renovation work). The inspection found all the milestone work had been completed and appeared to be completed to a high standard.

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**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** F&F 25

**Division/Agency:** Fisheries and Forestry

**Topic:** Decline in shark numbers

**Hansard Page:** 68 (25/05/06)

**Senator Siewert asked:**

I asked a question last estimates of Environment about sharks and I am going to be asking some more when I go back. In answer to one of my questions, where I asked, 'Is there concern about the apparent decline in shark numbers?' the department said yes. Then when I asked, 'Has the National Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks been reviewed,' they said no. I am wondering: are you aware of any moves to review that, or do you think it is a good idea that that be reviewed?

**Answer:**

There is an intent by the Natural Resource Management Marine and Coastal Committee to review the *National Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks* every four years.

Yes, I think it is a good idea to review the *National Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks* and as it was released in 2004, I expect it will be reviewed in 2008 or soon thereafter.

**Question:** F&F 26

**Division/Agency:** Fisheries and Forestry

**Topic:** Funding for studies of species threatened by illegal fishing

**Hansard Page:** 68 (25/05/06)

**Senator Siewert asked:**

I would appreciate that, because that is not how I have understood it in the past. But, if that is the case, it is much better. I understood it was announced that there was money in the new budget being put into studies of species that are threatened by illegal fishing—sharks being included, I presume. Can you remind me—I know I saw a media release about this—how much money is being put into that?

**Answer:**

There was no funding allocated in the new budget for studies of species that are threatened by illegal fishing, including sharks.

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**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** F&F 27

**Division/Agency:** Fisheries and Forestry

**Topic:** Deep-sea trawling

**Hansard Page:** 70 (25/05/06)

**Senator Siewert asked:**

**Senator SIEWERT**—Can I move on to deep sea trawling. I have quite a few questions. Some of these you might need to take on notice; I am aware of that. In 2004-05, as I understand it, there were about five Australian vessels that were undertaking deep sea trawling.

**Mr Hurry**—There would not have been any more than that. I would be a bit surprised if it was five, but around that number would be right.

**Senator SIEWERT**—That was in 2004-05. Can you tell me what those figures are now?

**Mr Hurry**—I do not think it would have changed very much for deep ocean trawling. We have vessels trawling for patagonian toothfish off Heard and McDonald Islands. There is a bit of fishing on the Indian Ocean ridges on the way back by those vessels. I think that is about all.

**Mr McLoughlin**—That is correct.

**Senator SIEWERT**—So you do not think there would have been any change since then?

**Mr Hurry**—No.

**Mr McLoughlin**—I think the number has reduced to three vessels, but I can confirm that.

**Answer:**

I can confirm that between January and July 2005 two trawlers undertook deep-sea trawling in the Heard Island and McDonald Islands (HIMI) Fishery, which is in Australian waters. This number has since decreased to one Australian vessel.

Australian vessels conducted deep-sea trawl operations in other areas inside and outside the Australian Fishing Zone. A total of six Australian vessels undertook deep-sea trawling on the high seas in the financial year 2005-06. Eighteen are currently licensed for high seas trawl.



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**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** F&F 28

**Division/Agency:** Fisheries and Forestry

**Topic:** Deep-sea trawling

**Hansard Page:** 70 (25/05/06)

**Senator Siewert asked:**

**Senator SIEWERT**—Do you know what the catch was?

**Mr McLoughlin**—We certainly record what catches come in. We have observers on those vessels as well, so they are very well monitored operations. I do not have those figures with me. I cannot provide those figure if there are less than five vessels because of confidentiality issues around identifying which boats have been fishing where and have caught what. We try and merge that.

**Senator SIEWERT**—If there are more than three, can you give it to me?

**Mr Hurry**—No. It has to be more than five for us to give you the data.

**Senator SIEWERT**—Can you check if there was? If there was, can I have that information and also the bycatch figures, please.

**Mr McLoughlin**—Yes.

**Answer:**

Catch information for the Heard Island and Macdonald Island (HIMI) fishery is commercially confidential as there were less than five vessels operating in 2005-06. However, total allowable catch quotas and bycatch limits are tightly regulated by the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) in accordance with the requirements of the international Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR). The total allowable catch (TAC) for the 2005-06 season for the main target species Patagonian toothfish was set at 2,584 tonne while 1,210 tonne was set for mackerel icefish. By-catch species TACs were set at low levels.

Total catch from deep-sea trawl fishing in all areas other than HIMI in 2005, was 426 tonne. This was taken by six vessels. In 2004, 1291 t was caught by a total of five vessels. Very small amounts of associated by catch were recorded as discarded. The principal species taken were orange roughy, oreo dorys and alfonsino.

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**Question:** F&F 29

**Division/Agency:** Fisheries and Forestry

**Topic: Impact of the Australian fishery**

**Hansard Page:** 71 (25/05/06)

**Senator Siewert asked:**

**Senator SIEWERT**—Thanks. Do you have any data on monitoring the impact of the Australian fishery?

**Mr McLoughlin**—Very substantial and extensive data. We put two observers on every boat that goes into the Heard and McDonald Islands fishery and the Macquarie Island fishery, in addition to those Australian boats that fish in CCAMLR territory. We record catch and bycatch data routinely on every trip. We have a management advisory committee with the Department of the Environment and Heritage and conservation NGO members on that. As Mr Hurry has indicated, it is almost certainly the most closely monitored high seas fishery in the world, and the costs of that monitoring are met by the industry participants, not the taxpayer.

**Senator SIEWERT**—Can that information be provided?

**Mr McLoughlin**—I think there is a substantial amount of information that is already in the public domain, and we are happy to provide that which is there.

**Answer:**

Due to less than five vessels operating in the Heard Island and Macdonald Island (HIMI) fishery, I am advised that the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) is able to provide only summary data. Total Allowable Catch (TAC) levels for target and by-catch species in the HIMI fishery in the 2005/06 season were adhered to with close cooperation between AFMA and industry to verify unloaded catch weights and ensure fishing within catch limits. Incidental mortalities of wildlife as a result of Australian trawl fishing operations at HIMI are minimal with a total of 23 seabirds being killed as a result of interactions with fishing gear since operations began in 1997.

A Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) project has been funded from 1 July 2006 to allow the Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) to assess the impact of various fishing gears on the benthic environment. This study extends earlier work by AAD where a camera sled was towed over various benthic habitats up to 550m deep in the HIMI fishery in the 2003-04 season. One of the aims of the new project is to develop deep sea cameras (to depths of 2000 metres) which can be attached to fishing gear to monitor benthic impacts during fishing operations.

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**Question:** F&F 30

**Division/Agency:** Fisheries and Forestry

**Topic:** Bottom Trawling

**Hansard Page:** Written Question

**Senator Siewert asked:**

In response to my question last year asking if the Minister was aware of the extent of the damage inflicted on deep sea coral and sponge environments by the practice of bottom trawling I was informed that “There is little known evidence as to the extent or impact of bottom trawling.” The answer cited a World Conservation Union and World Wildlife Fund report which in turn said “there has been no systematic study of the geographic extent of bottom trawl fisheries in relation to vulnerable deep-sea ecosystems or the extent of its impact on these ecosystems”. (answer to question 1182 provided on 7 Feb 2006)

- a. Is the Minister still of the view that “There is little known evidence as to the extent or impact of bottom trawling.”
- b. If so – does that mean Australia is in breach of its international and national legal obligations to apply the pre-cautionary principle
- c. Is it ‘responsible’ to license these fishing vessels if we are unaware of their impacts on ecosystems

**Answer:**

- a. Question 1182 was asked of, and answered by, Senator Ian Macdonald, former Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Conservation.

The 2004 Food and Agriculture (FAO) State of the World Fisheries and Aquaculture Report found that, while numerous investigations have been undertaken, knowledge of how towed fishing gears affect different habitat types is still rudimentary and little is known. The report states that few, other than general, conclusions can be drawn on the responses of benthic communities to trawling disturbances. One general conclusion stated is that studies indicate a “cause for concern” in relation to benthic effects, as in the case of deep-water corals. The FAO noted that conclusions can be limited by methodological deficiencies and that several studies have been published without taking caveats into account.

The Australian Government supports continual scientific research into all methods of fishing in order to understand high-seas biodiversity, to identify particular pressures and vulnerabilities, to support management and to assess the effectiveness of management options.

- b. No. The concept of the precautionary approach in the various international texts and treaties Australia is party to is not accompanied by explicit directions on how it should be applied. In absence of such directions, Australia has taken

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a strong scientific and risk based approach to decision-making and the application of precaution. Australia has approached the authorisation and management of high seas fishing in a precautionary manner. The Australian high seas fishing fleet is small, comprising six active fishing vessels, and is subject to strict controls. In all high seas activities undertaken by these vessels, a measure of precaution is applied in order to mitigate environmental impacts.

- c. Yes. The Australian Government implements various measures designed to mitigate impacts on the marine environment from a range of activities, including fishing. Australian vessels authorised to fish on the high seas are subject to strict operating conditions and monitoring and compliance by the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA). Australia is recognised internationally as a responsible fishing nation and actively encourages other nations to apply sustainable fishing practices.

**Question:** F&F 31

**Division/Agency:** Fisheries and Forestry

**Topic:** Regulating Australian High Sea Bottom trawlers

**Hansard Page:** Written Question

**Senator Siewert asked:**

According to answers last year the requirements on these boats are:

“All Australian fishing vessels fishing on the high seas are required to meet a range of regulations in line with the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement. These include: mandated use of an integrated computer vessel monitoring system (IVCDS); nil take of a range of fish species such as black marlin; a ban on the use of driftnets; implementation of a range of by catch measures and completion of logbooks for lodgment with the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (FAMA).” (Answer to question 1183 provided on 13 October 2005)

- a. Could you provide more specific details on these requirements?
- b. Is the possibility of unreported or under-reported catches an issue for the Department?
- c. Are there requirements not to disturb the ocean floor?

**Answer:**

- a. The Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) is an automated, satellite-based communication system coupled with a Global Positioning System (GPS). This system is currently fitted to 400 Australian fishing vessels, including all vessels authorised to fish on the high seas. The system beams information on vessel position, course and speed via satellite to the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) in Canberra. At AFMA, vessel tracks are

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monitored for incursions into closed areas or incorrect fishing zones and reported to compliance officers around the clock.

Blue marlin and black cod are specified as no take species under the *Fisheries Management Act 1991* (the FMA). These prohibitions were established before the ratification of the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement (UNSFSA). The FMA also establishes the capacity for AFMA to prescribe other no take species. Almost every Commonwealth fishery includes a suite of no take species within the management arrangements.

In 1991 the United Nations passed a resolution which called for a moratorium on the use of driftnets on the high seas. In 1992, the Convention for the Prohibition of Fishing with Long Driftnets in the South Pacific came into force in Australia. AFMA management arrangements ban all drift-netting as a fishing method.

Bycatch action plans have been developed by AFMA to identify and address the specific bycatch issues for each fishery. These plans are reviewed by the Department of the Environment and Heritage. The three main areas covered by bycatch action plans are protected species and ecological communities, high risk and other bycatch species and the broader marine ecosystem. The bycatch action plan is implemented under the management arrangements for the fishery and is reviewed every two years to ascertain whether the mitigation measures adopted are sufficiently precautionary.

Logbooks are the principal means for collecting catch and effort data from Commonwealth Fisheries. Logbooks are designed specifically for a fishery and/or gear type and are completed by the fisher. Each logbook must be filled out indicating a shot by shot resolution of the fishing effort, catch and any incidental wildlife interaction data. Effort information includes the position, time and depth where a type and quantity of gear is deployed. Catch information must include estimates of the weight and number of each species retained and discarded. In the event of an interaction between a fishing vessel and a listed marine or threatened species, logbooks have a designated form 'Listed Marine and Protected Species Form' which collects species and operational information relating to the interaction. The Commonwealth fishery logbooks are noted as some of the most comprehensive in the world.

- b. The Australian Government is proactive in implementing measures to mitigate the possibility of unreported or underreported catch in all Commonwealth Fisheries. In particular, observers are used extensively throughout Commonwealth Fisheries and, as part of their duties, are charged with validating logbook records. While observers are not compliance officers, their data is compared to the vessel logbook records to indicate the level of under or unreported catch, bycatch and discarded catch. Onboard observers are able to educate fishers on the importance of accurate logbook records and assist in their completion where necessary.

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Observer coverage is extending throughout Commonwealth Fisheries with coverage set at a level recommended by a stakeholder in the fishery and considered by the relevant management advisory committee. For example 100 per cent of fishing operations are observed (24 hour coverage) in the Heard Island and McDonald Islands (HIMI) Fishery through the deployment of two observers on every voyage. This level of monitoring is greater than the requirements of the international Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources. Observer coverage in other fisheries varies depending upon the program objectives.

- c. AFMA minimises disturbance to the benthic environment through the establishment of fisheries closures for critical habitat areas. Extensive habitat closures exist in the Northern Prawn Fishery in order to protect areas of vegetated seafloor. In addition, AFMA is taking a structured precautionary management approach to the opening of new fishing grounds. Areas never fished before are identified and restricted expansion of fishing activity to any new area for a particular gear type is dependent upon information to ensure ecologically sustainable harvesting and minimise benthic habitat destruction.

In the HIMI Fishery and the Macquarie Island area, marine parks have been established to protect the marine environment. A benthic study was undertaken as part of the formation of the Macquarie Island Marine Park and its findings considered the range of community types and habitats significant in terms of conservation. The Macquarie Island Marine Park comprises almost one third of the Australian fishing zone around Macquarie Island. The HIMI Marine Reserve, declared in October 2002, is the world's largest protected marine reserve. Commercial fishing is prohibited in the reserve and further assessment will be undertaken to determine whether adjoining Conservation Zones (protected but fishing permitted) should also be included in the reserve.

Further to area closures, vessels fishing in Australian Antarctic water have restrictions on trawl gear where bobbin diameters and mesh size is prescribed to minimise benthic impacts and allow the escape of juvenile target species and bycatch finfish. Rock-hopper rubber discs are also specified as measures to reduce the impact on benthic habitats.