

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2007

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question no: FF 01

Division/Agency: Fisheries and Forestry

Topic: Geographic distribution of sightings of illegal foreign fishing vessels

Hansard page: 46 (24/05/07)

Senator O'BRIEN asked:

Senator O'BRIEN—It is irrelevant to what Gary Ward said because what I was quoting was Gary Ward in relation to the Gulf of Carpentaria. But you introduced the other fishery. I was quoting him there and, arising from that quote, I am asking what the geographical distribution is. It is a pretty simple question.

Senator Abetz—We will have to take that on notice. For what it is worth, we give all this data on a sixmonthly basis to the Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australian ministers as well.

Senator O'BRIEN—I guess I am asking you here because I have not sought that data from them.

Senator Abetz—Yes. I am more than happy to make it available.

Senator O'BRIEN—Thank you.

Answer:

Map 1 (**attachment A**) shows the geographical distribution of sightings of Indonesian motorised foreign fishing vessels inside the Australian Exclusive Economic Zone (AEEZ) for the period January to June 2006.

Map 2 (**attachment B**) shows the geographic distribution of sightings for the period January to June 2007. This data has been provided by the Border Protection Command.

[FF 01 attachments A and B]

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question no: FF 02

Division/Agency: Fisheries and Forestry

Topic: Seafood Hotline

Hansard page: 68 (24/05/07)

Senator O'Brien asked:

I take it there is no commitment that you know of to tabling a report in parliament?

Answer:

The Department cannot find a record of a commitment by Senator the Hon Ian Macdonald, former Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Conservation, to table a report in parliament on the 1800 number service. A report on the operations of the 1800 number service is **attached**.

[FF02 attachment]

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question no: FF 03

Division/Agency: Fisheries and Forestry

Topic: Australian Fish Names Standard

Hansard page: 69 (24/05/07)

Senator O'Brien asked:

Senator O'BRIEN—I understand the Australian fish name standard is going to the board of standards next week or thereabouts. Has the minister provided any commitments to the industry in relation to assisting with the implementation of the standard?

Mr Hurry—We will take that on notice. I am reasonably sure that we have not, but we can follow that up.

Answer:

The Australian Fish Names List (AFNL) is now an Australian Standard known as the 'Fish Names Standard'. Australia's Standards Accreditation Board incorporated the AFNL as a standard that can be referenced in the Food Standards Code (FSC). The Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) has committed funding through Seafood Services Australia, to achieve the adoption of standard fish names across all seafood industry sectors.

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question no: FF 04

Division/Agency: Fisheries and Forestry

Topic: Australian Fish Names Standard

Hansard page: 69 (24/05/07)

Senator O'Brien asked:

Has the government committed to providing any promotional support for the standard?

Answer:

The Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) through Seafood Services Australia (SSA) has committed approximately \$230,000 over the next five years to achieve the adoption of standard fish names throughout the Australian seafood industry.

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question no: FF 05

Division/Agency: Fisheries and Forestry

Topic: Government funding for ASIC

Hansard page: 71 (24/05/07)

Senator O'Brien asked:

We know the Australian Seafood Industry Council recently went into administration and soon after went into liquidation. I am advised that a significant proportion of the \$70,000 of ASIC funds available after liquidation went into fees to the administrator. Is this the reason why there was a zero allocation in 2006-07?

Answer:

A funding agreement was signed between the Commonwealth and the Australian Seafood Industry Council (ASIC) on 23 June 2005 involving \$400,000 over four years to improve ASIC's capacity to engage in Government consultative processes and to provide industry leadership on national issues. The grant was paid in instalments upon receipt of a tax invoice and provision of financial, activity and audit reports. ASIC went into liquidation on 5 July 2006 and as a consequence no payments were made 2006-07.

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question no: FF 06

Division/Agency: Fisheries and Forestry

Topic: Licence Buyback

Hansard page: 73 (24/05/07)

Senator O'Brien asked:

Senator O'BRIEN—Can I be provided with an updated list of licence and entitlements buybacks by fishery and associated costings?

Senator Abetz—I think we have made some of that available.

Senator O'BRIEN—I did say an updated list.

Mr Murphy—There has been very little movement of that in recent times.

Senator O'BRIEN—Are you able to tell me it has not changed?

Mr Murphy—There was one very minor change—I think about \$63,000 was the last payment—but we can provide you with an updated table. It has not changed much from what you have seen.

Answer:

In excess of 550 concessions were purchased through the buyback process. The details of these are attached.

[FF06 attachment]

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question no: FF 07

Division/Agency: Fisheries and Forestry

Topic: Licence Buyback budget allocation by fishery

Hansard page: 75 (24/05/07)

Senator O'Brien asked:

Senator O'BRIEN—Can you tell me now how much was allocated by fishery?

Mr Talbot—I can tell you how much was initially allocated under each round.

Mr Talbot—We will take that one on notice and come back to you, but can I just clarify that the question is the amount of money committed to each fishery?

Senator O'BRIEN—I want to know if you had a budget for each fishery and how much you actually spent in each fishery, and certainly in your target fisheries.

Mr Talbot—I can certainly give you figures for the money that was spent in each fishery, and I would have to take on notice the amounts that were allocated for each fishery.

Answer:

The total amount allocated for the *Securing our Fishing Future Package* was \$220m. There were no explicit amounts allocated by fishery. No hard budgets were allocated as the amount spent was based on assessment of eligible tenders based on value for money across all fisheries.

Amounts spent by Fishery

Fishery	Round 1 amount spent (\$m)	Round 2 amount spent (\$m)
Northern Prawn Fishery	16.505	52.189
Bass Strait Central Zone Scallop Fishery	0.118	1.550
Eastern Tuna & Billfish Fishery	34.31	0.180
Southern & Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery	36.277	3.740
Other	2.06	1.770
	89.27	59.429

Note: Round 2 was funded from unspent Round 1 funds, and resulted because very few Round 1 tenders in the Bass Strait Central Zone Scallop Fishery and the Northern Prawn Fishery were considered to represent value for money.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question no: FF 08

Division/Agency: Fisheries and Forestry

Topic: Research into land available for forest plantations

Hansard page: 83 (24/5/07)

Senator Heffernan asked:

CHAIR—What is the industry saying?

Mr Bartlett—It is a complex question, but there has been a lot of work done about land that is potentially suitable for growing plantations. BRS have co-ordinated some of that work, and probably more importantly, a large part of it has been done through the regional plantation development committee. It is decentralised work; each of those local, regional committees has been looking at that. If you want to know the total figures, I would have to take that on notice. As far as I am aware, it way exceeds the estimated three million hectares of plantations that the 2020 Vision talks about. There is a very big difference between land suitability and land availability; that is where it all comes into play.

Answer:

Many studies have been undertaken over many years into the potential for timber plantations. These studies include all of the regions where commercial tree growing could potentially be viable. Studies have been undertaken by private organisations and by State and Australian government agencies, including several by the Bureau of Rural Sciences. Reports on the latter are available on the Bureau's web site.

Some studies consider the technical aspects of tree growing, usually focussing on particular tree species. Some also consider social and economic factors such as planning policies, land values and access to markets and transport infrastructure. The areas found suitable by different studies may therefore not be directly comparable because different methods and assumptions were used.

A review of several of the studies compiled by the Bureau of Rural Sciences found that, in aggregate, the area potentially suitable for commercial timber plantations was between 8 and 16 million hectares.

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question no: FF 09

Division/Agency: Fisheries and Forestry

Topic: Carbon and Forestry

Hansard page: 90 (24/05/07)

Senator O'Brien asked:

Mr Bartlett—We have got some terms of reference. I will have to take it on notice and provide those to you.

Senator O'BRIEN—It is about carbon sequestration?

Mr Bartlett—That is one of the aspects.

Answer:

The Forest Industries Branch has sought advice from the Bureau of Rural Sciences on carbon fluxes and carbon sequestration for different land use types, including production native forests, plantation forests and forest reserves. The advice, once provided, will in the first instance be used internally to better inform policy development on emerging issues for the land use sectors, such as climate change and emissions trading.

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question no: FF 10

Division/Agency: Fisheries and Forestry

Topic: Soil Carbon and Forestry

Hansard page: 92 (24/05/07)

Senator O'Brien asked:

Senator O'BRIEN—Are you aware of any work done by anyone else?

Mr Bartlett—It is possible that, through the Australian Greenhouse Office, they have done that. I know that they have done some work on soil carbon rates for forest types. If you want me to find out the detail, I will have to get back to you, but it is not our department's responsibility. That work is done through the Australian Greenhouse Office.

Answer:

The Government uses the National Carbon Accounting System to account for carbon sequestration and greenhouse gas emissions from the land sectors (including forests) in accordance with internationally agreed reporting frameworks. For afforestation, reforestation and deforestation activities under Article 3.3 of the Kyoto Protocol, there is a requirement to account for carbon stock changes in carbon pools including biomass, debris and soil.

The development of the National Carbon Accounting System includes extensive research on carbon sequestration in plantation and native forests, including analysis of carbon in forest soils.

The development of the National Carbon Accounting System, including supporting research, is fully documented in a series of publications, available at www.greenhouse.gov.au/ncas/publications/index.html.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question No: FF 11

Division/Agency: Fisheries and Forestry

Topic: Tasmanian old growth forest

Hansard page: 92-93 (24/05/07)

Senator O'Brien asked:

Senator O'BRIEN—In the Tasmanian context, is '60 percent of existing old-growth forests, increasing to 100 percent of rare and depleted old-growth forest, and 90 percent of high-quality wilderness' protected at present?

Mr Bartlett—The total figure is 79 percent at the moment, and we expect it to go over 80 percent once the private forest, old-growth types program is finished. If you want the information forest type by forest type, I will have to take that on notice, but overall it has certainly been exceeded.

Answer:

79 per cent of Tasmania's old growth forests are protected and 97 per cent of high quality wilderness. There are four forest types identified as rare and depleted old growth in Tasmania, with the area reserved ranging from 50 per cent to 83 per cent.

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Budget Estimates May 2007

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question No: FF 12

Division/Agency: Fisheries and Forestry

Topic: Upper Florentine

Hansard page: Written

Senator Brown asked:

The Government has failed to protect the Upper Florentine – one of the old growth forests which the Prime Minister promised protection in October 2004.

a) Can the Minister say how much of taxpayer's money has been spent under the Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement on logging or roading forests in the Upper Florentine Valley?

Answer:

a) \$47,900.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question No: FF 13

Division/Agency: Fisheries and Forestry

Topic: Upper Florentine

Hansard page: Written

Senator Brown asked:

Regarding the 1997 briefing note from the RFA unit, titled: 'Suggested Package for Negotiating the Final RFA'.

- a) Is the Minister aware of this document, from the 1997 RFA, showing that only 8 forestry jobs existed in the Upper Florentine Valley? Given that the money for Tasmania's forests was increased from \$52 million (October 2004) to over \$160 million (community Forest Agreement, May 2005) why could this area not have been protected by those increased taxpayer's dollars instead of destroyed by those taxpayer's dollars?
- b) Is the Minister aware that this document was put before both the Environment Department and the Minister's predecessor, Senator Ian Campbell, in 2004 and 2005 before the May 2005 agreement, but that it was ignored?

Answer:

- a) Updated figures indicate that 90 jobs are dependant on the continuation of harvesting in the Upper Florentine Valley. The investment that the Australian Government has made through the Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement is to ensure that a sustainable and vibrant timber industry is maintained in Tasmania. This investment will see 80 per cent of the total amount of old growth forest in Tasmania protected in conservation reserves or unavailable for harvest, whilst still ensuring jobs for timber workers.
- b) A combination of environmental, economic and socio-economic advice was taken into account when it was determined that a small portion of the Upper Florentine Valley was economically significant and critical for the future welfare of timber workers and associated communities.

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question No: FF 14

Division/Agency: Fisheries and Forestry

Topic: Upper Florentine

Hansard page: Written

Senator Brown asked:

Is the Minister aware that Forestry Tasmania now claims that 90 per cent of the Upper Florentine will not be logged? Can the Minister provide a copy of the map showing this?

Answer:

A map of the Upper Florentine reserve network and forest practices plan is available from Forestry Tasmania, the agency responsible for forest management in Tasmania.

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question No: FF 15

Division/Agency: Fisheries and Forestry

Topic: Upper Florentine

Hansard page: Written

Senator Brown asked:

And if 90 per cent of the Upper Florentine Valley is now not to be logged anyway, why not protect its wilderness values, given that the 1997 RFA said that this valley is a potential World Heritage site in its own right? Especially as the Government is spending over \$160 million compared with the original pledge of only \$52 million?

Answer:

90 per cent of the Upper Florentine Valley is protected, or unavailable for any form of harvesting. The wilderness values in 90 per cent of the Valley are protected.

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question No: FF 16

Division/Agency: Fisheries and Forestry

Topic: Upper Florentine

Hansard page: Written

Senator Brown asked:

Is the Minister aware that forests such as the Upper Florentine are amongst the most carbon-dense stands of vegetation in the world, and that logging them gratuitously increases Australian's contribution to climate change and squanders an opportunity for reducing our emissions?

Answer:

The carbon stored in old-growth forests does not increase over time as these forests are in a steady-state where the rate of carbon sequestration (forest growth) is equal to the rate of carbon emissions (forest decay). In production forests, recent Australian Greenhouse Office figures show Australia's sustainably managed native forest and plantation estate was carbon positive, reducing Australia's emissions by a nett 42.7 million tonnes of carbon in 2006.

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question No: FF 17

Division/Agency: Fisheries and Forestry

Topic: Weld Valley

Hansard page: Written

Senator Brown asked:

The Weld Valley area that the Government has promised to protect in October 2006,

- a) Is the Minister aware that fewer than 50 hectares out of over 4000 ha of threatened forest, were actually protected by the Government in May 2005?
- b) Why is the Government allowing taxpayers' funds to be spent on new logging roads into steep, scenic tracts of pure rainforest in this wilderness valley, which is immediately adjacent to the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area?
- c) How much taxpayers' money has been spent or allocated on new (since October 2004), logging roads and modified clearfelling in the Weld Valley?

Answer:

- a) The Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement has resulted in 139 500 hectares of additional forest areas being placed into conservation reserves. This is 13 800 hectares in excess of the amount originally pledged. The great majority of the Weld Valley was already in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area and currently 82 percent of the Weld Valley is protected.
- b) Under the Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement, the small area of the Weld Valley that is not in conservation reserves is available for sustainable timber production. About 2 percent of the Weld Valley will be harvested and regenerated as native forest over the next eight years.
- c) \$550,000 has been spent on roading to special timbers and leatherwood areas in the Weld Valley using Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement funds. No funds have been spent on harvesting.