

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2008

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: AFMA 01

Division/Agency: Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Topic: Illegal foreign fishing

Hansard Page: 133 (27/05/08)

Senator Siewert asked:

Senator SIEWERT—How long were the fishers in the Darwin detention centre?

Mr Hurry—I would have to take that on notice. It is probably more a question for Immigration, but we could probably get the figures for you.

Senator SIEWERT—That would be appreciated.

Answer: (Provided by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship)

55 Indonesian fishers (49 adults and 6 juveniles) were apprehended from the nine foreign fishing vessels mentioned between 24 April and 30 April 2008. Upon arrival in Darwin, all juveniles were accommodated in motel style accommodation in Darwin and two adults were held in the Royal Darwin Hospital for a short period of time for medical reasons. The remaining 47 fishers were accommodated at the Northern Immigration Detention Centre (NIDC) and in some instances in motel style accommodation in Darwin for short periods of time prior to their return to Indonesia.

Average time for adults accommodated in Darwin at either the NIDC or in motel style accommodation was 21.2 days per person.

Average time in Darwin for the 6 juveniles was 20 days per person.

The two adult fishers initially detained in the Royal Darwin Hospital were both removed by charter aircraft, following medical clearance, on 6 June 2008, 42 days after arriving in Darwin.

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: AFMA 02

Division/Agency: Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Topic: Shark Catch in Queensland waters

Hansard Page: 133 (27/05/08)

Senator Siewert asked:

Senator SIEWERT—The Queensland fin fishery: I am sure you are aware that there is controversy raging over the potential for sharks to be taken for fins in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. I am getting blank looks.

Mr Hurry—If it is a Queensland state fishery, it is a Queensland government fishery and it would be an issue for the Queensland government. There is a tuna fishery that operates off the Queensland coast out of Mooloolaba that in the course of taking tuna probably takes shark as well. We monitor it very carefully. There have been some prosecutions for the illegal take of shark fin in that fishery and, from memory, there was a recent one.

Senator SIEWERT—Could You take on notice to provide me with the details around how many people have been taking?

Mr Hurry—I can give you the information on the last prosecution that we had and whether there have been any previous ones. If it is a Queensland state shark fishery then it is an issue for the Queensland government, but I can provide you with the details on the Commonwealth fishery that operates out of those waters.

Senator SIEWERT—That would be appreciated.

Answer:

The Commonwealth Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery (ETBF) operates off the east coast of Australia. All vessels in this fishery are subject to a limit of landing 20 sharks per fishing trip and all sharks taken must have fins attached to the carcass when landed. No shark fins or livers are permitted to be landed without a carcass. Sharks are a bycatch when targeting tuna and billfish species in the fishery.

In 2007 a total of 3,268 sharks were caught off Queensland waters (9°-28°S) in the Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery (ETBF) of which 1,031 were retained (Figure 1). Blue shark, shortfin mako, oceanic whitetip and bronze whalers were the most commonly caught and retained species.

Fishers off New South Wales (28°-37°S) in the ETBF caught a total of 2,021 sharks in 2007 of which 924 were retained (Figure 2). Blue shark, shortfin mako and bronze whaler were the most commonly caught and retained species.

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The data in the table is from 58 vessels, of which 19 fished solely off Queensland and seven fished solely off New South Wales, the remaining 32 vessels fished off both States.

Figure 1: Catches of sharks off Queensland (9°-28°S) in 2007

Species	No. of sharks retained	No. of sharks released	Estimated kgs retained	No. of vessels
<i>Blue Shark</i>	113	1180	4,440	34
<i>Crocodile Shark</i>	0	188	0	6
<i>Bronze Whaler</i>	161	105	5,008	34
<i>Dusky Shark</i>	24	41	519	21
<i>Great white shark</i>	0	1	0	1
<i>Hammerhead Shark</i>	45	22	1,690	18
<i>Oceanic Whitetip Shark</i>	108	165	3,330	32
<i>Porbeagle</i>	12	4	245	6
<i>Shark other</i>	0	1	0	1
<i>Shortfin Mako</i>	495	87	20,529	48
<i>Silky Shark</i>	55	86	1,735	9
<i>Thresher Shark</i>	1	166	30	14
<i>Tiger Shark</i>	17	191	790	21
Total	1031	2237	38,316	

Figure 2: Catches of sharks off New South Wales (28°-37°S) in 2007

Species	No. of sharks retained	No. of sharks released	Estimated kgs retained	No. of vessels
<i>Blue Shark</i>	74	699	4,530	23
<i>Crocodile Shark</i>	0	1	0	1
<i>Bronze Whaler</i>	118	229	5,793	22
<i>Dusky Shark</i>	2	12	75	4
<i>Great white shark</i>	0	1	0	1
<i>Hammerhead Shark</i>	20	1	710	12
<i>Longfin Mako</i>	1	0	70	1
<i>Oceanic Whitetip Shark</i>	9	18	355	14
<i>Porbeagle</i>	1	1	70	2
<i>Shortfin Mako</i>	631	43	15,192	36
<i>Silky Shark</i>	0	4	0	2
<i>Thresher Shark</i>	2	34	430	10
<i>Tiger Shark</i>	66	54	2,000	18
Total	924	1097	29,225	

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Question: AFMA 03

Division/Agency: Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Topic: Illegal foreign fishing

Hansard Page: 133 (27/05/08)

Senator Siewert asked:

Senator SIEWERT—Has there been a decrease in funding for IUU surveillance?

Mr Hurry—No.

Senator SIEWERT—Could you provide on notice details of the funding for that particular line item?

Mr Hurry—Yes, Senator.

Senator SIEWERT—And compared to last financial year.

Mr A. Grant—Can I just clarify that: do you mean the whole of the illegal foreign fishing package, which is a government process across the board involving a whole lot of other agencies, or just the surveillance component?

Senator SIEWERT—Just the surveillance component of it.

Mr Hurry—Which Customs or Defence have responsibility for.

Senator SIEWERT—Yes.

Answer:

The Australian Customs Service advises that surveillance and response operations in Australia's maritime domains are carried out by a range of air, surface and space-based (satellite) assets. As each of these assets are deployed to detect and / or respond to breaches in relation to all maritime security threats, it is not possible to separate out a discrete component of funding that would be applicable solely to IUU surveillance.

The Australian Customs Service was provided with \$99.461 million in 2006-07 and \$109.144 million in 2007-08 to undertake civil maritime and response services.

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Question: AFMA 04

Division/Agency: Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Topic: Illegal foreign fishing

Hansard Page: 134 (27/05/08)

Senator Scullion asked:

Senator Scullion—I have some supplementary questions to the questions asked by my colleague, Senator Siewert. I have put AFMA on notice that I may be asking some questions, and I understand you may have even provided a photograph of these fish traps. For the benefit of those people who are not across the detail, I understand that there was some confusion with a fish trap—or so it has been given to me by the minister, and I would acknowledge that he rang me personally at the time to explain what had happened. I would appreciate that perhaps on notice or your providing the photograph of it—I do not really need it at the moment.

Answer:

Photos are **attached**.

[AFMA 04 attachment]

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Division/Agency: Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Topic: Illegal foreign fishing

Hansard Page: 135 (27/05/08)

Senator Scullion asked:

Senator Scullion—Indeed. I have also spoken to the same individuals, but I will not go into that too much. I just think it is extremely important that we see this as a different circumstance in terms of any compensation because, as you would well know, when this gets out of hand in Australia the media will pick this up extremely quickly. We have had some very nasty historical incidents of that. I look forward to you, perhaps on notice, providing me with the series of changes you have made in the operating procedures. Certainly I would like to see the capacity, if there is some doubt, to ensure that we are sending back photographs to those people who may have more experience. Perhaps you can give us an update on the exact training regime for the new recruits in AFMA.

Mr Hurry—We can do that, Senator Scullion.

Answer:

Specific guidelines have been reviewed for the apprehension of foreign fishing vessels north of the Provisional Fisheries Surveillance and Enforcement Line (PFSEL), where Australia has jurisdiction over sedentary species and Indonesia has jurisdiction over swimming species. The guidelines assist officers in determining whether fisheries offences are being committed in the area north of the PFSEL. The type of evidence required by fisheries officers to establish that offences have been committed was amended to take into account the new fishing method. The Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) are also revising the language cards used by officers to help determine the fishing methods being used and the target species being taken. Fisheries officers on board the surface assets are able to contact the AFMA duty officers located within the Border Protection Command 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

AFMA officers undertake a range of training designed to facilitate boarding and inspection activities within the AFZ. The training includes sea safety, first aid, Certificate IV in Commonwealth Fraud Investigations and on the job training at sea. New officers are deployed on patrols with experienced officers prior to conducting patrols on their own. AFMA requires authorised fisheries officers to be familiar with the provisions and officers powers under the *Fisheries Management Act 1991*. Depending on the nature of their work, officers also undertake specific training such as international law and immigration detention arrangements.