

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2010

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: SRM 01

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Fisheries staffing levels

Hansard Pages: 12-13 (24/05/2010)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Dr O’Connell, my impression of the department is that you are getting less and less involved in caring for our country, you are getting less and less involved in bioregional planning, which are things that your department used to do conjointly with Environment, and you seem to be getting less and less involved in fisheries. For example, your international fisheries now do not seem to have a dedicated area. First of all, can you tell me whether I am wrong on either of those. If you cannot tell me I am wrong can you give me, perhaps on notice but perhaps later in the hearing, the reduction of your staff in those areas?

Dr O’Connell—Between this year and next year in terms of budgeted requirements we can certainly look at that.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—I am talking, really, about last year to the year in which we are now. I am interested in—

Dr O’Connell—Not the forward year.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—And the forward year. I am asking for the current year and the forward year, because my impression is that there seem to be cutbacks in certain areas of the department which used to be a significant part of the department’s work. It now seems to have been abandoned to Environment, which is of great concern, of course, to agricultural Australians.

Dr O’Connell—We can provide those numbers on notice. You are looking, really, for three years from last year, this year and the budget year that is ahead.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Yes. But am I generally correct?

Dr O’Connell—It would be no surprise to suggest that I think we are just as involved in caring for our

country as we have been in the past in terms of the work jointly with our colleagues in the environment

department. We still run joint process.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—I am pleased to hear that. I do not think that is the case, but I am pleased to hear that you are telling me it is.

Dr O’Connell—We still run the process jointly. We still have the ministerial board jointly making

decisions. It is all joint approvals all the way through on that, so I do not see that that has been reduced. When we come to the other areas obviously we can talk through the specifics, but I am happy enough to take those numbers on notice.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Thank you.

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Question: SRM 01 (contintued)

Answer:

For Fisheries component, refer to SRM 06.

For the component of Sustainable Resource Management (SRM) Division jointly delivering Caring for our Country with the then Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, the breakdown is as follows:

Financial Year	No. of FTEs	Budget
2007-08	76	\$9 214 208
2008-09	90	\$10 141 210
2009-10	74	\$9 317 682

This table does not include the Climate Change and Biofuels Branch in the 2007-08 count, nor does it include the SRM Executive.

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Question: SRM 02

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Environmental Stewardship Budget

Hansard Page: 89 (24/05/2010)

Senator COLBECK asked:

Senator COLBECK—What is your budget for entering into new contracts over the next 12 months? You would have a number of contracts that would be signed now which would have a liability attached over the life of the contracts—we would like to know what that is. Then there would be a budget that you will have up to which you could obviously enter into contracts.

Mr Thompson—I do not have the numbers of the detail of the potentially contracted amounts of the stewardship. As our discussions have identified, it gets a bit complicated because of those forward-year figures. I would have to take that on notice and get back to you.

Answer:

The Environmental Stewardship appropriation is \$17.5 million for the 2010-11 financial year. Ministers have approved \$11.4 million to make payments to landholders, service delivery agents and for administration associated with the program as at 15 June 2010. This leaves \$6.1 million currently available for new commitments in 2010-11.

Projects approved as at 15 June 2010 have scheduled commitments through to 2024-25 totalling \$67.7 million; this is inclusive of the commitments which will be met in 2010-11 upon achievement of milestones.

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Question: SRM 03

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Response to Recfish letter

Hansard Page: 155 (24/05/2010)

Senator Colbeck asked:

Senator COLBECK—Can you tell me whether the minister has responded to their letter of 22 February seeking some assistance with support for Recfish as an organisation?

Mr Pittar—I do not know the answer to that directly. I need to take that on notice. If I can take that on notice, that would be helpful.

Answer:

Yes. A letter responding to the letter from Recfish of 22 February was sent by the department on behalf of the Minister on 22 April 2010.

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Question: SRM 04

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Importation of fish from Vietnam

Hansard Page: 159 (24/05/2010)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—I know we have spoken about basa at previous estimates committees. I will table this email, which I and every other senator received, from a Mr Glen Santacaterina. Forget the political comments in it, but it talks about ‘brought up with high levels of poisons and bacteria’, ‘raised in Vietnam with the food that comes from Peru’, ‘their hormones, which are injected into the female fish, come from China’ et cetera. There is a bit of material there. Could I ask either AFMA or the department—do not spend a lot of time on it—to do a short critique on what is said in the email. Do we know if the comment about the injection of hormones is correct? Could you do that on notice.

Answer:

The email contains statements that are not substantiated or supported with evidence or references. It is therefore hard to establish the veracity of the statements.

Peru is a supplier of fishmeal into international markets for aquaculture production. It is conceivable that Vietnam sources fishmeal from Peru but the department does not have specific information.

Foods imported into Australia are subject to a risk-based testing regime. Food Standards Australia and New Zealand determines the level of risk which then informs sampling and testing regimes.

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Question: SRM 05

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Weeds: Wandering Trad – Biological Controls

Hansard Page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

In the lead up to the 2007 election, Environment Minister Peter Garrett visited the electorate of La Trobe and pledged \$15 million funding for a National Weeds and Productivity Research Program (NWPRP). This was in response to a Coalition Government commitment for \$450,000 to develop a biological control for Wandering Trad in the Dandenong Ranges.

1. Has any Government funding been provided since then to develop a biological control into Wandering Trad?
2. Is any budgeted funding earmarked to develop a biological control into Wandering Trad?
3. Is any funding from the NWPRP currently being used to eradicate weeds in the Dandenong Ranges?

Answer:

1. There is no Australian Government funding in place at this time to develop a specific biological control for Wandering Trad, in the Dandenong Ranges.
2. No.
3. Several research projects under the National Weeds and Productivity Research Program, including research into the control and management of boneseed and gorse, will help to manage weeds that occur in the Dandenong Ranges.

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Question: SRM 06

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division
Topic: Fisheries staff and budget numbers
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Colbeck asked:

1. How many staff currently work in the Fisheries Policy Unit? Can you please provide a breakdown of staff of their roles within this unit (i.e. recreational fishing, international treaties, etc)
2. How has this changed since 2007?
3. Can you please provide a breakdown of for each of the financial years from 2007-2008?
4. What is the budget for this unit?
5. Can you please provide a breakdown of funding for each of the financial years from 2007-2008?

Answer:

1. For the 2009-2010 financial year, there were 37 FTEs in the Fisheries branch. The breakdown is as follows:

Current Fisheries Branch FTEs 2009-10	
International Fisheries	5
Northern Fisheries	8
Grants Management	8
Legislation and Governance	7
Fisheries Policy	9
Total	37

2. In 2007-2008 and 2008-2009, there were two fisheries branches. The breakdown is as follows:

Financial Year	No. of FTEs	Budget
2007-2008	46	\$9 249 548
2008-2009	52	\$6 268 551
2009-2010	37	\$4 344 738

3. See answer to Question 2.
4. The allocation reported in the PBS for program support for Program 1.4 Fishing Industry for 2010-2011 is \$7,848,000. This includes the Fisheries branch and some research activities conducted in the BRS/ABARE. The department is currently finalising the internal budget for 2010-2011.

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Question: SRM 06 (continued)

5. See answer to Question 2.

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Question: SRM 07

Division/Agency: Sustainable Resource Management Division

Topic: Thresher Sharks

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Colbeck asked:

1. What data does DAFF or other organisations have on the Thresher Shark population?
2. Is this data publicly available?
3. What is the conservation status of the shark in Australian waters?
4. What is the annual catch by a/ commercial and b/ recreational fishermen?
5. What tag and release data is available?
6. What are the current regulations with respect to Thresher Sharks? State regulations?
7. Who was consulted about the IOTC meeting and potential outcomes prior to the 1-5 March meeting in Korea? Rec or Commercial fishing? Environmental groups? How were they consulted? When?
8. Which people were directly consulted at the Tropical Tuna MAC over the thresher shark resolution and when?
9. Which Departments provided advice prior to the meeting?
10. Who attended in either an official or unofficial capacity from Australia? Names, positions, organisations.
11. Who paid for them?
12. Is Australia able to appeal the resolution or its impact?
13. If so, when does this need to be submitted?
14. What consultation has occurred with stakeholders following this meeting? When? Who?
15. When did DAFF write to State authorities regarding the passed resolution?
16. When did DAFF first advise the Minister on the outcomes of the IOTC meeting?
17. Will there be any additional restrictions on fishing for Thresher Sharks in Australian waters as a result of the resolution?
18. If so, what? How and when will they be implemented?

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Question: SRM 07 (continued)

Answer:

1. DAFF holds no information on Thresher shark populations, other than catch information (from logbooks) provided by Australian Fisheries Management Authority.
2. Data is submitted to the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) and Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) annually. Data submitted to the IOTC is not available publically as it is treated as commercial-in-confidence in line with the AFMA information disclosure policy, however data submitted to the WCPFC is available on the website (www.wcpfc.int).
3. Undetermined by Australian Government conservation agencies.
4. Landings and discards for the period 2004 to 2009 inclusive are shown below, for the Western Tuna and Billfish Fishery (WTBF) and the Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery (ETBF).

a) Commercial: total number of thresher shark (*Alopias vulpinus*), released/discarded by Australian longline vessels in the IOTC and WCPFC Convention Areas from 2004 to 2009 (source: AFMA logbook data).

Fishery Area	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
WTBF - IOTC Convention Area						
Number of sharks discarded	23	9	2	0	4	0
Weight of sharks retained (kgs)	0	0	0	29	0	79
ETBF - WCPFC Convention Area						
Number of sharks discarded	202	229	104	200	140	137
Weight of sharks retained (kgs)	0	0	0	0	0	0

- b) Recreational/Game: no information on recreational catches is held by DAFF. State agencies manage recreational take.
5. DAFF does not hold any tag and release information for thresher sharks.

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Question: SRM 07 (continued)

6. There are no regulations specific to thresher sharks.
 - a) Commonwealth: In 2000, a retention limit of 20 sharks per trip was imposed in both the Eastern and Western Tuna and Billfish Longline Fisheries. Any sharks caught in excess of 20 are no longer classified as byproduct but become bycatch and must be discarded whether alive or dead.
 - Operators in the WTBF who conduct a ‘high seas only’ trip are subject to a trip limit of 100 sharks per trip. The 100 per trip limit does not apply to vessels operating inside the AFZ.
 - To reduce the capture of sharks in these fisheries, the use of wire trace was banned in the WTBF and ETBF in 2001 and 2005 respectively.
 - b) State: The Department does not hold details of State regulatory arrangements.

7. Consultation by DAFF and AFMA about the IOTC14 meeting in advance of the meeting was as follows:
 - On 24 February 2010, AFMA sent a consultation email to the Tropical Tuna MAC members, via its Executive Officer, informing them of the proposals presented by the IOTC Members prior to the meeting.
 - On 24 February 2010, AFMA sent an email to recreational and charter fishing representatives outlining the shark proposal.
 - Mr Grahame Williams, President of Game Fishing Association Australia, was consulted via telephone on the 26 February 2010 to discuss the Australian position towards the shark proposal.
 - Mr Bill Edwards, Queensland Charter Vessel Association, and Mr Grahame Williams, were further advised of the Australian position on 26 February 2010.

8. See response to Question 7, and below.
 - Bill Edwards, Queensland Charter Vessel Assoc.; Bill Nagle, Chair of NSW Ocean Haul MAC; Brian Jeffriess, CEO of Australian Southern Bluefin Tuna Industry Association; Brigid Kerrigan, Manager Reef Line & Harvest Fisheries - Fisheries Queensland; Campbell Davies, Stream Leader, Pelagic Fisheries and Ecosystems for CSIRO; Erica Starling, Seafood CRC – Board member; G & M Binns, Longline fisher - Ulladulla; Gary Heilmann, Longline fisher; Len Oylott, Recfish Australia CEO; Paul Williams, Longline fisher; Peter Trott, Fisheries Program Manager – WWF Australia; Ship Agencies Australia Pty Ltd and Upscale Seafoods Pty Ltd.

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9. The briefing for the IOTC 14 meeting in Korea was developed by DAFF; the Department of the Environment, Heritage, Water and the Arts; the Australian Fisheries Management Authority; the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Australian Attorney-General's Department.

10. Head of Delegation: Mr Roland Pittar
General Manager, Fisheries Branch
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Delegate: Ms Anna Willock
Manager, International Fisheries
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Observer: Mr Bill Holden
Pacific Fisheries Manager
Marine Stewardship Council

11. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry paid for the two delegates from the department. Mr Holden made personal arrangements.

12. Any Member of the Commission may, within 120 days from the date finalised (6 July 2010), take out a reservation on a conservation and management measure adopted at the commission meeting. A Member of the Commission which has objected to a measure shall not be bound by it.

13. A reservation on a conservation and management measure, agreed to at IOTC 14, must have been submitted to the Executive Secretariat of the IOTC by 6 July 2010. Australia did not submit a reservation.

14. Tropical Tuna Management Advisory Committee (membership provided in Q8 answer) on 5 May 2010. Consultations that occurred with stakeholders following this meeting included:
 - discussions were held with the chair of the Australian Fisheries Management Forum to work more closely with state and territory fisheries agencies on this.
 - discussion at the Natural Resource Management Marine and Coastal Committee 34 meeting on 17 May 2010. State and territory representatives are present at meetings of this Committee.
 - a telephone conversation with Grahame Williams, President of the Game Fishing Association, on 25 May 2010.
 - a meeting between Minister Burke and Mr Dean Logan from the Boating and Fishing Council of Australia on 2 June 2010.

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15. The department outlined the passed resolution to state and territory agencies on 5 and 17 May 2010 during the Tropical Tuna Management Advisory Committee and National Resource Management Marine and Coastal Committee meetings.
16. DAFF delegates advised the minister's office daily via emails on the meeting progress.
17. Yes.
18. DAFF is continuing to consult with state and territory managers, while AFMA is consulting with industry, on developing measures to implement the resolution.