

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Estimates October 2006

Transport and Regional Services

Question No: AMSA 01

Division/Agency: Australian Maritime Safety Authority

Topic: Dornier Aircraft

Hansard Page: Written Question

Senator McGauran asked:

Could you please provide detail on the Dornier aircrafts' performance since commencement of the contract?

Answer:

AMSA has two contracts involving the supply of dedicated search and rescue services by Dornier 328TP aircraft. The first contract covers provision of a Dornier aircraft based at Darwin, which commenced service in October 2005. The second contract covers provision of four Dornier aircraft being introduced progressively at Perth, Cairns, Melbourne and Brisbane.

Since the commencement of the Dornier aircraft at Darwin in October 2005, it has generally achieved or exceeded targeted performance levels. There were some initial technical issues relating to the integration of the sophisticated suite of sensors installed on the aircraft. The main issue concerned an intermittent problem with the maritime search radar, but this has been resolved. In August 2006, a second issue occurred with a malfunction in the aircraft's twin navigation transponders due to a component failure. This led to the aircraft being grounded for several days until parts could be sourced to rectify the faulty component.

In addition to its search and rescue operations, AMSA and the Border Protection Command are conducting a three-month trial to determine the effectiveness of the Dornier in the maritime surveillance role. If assessed as being suitable to a role within the Civil Maritime Surveillance Program, the AMSA Dornier aircraft will continue to undertake maritime surveillance for the Border Protection Command. The trial arrangements recognise the Dorniers' primary search and rescue role and allow the aircraft to be diverted to a search and rescue mission at short notice. AMSA has been advised by the Border Protection Command that the preliminary assessment from the trial confirms that the Dornier is a highly capable aircraft.

Both the Perth and Cairns aircraft commenced operations as scheduled on 8 August and 10 October 2006, respectively, and are achieving or exceeding targeted performance levels. The two remaining aircraft are on schedule for delivery in Melbourne in December 2006 and in Brisbane in February 2007.

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Question No: AMSA 02

Division/Agency: Australian Maritime Safety Authority

Topic: Dornier Aircraft

Hansard Page: Written Question

Senator McGauran asked:

Was the capability fully available on the proposed start date?

Answer:

The Darwin based service initially commenced in February 2005 using a King Air Beech 200T aircraft while the Dornier aircraft was undergoing a modification program overseas, including the fitting of its specialised search and rescue equipment. The first Dornier aircraft commenced service in October 2005, instead of originally scheduled in August 2005, because of slippage in the timing of the modification program overseas. However, the King Air Beech 200T aircraft continued to provide the service until the Dornier came into operation and continues to provide a back-up service to the Dornier aircraft, as provided in the contract for the Darwin service.

The Perth and Cairns-based Dornier aircraft commenced service as planned on 8 August and 10 October 2006, respectively.

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Question No: AMSA 03

Division/Agency: Australian Maritime Safety Authority

Topic: Dornier Aircraft

Hansard Page: Written Question

Senator McGauran asked:

How many live tasks have been performed?

Answer:

The Darwin-based Dornier aircraft has performed 49 search and rescue missions since it commenced service in October 2005, involving 370 hours of flying time. Since 9 August 2006, it also has performed 22 missions and 111 hours of flying time in the Border Protection Command's Civil Maritime Surveillance Program.

The Perth-based Dornier aircraft has performed 9 search and rescue missions since it commenced service on 8 August 2006 involving 22 hours of flying time.

The Cairns based-Dornier aircraft has performed ten search and rescue missions since it commenced service on 10 October 2006 involving 30 hours flying time.

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Question No: AMSA 04

Division/Agency: Australian Maritime Safety Authority

Topic: Dornier Aircraft

Hansard Page: Written Question

Senator McGauran asked:

What was the response time on each occasion?

Answer:

The Darwin-based Dornier aircraft's response times were within the contracted performance measures except on 10 occasions when response times were below the contracted performance level by two to five minutes on four of these occasions, ten minutes on two occasions, 15 to 17 minutes on three occasions and 27 minutes on one occasion.

The Perth and Cairns-based aircrafts' response times have been within the contracted performance measures.

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Question No: AMSA 05

Division/Agency: Australian Maritime Safety Authority

Topic: Dornier Aircraft

Hansard Page: Written Question

Senator McGauran asked:

I am led to believe that the Dornier 328TP aircraft radar has some performance limitations. Could you please advise the issues with the radar performance?

Answer:

There are no performance limitations with the Dornier 328TP aircraft radar. The Darwin based Dornier aircraft did experience intermittent problems with its radar resulting in downtime for both the radar and the aircraft, but these have been resolved. These 'teething problems' were not unexpected by AMSA, given the sophisticated suite of sensors being integrated into the aircraft for the first time.

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Question No: AMSA 06

Division/Agency: Australian Maritime Safety Authority

Topic: Dornier Aircraft

Hansard Page: Written Question

Senator McGauran asked:

How many days has the aircraft been out of service or unavailable due to maintenance or other issues?

Answer:

The Dornier aircraft have been unavailable for a total of 29 days because of issues involving maintenance or rectification of problems with equipment. However, the contract provides for periods of aircraft unavailability due to maintenance and repairs. In total, the Dornier aircraft have been unavailable for approximately nine days beyond the contracted performance mainly because of the initial intermittent problem with the maritime search radar and the later component failure in the aircraft's twin navigation transponders, when the aircraft was grounded for several days until parts could be sourced to rectify the faulty component.

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Question No: AMSA 07

Division/Agency: Australian Maritime Safety Authority

Topic: Dornier Aircraft

Hansard Page: Written Question

Senator McGauran asked:

Where the contractor has failed to meet the required performance standards what measures are open to AMSA under the contract to enforce performance or apply penalties?

Answer:

The contract allows AMSA to apply reductions in payments when the contracted services are not delivered as specified and AMSA has applied such reductions as appropriate.

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Question No: AMSA 08

Division/Agency: Australian Maritime Safety Authority

Topic: Annual Reports

Hansard Page: Written Question

Senator Ludwig asked:

With regard to each Agency (and the Department itself) that fall inside the Department's Portfolio, could the Department indicate what date the Agency's *2005-06 Annual Report* was tabled before Parliament?

Answer:

AMSA's annual report 2005-2006 was tabled on 27 October 2006.

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Question No: AMSA 09

Division/Agency: Australian Maritime Safety Authority

Topic: Annual Reports

Hansard Page: Written Question

Senator Ludwig asked:

If the Annual Report was not tabled by **31 October 2006**, could the Department indicate:

- a. When the Report was tabled, or if it remains un-tabled what date the Report is it expected to be tabled by.
- b. Whether the Agency's own legislation provides an alternative timeframe for its Annual Report. If so, could the Department provide?
 - i. A description and reference to the relevant provision and legislation.
 - ii. An explanation of why the Agency cannot meet the general timeframe set out in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet's Requirements for Annual Reports, and so requires an alternative timeframe?
- c. Whether the Agency was granted an extension under section sub-sections 34C(4) - (7) of the *Acts Interpretation Act 1901*? If so, could the Department provide?
 - i. The date for finalizing the report as set out in the extension.
 - ii. The reason given for granting the extension.
 - iii. The date that the Minister tabled in Parliament a statement explaining why an extension was granted.
 - iv. A copy of the Minister's statement.
- d. Where the Agency's legislation doesn't provide for an alternative timeframe (as per **question b**) nor was the Agency granted an extension (as per **question c**) could the Department provide:
 - i. Explanation for why the Annual Report was tabled outside the timeframe set by DPM&C despite there being no provision alternative timeframe set out in the Agency's legislation nor there being any formal extension granted.
 - ii. Details of any other arrangement in place for the tabling of the Agency's Annual Report.

Answer:

Not applicable.

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Question No: AMSA 10

Division/Agency: Australian Maritime Safety Authority

Topic: Possible Parliamentary Questions

Hansard Page: Written Question

Senator Ludwig asked:

With regard to the preparation of Possible Parliament Questions briefs or other such documents intended to brief Minister's on an issue specifically for Question Time, could the Department/Agency provide:

- (1) The number of such briefs prepared in each of the last three financial years (2003-04, 2004-05, 2005-06).
- (2) The number of staff who are responsible for coordinating such briefs and the salary level they are engaged at.
- (3) The name of internal unit/team that those staff belong to and a description of its other responsibilities.
- (4) The total budget associated with the unit/team referred to in response to part 3.

Answer:

- (1) 2003-04: 17
2004-05: 4
2005-06: 6
- (2) One staff member at EL2 equivalent level.
- (3) The government and international relations team has responsibility for coordination of government and international relations, the AMSA corporate plan and annual report.
- (4) Total annual budget for the team is around \$450,000.

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Question No: AMSA 11

Division/Agency: Australian Maritime Safety Authority

Topic: Legal Services Expenditure

Hansard Page: Written Question

Senator Ludwig asked:

What sum did the Department/Agencies spend during 2005-2006 on external -

- (a) barristers; and
- (b) solicitors (including private firms, the Australian Government Solicitor and any others)?

Answer:

- (a) \$1,943
- (b) \$156,200

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Question No: AMSA 12

Division/Agency: Australian Maritime Safety Authority

Topic: Legal Services Expenditure

Hansard Page: Written Question

Senator Ludwig asked:

What sum did the Department/Agencies spend on internal legal services?

Answer:

AMSA estimates that gross salary expenditure on the provision of internal legal services was \$233,000 in 2005-2006.

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Question No: AMSA 13

Division/Agency: Australian Maritime Safety Authority

Topic: Legal Services Expenditure

Hansard Page: Written Question

Senator Ludwig asked:

What is the Department's/Agencies' projected expenditure on legal services for 2006-2007?

Answer:

AMSA does not budget separately for legal services as this expenditure is included as part of individual project management costs and is not itemised separately. AMSA expects legal services expenditure to be a similar amount as spent in 2005-2006.