

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Environment portfolio

Question No: 39

Hearing: Supplementary Budget Estimates

Outcome: Outcome 5

Programme: Wildlife Heritage and Marine Division

Topic: Update of the Super Trawler

Hansard Page: N/A

Question Date: 27 November 2013

Question Type: Written

Senator Sterle asked:

Can you provide the committee with an update on the Super trawler review.

Answer:

An expert panel was established under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) to provide an independent scientific assessment regarding the potential for adverse environmental impacts that may arise from “super-trawlers”, as defined in the *Final (Small Pelagic Fishery) Declaration 2012*. Consistent with its terms of reference, the expert panel is currently seeking advice from a wide range of relevant experts to inform its assessment. As of December 2013 the panel has:

- considered the substantive submissions that were received through the consultation process with affected commercial fishers for making the declaration under the EPBC Act;
- invited the authors of those substantive submissions to suggest additional experts from whom the panel could seek further advice;
- undertaken 12 face-to-face interviews with identified key experts; and
- considered four written submissions.

The expert panel has also commissioned two literature reviews and a technical review to inform its assessment, particularly in relation to:

- the likely nature and extent of direct interactions with species protected under the EPBC Act;
- the potential for any localised depletion of target species to result in adverse impacts to the Commonwealth marine environment, including the target species’ predators that are protected under the EPBC Act; and
- actions that could be taken by operators of the Declared Commercial Fishing Activity or relevant regulatory authorities to avoid, reduce and mitigate adverse environmental impacts of the activity.

The panel is due to report to the Environment Minister by 22 October 2014.