



Tourism, sharks and safety at sea

The future of Australia's tourism industry, protecting migratory sharks and increasing maritime safety are the subjects of two reports released today by the Treaties Committee.

The first report examines the addition of 31 species to the Bonn Convention, an intergovernmental treaty concerned with the conservation of wildlife and habitats globally. It aims to protect migratory species of animals, birds and fish. The species coming under protection include several varieties of hammerhead and thresher sharks that migrate through Australian waters. Australia has lodged a reservation to listing five of the species due to concerns over recreational fishing.

The second report investigates the International Maritime Organisation's (IMO) Instrument Implementation Code which provides a mandatory audit scheme aimed at improving maritime safety.

The IMO is the United Nations agency responsible for the safety, security and environmental performance of international shipping. Through amendments to a range of relevant IMO conventions, the Code will apply to fire safety and management, and environmental standards. The audit will help Australia and other countries ensure compliance with IMO regulations.

Committee Chair, Wyatt Roy MP, said Australia already complies with the IMO audit requirements and fully supports its efforts to improve safety standards worldwide.

The committee also examined a proposal for Australia to withdraw from the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

The UNWTO is the leading international organisation in the field, promoting tourism as a driver of economic growth and development. The proposed withdrawal has been prompted by claims that Australia is not receiving value for money from its membership of the organisation.

"The committee recognises the important work of the UNWTO and its focus on promoting responsible, sustainable tourism particularly in developing countries. However, the evidence suggests that Australia would gain greater benefit at this time from membership of bodies that focus on our key tourism markets," Mr Roy said.

The final treaty action considered in the report deals with the extension of Australia's agreement with the Netherlands to facilitate the recovery effort after the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17. The original treaty expires on 1 August 2015.

"There is still work to be done after this tragic disaster and Australian personnel are likely to remain in the Netherlands for some time. The treaty needs to be extended to ensure their ongoing protection," Mr Roy said.

The full reports are available on the committee's website: <http://www.aph.gov.au/jsct> or by contacting the committee secretariat on (02) 6277 4002.

MEDIA CONTACTS

Media contact: Mr Wyatt Roy MP
Background: Committee Secretariat

0421 059 438
(02) 6277 4002