

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

Question No: 50
Hearing: Additional Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 1
Programme: Wildlife Heritage and Marine Division (WHM)
Topic: Japanese lethal whaling
Hansard Page: N/A
Question Date: 23 February 2015
Question Type: Written

Senator Whish-Wilson asked:

1. Has there been Ministerial representation to the Japanese government in regards to their plans to continue lethal whaling in the Southern Ocean for the 2015/16 summer season?
2. What plans does the government have to undertake monitoring of Japanese whaling in the Southern Ocean for the 2015/16 summer season?
3. What plans are there for Australia's contribution to the Southern Ocean Research Partnership for the 2015/16 summer season?
4. What role did Australia play at the Expert review panel workshop of the New Scientific Whale Research Program in the Antarctic Ocean (NEWREP-A) special permit proposal in Japan in February 2015?
5. What staff from the Department attended the Expert review panel workshop of the NEWREP-A special permit proposal in Japan in February 2015?

Answer:

1. Yes. The Minister for the Environment, the Hon Greg Hunt MP, met Japan's State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Minoru Kiuchi, on 10 March 2015 in Tokyo and briefly discussed Japan's new Southern Ocean special permit whaling proposal: 'Plan for a New Scientific Whale Research Program in the Antarctic Ocean' (NEWREP-A). Minister Hunt noted that Australia's opinions on whaling differ to Japan, and that we hope to continue to have constructive discussions with Japan on this matter. The Australian Government is providing robust scrutiny of NEWREP-A, through International Whaling Commission (IWC) processes. Australia considers the IWC to be the appropriate forum to address issues relating to whales and whaling.
2. The Government has commenced whole of government planning, including dialogue with New Zealand, in preparation for the possibility that Japan recommences special permit (scientific) whaling in the Southern Ocean in the 2015-16 summer season. The Government does not discuss operational matters such as potential monitoring of Japanese whaling vessels.

3. The IWC led Southern Ocean Research Partnership is delivering valuable, best-practice, non-lethal whale research and demonstrates that whales do not need to be killed in the name of science. Future research activities of the Partnership will be discussed at the upcoming annual meeting of the Commission's Scientific Committee in May/June 2015. During the 2015-16 summer season Australian scientists will be analysing the results of the recent joint Australia-New Zealand Antarctic Ecosystems Voyage to the Southern Ocean that focused on the feeding areas of cetaceans, primarily blue and humpback whales, to better understand the factors affecting their numbers and distribution. Data from Southern Ocean acoustic moorings will also be analysed and additional acoustic moorings deployed. Australia will continue to collaborate in the five ongoing multi-national, Southern Ocean Research Partnership projects throughout the summer of 2015-16 and will support the Partnership's Secretariat in facilitating Southern Ocean research until the end of 2015.
4. Australia submitted two scientific papers to the Expert Panel Review Workshop analysing NEWREP-A's proposed methodology and assessing whether non-lethal research methods could be used instead of killing whales. Australia attended the workshop as an observer, but had a dispensation to present a critique of NEWREP-A to the panel. The Review Panel's report from the workshop on the scientific merit of NEWREP-A will be presented to the Scientific Committee for consideration at its meeting in May/June 2015. Papers informing the Expert Panel Review Workshop are available on the IWC website.
5. Dr William de la Mare and Dr John McKinlay from the Australian Antarctic Division attended the Expert Panel Review Workshop in Tokyo in February.