

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

Question No: 21
Hearing: Budget Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 1
Programme: Wildlife Heritage and Marine Division
Topic: THREAT ABATEMENT PLAN - MARINE DEBRIS
Hansard Page: N/A
Question Date: 10 June 2014
Question Type: Written

Senator Whish-Wilson asked:

1. What scientific studies are ongoing this financial year in relation to addressing the challenge of marine debris under the Threat Abatement Plan?
2. What scientific studies have been funded over the forward estimates?
 - a. What has been the level of funding for these studies in the current financial?
 - b. What funding is being made available to continue this work into the future?
 - c. Are the outcomes of these studies published?

Answer:

1. In 2013-14, the Department of the Environment has been engaged through the International Whaling Commission, the Convention on Migratory Species and the Arafura and Timor Seas Ecosystem Action Program with studies on marine debris.
2. The Department of the Environment has no new funding in forward estimates to commission scientific studies specifically on marine debris. However under the Government's Reef 2050 Plan election commitment, \$700 000 over 2 years has been committed for marine debris clean-up activities. This funding will be delivered through the Reef Trust.

The marine debris clean-up activities will improve the quality of coastal and marine habitats along the Great Barrier Reef. Activities will include the physical removal of marine debris, including ghost nets (abandoned fishing nets), and community engagement and awareness-raising. Activities will be selected and undertaken in accordance with the Reef 2050 Plan, the Reef Trust principles and objective, the Dugong and Turtle Protection Plan and the marine debris threat abatement plan.

- a) & b) The Department will continue its engagement through international and regional initiatives to address the challenge of marine debris into the future.
- c) A report from the first International Whaling Commission workshop is available at: <https://events.iwc.int/index.php/scientific/SC65a/paper/view/277/267>.

The second International Whaling Commission workshop will be held in August 2014 and a report will be submitted to the International Whaling Commission's 65th meeting in September 2014.

Reports arising from the three projects undertaken through the Convention on Migratory Species will be presented to the Convention on Migratory Species Scientific Council meeting (1-3 July 2014) for consideration, with a view to

submitting the reports to the 11th Conference of Parties for endorsement. The reports will then be available for wider circulation.

Information and studies resulting from the work undertaken through the Arafura and Timor Seas Ecosystem Action Program is available at the following sites:

<http://www.ghostnets.com.au/research/finding-solutions/indonesian-workshops/>

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23570989>

Reports funded by the Department in previous financial years are available on the Department's website and include:

- *Understanding the types, sources, and at-sea distribution of marine debris in Australian waters.* (Hardesty BD and Wilcox C. 2011)
<http://www.environment.gov.au/node/18284>
- *Impacts of plastic debris on Australian marine wildlife* (C&R Consulting Pty Ltd 2009) <http://www.environment.gov.au/resource/impacts-plastic-debris-australian-marine-wildlife>
- *Research on the impact of marine debris on marine turtle survival and behaviour* (Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation 2009)
<http://www.environment.gov.au/resource/research-impact-marine-debris-marine-turtle-survival-and-behaviour-north-east-arnhem-land>
- *Pilot investigation of the origins and pathways of marine debris found in the northern Australian marine environment* (Centre for Australian Weather and Climate Research 2008) <http://www.environment.gov.au/resource/pilot-investigation-origins-and-pathways-marine-debris-found-northern-australian-marine>