

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

Question No: 48
Hearing: Budget Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 1
Programme: Wildlife Heritage and Marine Division
Topic: MARINE DEBRIS THREAT ABATEMENT PLAN
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Question Date: 27 May 2014
Question Type: Spoken

Senator Whish-Wilson asked:

Senator WHISH-WILSON: I want to continue the questions I have asked at previous estimates around the threat abatement plan for marine debris. We heard tonight about some mitigation strategies for rivers, but is any scientific work being done on the impacts of marine debris and is there any funding in forward estimates for this area?

Mr Thompson: There are a few aspects to that question. Concerning the threat abatement plan for marine debris, the substance of that would be covered under program 1.4 rather than here. On research in relation to marine debris, there may be some extant research being undertaken by the national environment research program hubs. We have a couple that may have that within their research program. I would have to take that on notice. The last bit of your question was around whether there was any funding going into addressing marine debris.

Senator WHISH-WILSON: Could you give us an idea of how much has been spent since the threat abatement plan and the threatening process was identified by the environment department?

Mr Thompson: Again, I would have to take that question on notice for outcome 1.4 to report back on. In terms of the funding as it relates to 1.1, this outcome, we have current existing contracts with respect to marine debris in Northern Australia

Answer:

The Commonwealth funds actions identified in the threat abatement plan from various sources, including the Department of the Environment; the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service; the Australian Maritime Safety Authority; and the CSIRO.

Funding from the Department of the Environment includes:

- a. 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.

Details on the delivery arrangements will be finalised following consultation with relevant groups and community organisations.

- b. From 2009 to 2013, \$7.1 million has been invested through Caring for Our Country grants to governments, land councils, and non-government organisations to address marine debris issues such as pollution, litter removal, education, removal of ghost nets, species protection from marine debris, and monitoring.
- b. Working on Country funded around 40 ranger groups across Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory to undertake a range of activities, including some associated with the threat abatement plan. The activities include beach and marine debris cleanup, data collection and collation, marine fauna rescue and autopsy, community education, and liaison with project stakeholders.
- c. Water for the Future funded over \$6 million from 2008 to 2014 for the removal of potential marine debris by the installation of gross pollutant traps, biofiltration systems and constructed wetlands in Sydney and Perth.