

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

Question No: 93
Hearing: Budget Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 3
Programme: Australian Antarctic Division
Topic: ANTARCTIC BASE
Hansard Page: N/A
Question Date: 10 June 2014
Question Type: Written

Senator Whish-Wilson asked:

1. Where are the discussions with China up to for regarding them opening a new base in the Australian Antarctic Territory?
2. Are discussions underway between the AAD and any other country regarding us offering contracting services for them to run Antarctic bases?

Answer:

1. The Antarctic Treaty provides for freedom of scientific investigation in Antarctica. Consistent with the provisions of the Antarctic Treaty and the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty, activities such as establishing scientific support facilities in Antarctica are matters for the proponent country (or the country whose nationals are the proponent).

China established a seasonal (summer only) facility called *Taishan* station in the Grove Mountains region of the Australian Antarctic Territory in the summer of 2013/14.

China proposes to establish a new year-round scientific station in the Ross Sea region of Antarctica, which is outside the Australian Antarctic Territory.

- The environmental aspects of the proposed new station were considered at the 37th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting, held in Brasilia in April-May 2014, which discussed the draft Comprehensive Environmental Evaluation (CEE) that had been circulated by China in accordance with the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty.
- In accordance with the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty, should China decide to proceed with the proposed station, it is required to prepare a final CEE addressing comments received on the draft CEE from other Parties. A final CEE must be circulated 60 days before the commencement of the activity.

2. No