

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

Question No: 217

Hearing: Budget Estimates

Outcome: Agency

Programme: Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

Topic: International travel

Hansard Page: 56

Question Date: 25 May 2015

Question Type: Spoken

Senator WATERS asked:

Senator WATERS: On the lobbying trips, I understand that GBRMPA staff have gone along with various ministerial and departmental representatives to do their reef lobbying. Have any of the GBRMPA officers been allowed to speak with World Heritage country/nations without the minister or the department present?

Dr Reichelt: Yes, we have. I am just looking for the exact figures here. I have met with my counterparts in 11 member countries. I was on my own. I had no colleagues with me other than a Foreign Affairs person who helped facilitate the travel and took notes at the meeting.

Senator WATERS: You were meeting with whom?

Dr Reichelt: The natural expert advisers to the governments who were taking an interest in understanding the Great Barrier Reef and committee members.

Senator WATERS: Can you provide a bit more detail on notice about that? In those meetings, did you bring to the attention of the folk with whom you were conversing that statement in the outlook report which says that the overall outlook for the Great Barrier Reef is poor, has worsened since 2009 and is expected to further deteriorate in the future?

Dr Reichelt: Yes. Some of the meetings were short, an hour or so. In some cases the longest was nine hours, where I was quizzed in great detail about that report.

Senator WATERS: You drew that statement to their attention in every meeting?

Dr Reichelt: Yes, very much so. I was able to explain that it operates at different scales. It is the climate change effects, it is the long run changes in catchments, it is the fact that at the time that report was written there were five new ports proposed, and extensions. It was actually written in advance of the changes that have occurred in the past 12 months in ports policies. I was given unfettered access to those, to the extent that they wanted to meet with me.

Answer:

During overseas travel in 2015 (up to the end of April) the GBRMPA Chairman Dr Reichelt met with his counterparts from the following World Heritage Committee countries without members of the Commonwealth Department of the Environment present, and in the company of a representative from the Commonwealth Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade:

- Finland – Metsähallitus, Parks and Wildlife Finland
- Poland – Ministry of the Environment; National Heritage Board; Institute of Geography and Spatial Organization at the Polish Academy of Sciences; Ministry for Foreign Affairs
- Croatia – Ministry of Environment; University of Zagreb
- Serbia – Institute for Nature Conservation Serbia; Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Portugal – Ministry of the Environment; Portuguese Commission for UNESCO
- Germany – Federal Agency for Nature Conservation; Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety; Federal Foreign Office
- Jamaica – National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA); Ministry of State for Land, Water, Environment and Climate Change (MLWECC)
- Colombia – Office of International Affairs and Cooperation, National Parks Agency (PNNC); Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ministry of the Environment; and Ministry of Culture
- Peru – Ministry of Culture; Ministry of Foreign Affairs; National Service of Natural Protected Areas (SERNANP)

Dr Reichelt attended meetings in the company of a representative from the Commonwealth Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade with officials from:

- Switzerland – IUCN
- France – UNESCO World Heritage Centre

Dr Reichelt participated in further meetings organised and attended by officials from the Department of the Environment with officials from:

- Switzerland – IUCN
- France – UNESCO World Heritage Centre