

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

Question No: 84
Hearing: Budget Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 1.4
Programme: Wildlife Heritage and Marine Division (WHM)
Topic: Sharks Memorandum of Understanding
Hansard Page: 66-67
Question Date: 26 May 2015
Question Type: Spoken

Senator Siewert asked:

Mr Oxley: I think it would be fair to say that we had a very good appreciation of the views of all of the stakeholder interests and, when considering the ramification of listing these species on the EPBC Act, when essentially the consequence of listing is a level of protection that goes beyond what is actually required under the Convention on Migratory Species, Appendix 2, which is where they were listed, and bearing in mind the difficulties that were had a few years earlier in relation to the listing of mako sharks, the decision was taken to enter a reservation. It was a decision taken on the advice of the department.

That reservation, however, does not in any way diminish the commitment to the conservation of the species. It recognises that the way that the EPBC Act operates, there is a very significant penalty on anybody who interacts with those species, even though their conservation status is arguably not at question when Appendix 2 requires states to cooperate together through the conservation of those species. So while reservations have been taken out, Australia will continue to actively engage in activities to support the conservation of those species, including through our support for the memorandum of understanding on conservation of sharks under the convention itself.

We are actively involved, we have been a contributor of funding in the past and we will monitor the proponents of the sharks' MOU. We will stay actively engaged and we are seeking to have these species incorporated under the MOU so that there is a focused conservation effort put in place in relation to those species.

Senator SIEWERT: I have been told I have run out of time. Could I just ask if you could send that?

Mr Oxley: Yes, we will.

Answer:

Australia signed the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Sharks (the Sharks MOU) in 2011. Australia has provided an annual voluntary contribution of \$20,000 to the Sharks MOU each year from 2012 to 2015. This funding is directed towards the support of priority research and conservation projects and the maintenance of the Sharks MOU secretariat. The Sharks MOU aims to achieve and maintain a favourable conservation status for listed shark and ray species, which includes ensuring healthy and viable populations of these species remain in their existing habitats. Promoting cooperation and sharing information between countries that have signed the MOU is also a major focus of the instrument.

The second meeting of signatories of the Sharks MOU is expected to be held in February 2016. At this meeting the shark and ray species that were listed on the Appendices of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS) at the 11th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties will be considered for listing on Annex 1 of the Sharks MOU. Australia is an active member of the Sharks MOU Advisory Committee and is assisting in the preparation of these listing proposals for consideration. Australia is supportive of all shark and ray species listed on the Appendices of the CMS being listed on Annex 1 of the Sharks MOU.