

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee**

Answers to questions on notice
Environment and Energy portfolio

Question No: 86
Hearing: Budget Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 1
Program: Environment Standards Division (ESD)
Topic: Prosecutions
Hansard Page: 5 and 6
Question Date: 23 May 2017
Question Type: Spoken

Senator Rhiannon asked:

Senator RHIANNON: How many prosecutions is the department pursuing at the present time?

Mr Murphy: Our investigations section is in outcome 1.5. I am aware of investigations into wildlife, but I would have to take on notice and get the investigations section to advise you about how many investigations are underway.

Senator RHIANNON: if you could take that on notice please.

Senator RHIANNON: I want to go back to the issue of platypuses and platypus diplomacy. When we discussed—

Mr Knudson: Senator, Mr Cahill is here and can probably answer that question that we had to take on notice earlier on.

Mr Cahill: You may be aware that on 3 March an individual was arrested by the Australian Federal Police and charged with 40 offences for alleged involvement in an illegal international wildlife smuggling network. So we do put a concerted effort in this space. This included 37 counts contrary to the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act and three offences contrary to the Biosecurity Act. We have an ongoing investigation into a series of networks smuggling wildlife both into and out of Australia. This is a joint agency operation with the Australian Federal Police, who coordinate this investigation with us, and we are supported by a range of other Commonwealth agencies, including the Australian Border Force. We are very conscious that illegal trade in Australia's wildlife is unacceptable and very conscious of what that can mean to the welfare of Australia's unique wildlife. At the moment that investigation is ongoing, so it is probably inappropriate for me to comment any further.

Senator RHIANNON: The question was about how many prosecutions the department has pursued in the past year. You have mentioned one. Are there others?

Mr Cahill: This is the primary one. I am not aware of any actual prosecutions in the last two years. But I will take it on notice and go back through our records.

Answer:

In the last twelve months there have been no prosecutions completed by the Department. The Department has commenced five prosecutions through the Commonwealth Department of Public Prosecutions. A further four matters have been referred to Commonwealth Department of Public Prosecutions for assessment.