

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

**Question No:** 86  
**Hearing:** Supplementary Budget Estimates  
**Outcome:** Outcome 1.4  
**Programme:** Wildlife Heritage and Marine Division (WHM)  
**Topic:** UNESCO Monitoring Mission  
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**Question Type:** Spoken

**Senator Singh asked:**

**Senator SINGH:** I will finish this section and then we can put the others on notice. In regard to the department's engagement with the UNESCO monitoring mission that is coming to Tassie, I think in November, what will be the process of engagement that you will have with that mission?

**Mr Oxley:** The process of engagement will be essentially that there will be a couple of officers available at the disposal of the monitoring mission throughout the week that they are here. And they will be there as a conduit between the monitoring mission and government in the sense that if there is advice during the monitoring mission that the mission needs to get access to, then it will be able to enable that quickly if there is a particular expertise—

**Senator SINGH:** What will the monitoring mission be doing?

**Mr Oxley:** Essentially the monitoring mission have been asked to come to Tasmania to have a direct engagement in relation to the management plan and talk further with the Tasmanian government about it. They have been asked to come and have a dialogue with the state parties, Australia and the Tasmanian government in this case, in relation to making progress on the cultural values study for which the Australian government has provided funding in this financial year, and to assess the overall state of conservation of the property.

What does that mean in practical terms? It means that they will be receiving briefings from the Tasmanian government in relation to the draft management plan and the management arrangements for the property. They will be meeting a whole range of stakeholder groups that have got interest in the areas of concern that have been raised by the World Heritage Committee and then lastly they will be spending quite an extensive amount of time in the field inspecting firsthand the property, either with the Tasmanian parks department or with the various stakeholder groups, environment NGOs, the special species timber industry, the tourism industry and Aboriginal people from Tasmania.

**Senator SINGH:** In the interests of time, Mr Oxley, I would like you to take on notice what the expected outcomes from the mission will be. I ask you, because you did say to me in the May estimates that, even though budget issues have been delayed around the cultural values study or cultural heritage study, hopes were to get it kick-started very soon: has that allocation been funded yet and where is that study at?

**Mr Oxley:** It has been funded. The study has not yet commenced. There has been quite extensive dialogue and engagement between the Tasmanian department, PIPWE, and Aboriginal groups in Tasmania. PIPWE is working very hard to have a cultural values study scoped that has the full endorsement of the Aboriginal community in Tasmania. That is not an easy thing to achieve.

**Senator SINGH:** Is this a first for Australia to have UNESCO send a mission like this to Australia or to any other developed nation to examine and suggest improvements on how World Heritage areas are managed? Would that be a first?

**Mr Oxley:** No, in the sense that we had a reactive monitoring mission to the Tasmanian wilderness in 2008, I think it was. We had a reactive monitoring mission to the Great Barrier Reef in 2012, I think. They are examples.

**Mr Thompson:** It is very common for other developed countries and developing countries to receive monitoring missions as a way of the World Heritage Committee centre understanding better what is happening on the ground.

**Mr Oxley:** There are two essential principal lines of engagement by the World Heritage Committee in the field. The first is the conduct of reactive monitoring missions in relation to specific properties but they also go into the field to do very detailed assessments of properties that have been nominated for inclusion on the World Heritage list. So the field work is not at all unusual in the World Heritage system.

**Answer:**

The reactive monitoring mission to the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area will prepare a report on its findings and recommendations for consideration by the Australian and Tasmanian governments and the World Heritage Committee.