

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

Answers to questions on notice
Environment and Energy portfolio

Question No: 106
Hearing: Supplementary Budget Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 1
Program: Wildlife Heritage and Marine Division (WHM)
Topic: Whale Deaths
Hansard Page: n/a
Question Date: 24 October 2016
Question Type: Written

Senator Whish-Wilson, Peter asked:

How many whales and what species of whales have been caught or killed by ship strikes each year over the last decade? What is the breakdown by geographic region?

Answer:

In Australian waters between 2006 and 2015 there were 63 reports of a collision between a vessel and a whale, or of a dead whale at sea or washed ashore that showed evidence of a collision with a vessel. Of these 63 reports, 24 stated that the whale died or was already dead. The remainder reported that the status of the individual was unknown, ranging from no sign of injury to evidence of serious injury.

Nine species of whales were identified in the reports: humpback whale, southern right whale, blue whale, sperm whale, pygmy right whale, fin whale, pygmy sperm whale, Antarctic minke whale and dwarf minke whale. The most frequently reported species was humpback whale with 33 records, while 13 reports did not record the species.

Ship strikes were reported from waters off all states except the Northern Territory. The highest number were recorded off Queensland with 26 reports.

The Australian Government, with the cooperation of State and Territory agencies, collates data on ship strikes as part of Australia's annual National Progress Report to the International Whaling Commission.

Recent research and data collection on ship strike funded by the Australian Government includes:

- *Quantitative assessment of the relative risk of ship strike to humpback whales in the GBR* – Final report 2015 – funded through the Australian Marine Mammal Centre
- *Quantification of national ship strike risk* – funded through the National Environmental Science Program Marine Biodiversity Hub.

A draft *National Strategy for Mitigating Vessel Strike of Marine Mega-fauna* is currently available on the Department's website for public comment.