

Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry, Innovation and Science Portfolio
2017 - 2018 Budget Estimates
31 May – 1 June 2017

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND SCIENCE

TOPIC: Country of Origin Labelling for Seafood

REFERENCE: Questions on Notice (Hansard, 1 June 2017, pages 94-95)

QUESTION No.: BI-52

Senator XENOPHON: On 28 November 2016 the government announced its intention to consider improvements to origin labelling for seafood sold in the food service sector in Australia: 'The consultation process with stakeholders will be led by the Assistant Minister for Industry, the Hon. Craig Laundy MP. The government will report back to the parliament by the end of 2017.' We are almost halfway there. Has this consultation process begun?

Mr Power: The consultation itself has not been completed yet. The consultation is being set up now and will be brought together by Assistant Minister Laundy. So, we have started organising that. It has not occurred yet.

Senator XENOPHON: I think Senator McKenzie asked a question on 9 February this year and the response was that the assistant minister had written to key stakeholders seeking their views and further information on this issue, and the working group would then review this information and consider next steps. Can you advise me, either now or on notice, of how many stakeholders the minister has written to?

Mr Power: I would have to take that on notice.

Senator XENOPHON: Do you have a rough idea—a ballpark figure?

Mr Power: No. I would prefer to take it on notice, to give you an accurate number.

ANSWER

The Hon Craig Laundy MP, Assistant Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science, has commenced seafood origin consultations. On 7 February 2017, Assistant Minister Laundy wrote to 12 key seafood, restaurant, catering and hospitality industry groups, and a consumer organisation seeking input on the barriers consumers face accessing seafood origin information in foodservice purchases.

On 5 July 2017, Assistant Minister Laundy convened a working group of seafood and foodservice industry stakeholders for more detailed discussions on the provision of seafood origin information. The working group consisted of Seafood Industry Australia, Restaurant and Catering Industry Association, Sydney Fish Market, Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council, Northern Territory Seafood Council, Fisheries Research and Development Corporation, Seafood Importers Association of Australia, Australian Hotels Association and Professional Fisherman's Association (NSW).

The Department of Industry, Innovation and Science has also been consulting with relevant Commonwealth and State government consumer affairs and fisheries agencies.

Assistant Minister Laundy's work on seafood origins is also leveraging the extensive public submissions already provided to past Senate and Productivity Commission inquiries into food labelling and seafood industry matters, including:

- Labelling Logic: Review of Food Labelling Law and Policy, independent review of food labelling law and policy chaired by Dr. Neal Blewett in 2011;
- Inquiry into the Current Requirements for Labelling of Seafood and Seafood Products by the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee in 2014;
- Inquiry into the Food Standards Amendment (Fish Labelling) Bill 2015 by the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee in 2015;
- Inquiry into Opportunities for Expanding Aquaculture in Northern Australia by the Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia in 2016; and
- Inquiry into Regulation of Australian Marine Fisheries and Aquaculture Sectors by the Productivity Commission in 2016.