

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

**Agriculture**

**Question:** 312

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Caring for our Country Innovation Grants recipients

**Proof Hansard page:** 122

**Senator FARRELL asked:**

**Senator FARRELL:** Mr Tucker, can I go back to some of the questions you were answering for Senator Siewert. You talked about a figure of \$17 million. Do I take it that that would have been under the discretionary grants program?

**Mr Tucker:** Some of those, yes, were discretionary grants. They had been out for proposals to come in. They had come in but just the timing of it around the election meant that they were not completed—

**Senator FARRELL:** When you say not completed, contracts weren't signed—

**Mr Tucker:** Contracts were not signed.

**Senator FARRELL:** but offers had been made to—

**Mr Tucker:** For some.

**Senator FARRELL:** Yes, okay. How many of the \$17 million?

**Ms Barbour:** Thirty-one.

**Senator FARRELL:** Thirty-one projects. Are you able to identify those projects for us?

**Mr Tucker:** We would have to take it on notice. I don't think we would have the list of every project here this evening.

**Senator FARRELL:** Nobody here has got the list of all of those projects?

**Ms Barbour:** Not with us this evening, sorry.

**Senator FARRELL:** Not with us. How quickly can you get us that list of 31 projects?

**Ms Barbour:** We can provide it tomorrow?

**Senator FARRELL:** Thank you.

**Answer:**

This advice was provided on 26 November 2013.

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

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Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

**Agriculture**

**Question:** 313

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Grants programs administration costs

**Proof Hansard page:** 124

**The CHAIR asked:** CHAIR: So the grant program does not get rated by the bureaucracy?

**Ms Green:** Okay, I may have misunderstood that. The 10 per cent that I was talking about was actually for the applicant and their project—

**CHAIR:** So where does the bureaucracy feed itself from—that administers all this?

**Senator Abetz:** From its departmental allocation.

**CHAIR:** Just from its departmental allocation—nothing to do with the grant system?

**Dr Grimes:** There have been some allocations out of administered funding for years, but they have been—

**CHAIR:** Could you take that on notice?

**Dr Grimes:** We could take it on notice. They are actually fixed amounts. There is not just a general bucket there that departments can dip into.

**Answer:**

Administration of the Sustainable Agriculture stream of Caring for our Country is funded from the Landcare departmental appropriation and the Sustainable Agriculture stream of the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT). In 2013-14 funds for administration are \$2.1 million from the Landcare departmental appropriation and \$8.0 million from the NHT.

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

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Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

**Agriculture**

**Question:** 316

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Australian Feral Camel Management Project

**Proof Hansard page:** 127

**Senator RHIANNON asked:**

**Senator RHIANNON:** Thank you for the new figure, but the question was that you have a company that makes an estimation on the numbers, and then the contract is awarded on the basis of that figure to the very company that has made the estimation.

**Mr Talbot:** I would have to take that on notice, because I do not know the exact details of how the contract was originally negotiated.

**Answer:**

The original estimate of the size of the population of feral camels was prepared by a working group of professional population ecologists/modellers and wildlife scientists employed by the Northern Territory Government, as part of a study of the camel problem coordinated by the (then) Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre. Ninti One Ltd was established as the commercial arm of the Cooperative Research Centre.

The project was funded by a grant from Caring for our Country to Ninti One Ltd to manage the threat posed by feral camels to desert ecosystems, pastoral businesses and remote Indigenous communities and interests across much of Australia's rangelands. The grant was predicated on mitigating the unacceptable level of damage to these assets and values caused by feral camels, and not on the number of feral camels.

Ninti One Ltd was not contracted to remove a specific number of camels.

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**Agriculture**

**Question:** 317

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Ngaanyatjarra Camel Company

**Proof Hansard page:** 127

**Senator RHIANNON asked:**

**Senator RHIANNON:** Okay, if you could take it on notice, thank you. Were you aware of any warnings made by organisations such as the Ngaanyatjarra Camel Company about the overstating of the feral camel problem?

**Mr Talbot:** I would have to take that on notice, because I would really have to check with other departmental officers. I am certainly not aware.

**Answer:**

The Department of Agriculture received various items of correspondence offering opinions on the size of the population of feral camels. We are not aware of any specific correspondence from the Ngaanyatjarra Camel Company.

The subject was also raised in meetings, including meetings of the project Steering Committee attended by Departmental officers.

We are not aware of any suggestions of overstating the damage caused by feral camels.

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Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

**Agriculture**

**Question:** 319

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Overstating the feral camel problem

**Proof Hansard page:** 128

**Senator RHIANNON asked:**

**Senator RHIANNON:** I heard you say that the costs were about \$40 a head, and for the non-commercial I think you said they were \$25 to \$40 a head. I would have to revise that, because I have the final cost here as \$15 million for the culling of 140,000 camels. That comes in at \$103 per camel. So isn't the figure of \$40 a head that you are giving based on the inflated figure of the number of camels to be culled, not the actual number that were culled?

**Mr Talbot:** I will have to take that on notice in terms of doing the maths. Also, I have a subnote here that, where there were very small culls, it could be up to \$120 per head.

**Senator RHIANNON:** That is even higher than my figure.

**Mr Talbot:** So I will take that away and do the maths on that.

**Answer:**

Ninti One Ltd, as the project manager, has advised that the operational costs of camel removal operations were generally in the range of \$25-40 per head. Small culls have generally been more expensive. The most cost-effective operation was as low as \$17 per head.

The Department of Agriculture will consider the final report for the project, and review the figures for costs of camel removal, as part of the regular process for project finalisation.

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**Agriculture**

**Question:** 320

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Caring For Our Country Grant—between Bathurst and Mudgee

**Proof Hansard page:** 128

**Senator HEFFERNAN asked:**

**CHAIR:** I ran into the guy who made the assessment. He said it would cost \$400,000, I think it was, just to spray the blackberries. And we locked the bloody joint up to save 200 acres of gummy grass country for \$890,000 or whatever it was. It was a con, and someone should go to jail. Can you take it on, because you share the responsibility—

**Mr Tucker:** We will check with Environment.

**CHAIR:** Can you check with them and come back to this committee with what has happened to that investigation? I want to see every word of it.

**Dr Grimes:** We would be happy to forward that to Environment.

**Answer:**

As the Department of Environment have responsibility for the grant in question, this request for information would be best directed to that department.

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**Agriculture**

**Question:** 321

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Caring for our Country grant and R.M Williams property

**Proof Hansard page:** 129

**The CHAIR asked:**

**CHAIR:** Also, what eventually happened to the millions of dollars we spent on the R. M. Williams property in Central Australia?

**Dr Grimes:** Again, that is a matter for the environment department.

**CHAIR:** But it is the same sort of money. You might also get the details for me and save me yelling at everyone.

**Dr Grimes:** Okay; we will pass that on.

**Answer:**

As the Department of the Environment have responsibility for the R.M Williams grant, this request for information is best directed to that department.

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

**Agriculture**

**Question:** 323

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Regional Group Funding

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator SIEWERT asked:**

Does the Federal Government intend to provide funding to the new NSW Local Land Services as part of the regional allocation from July onwards this year? Has a contract been signed? Is it at the same level as the 1 year contract issued to NSW CMAs as part of the transition? Will this include as in all the other regional allocations, funding for Regional Landcare Facilitators?

**Answer:**

Existing contracts with NSW Catchment Management Authorities end 30 June 2014. Funding beyond 2013-14 will be considered by the Government upon finalisation of the administrative arrangements for the Local Land Services model.



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**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

**Agriculture**

**Question:** 325

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Funding for Queensland and NSW water infrastructure grants

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator SIEWERT asked:**

From where specifically is the funding for the newly announced Queensland and NSW water infrastructure grants coming from?

**Answer:**

Uncommitted funds within the department's programs, the source of which will be made clear in the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

**Agriculture**

**Question:** 326

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Innovation in Agriculture grant round

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator SIEWERT asked:**

Some organisations in the Innovation in Agriculture grant round have received letters indicating grant success, but no contracts yet. Do you intend to follow through with projects approved but not-yet-contracted under grant rounds managed under the previous government?

**Answer:**

The government is considering the projects that have not been contracted. It is normal process for a new government to assess projects that were not finalised and to seek to ensure that spending aligns with the priorities of a new government.

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

**Agriculture**

**Question:** 327

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Caring for our Country

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator SIEWERT asked:**

Are there any other plans to reduce the size of existing allocations for the Caring for our Country program or redirect funds to other non-NRM related projects or 'NRM' projects that were not intended to be resourced from this pool?

Is the Caring for our Country program subject to recommendations from the Commission of Audit given that there was an election commitment to maintain the current funding levels?

**Answer:**

The government is considering options to improve its broader investment in agriculture and natural resource management through a new National Landcare Programme.

The National Commission of Audit terms of reference state that the Commission has a broad remit to examine the scope for efficiency and productivity improvements across all areas of Commonwealth expenditure.

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

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Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

**Agriculture**

**Question:** 328

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Merging Caring for our Country and Landcare

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator STERLE asked:**

Can you update the committee on the decision process for merging Caring for our Country and Landcare Programs?

**Answer:**

Decisions on the programme will be made by the Natural Heritage Ministerial Board, comprising the Minister for Agriculture and the Minister for the Environment.

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

**Agriculture**

**Question:** 330

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Pre-election grants

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator STERLE asked:**

Can you update the committee on pre-election grants that were announced and approved and whether they will be honored even if the contracts weren't signed off on?

**Answer:**

The government is considering options to improve its broader investment in agriculture and natural resource management through a new National Landcare Programme. This includes considering the way forward for projects that have not been contracted.

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

**Agriculture**

**Question:** 331

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Advisory committees or programs be cut

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator STERLE asked:**

Will any advisory committees or programs within this division be cut by the government?

**Answer:**

This is a matter for the government.

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

**Agriculture**

**Question:** 333

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Red and green tape cuts for fisheries sector

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator STERLE asked:**

How will the Government cut the cost of red and green tape for businesses in the fisheries sector?

**Answer:**

Please refer to Hansard, Senate Supplementary Estimates 19 November 2013 page 83 and page 87.

The Department of Agriculture is continuing to consult the government on the implementation of green and red tape reduction issues.

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

**Agriculture**

**Question:** 334

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Update on Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator STERLE asked:**

Can you provide the committee with an update on the establishment of the Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee?

**Answer:**

Please refer to Hansard, Senate Supplementary Estimates 19 November 2013 page 85.



**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

**Agriculture**

**Question:** 335

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Contact with Mr Allan Hansard

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator STERLE asked:**

Has the Department contacted Mr Allan Hansard to discuss this matter?

**Answer:**

At the request of Mr Hansard, the department met with Mr Hansard and members of the Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation on 26 November 2013.

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

**Agriculture**

**Question:** 336

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Secretary briefed on investigations of AFMA

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator STERLE asked:**

1. Has the secretary been briefed on the department's investigation of AFMA conducted at the end of last year and completed in the beginning of this year?
2. Are there any plans to review AFMA in the future?

**Answer:**

1. No
2. No

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

**Agriculture**

**Question:** 338

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Landcare Australia Limited Projects

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator STERLE asked:**

What sort of projects will not go ahead because of this cut?

**Answer:**

The government is considering options to improve its broader investment in agriculture and natural resource management through a new National Landcare Programme.

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

**Agriculture**

**Question:** 339

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Governments commitments to policies

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator STERLE asked:**

Can you provide the committee with detail about the government's commitments in this policy area and what has been done or will be done to implement the following policies:

- a) Marine Bioregional Planning Process
- b) Review and Streamline Regulations
- c) Australia's Seafood Task – National Aquaculture Strategy
- d) Improve Engagement with Indigenous Communities
- e) Improve the Connection between Science and fishing
- f) Reinvigorate a Representative Body for Recreational Fishers
- g) Conduct Recreation Fishing surveys every five years
- h) Recognise Ocean Watch as a Natural Resource Management Group
- i) Target Invasive Marine Species
- j) Assist Commercial and Recreational Organisations Adapt to National Maritime Safety Standards
- k) Work to develop Sustainable Mechanisms for Strong Representative Recreational and Commercial Fishing Bodies
- l) Commit to Fighting Illegal Foreign Fishing

**Answer:**

- a) Please refer to Hansard, Senate Supplementary Estimates 19 November 2013 pg 83
- b) Please refer to Hansard, Senate Supplementary Estimates 19 November 2013 pg 83.
- c) Please refer to Hansard, Senate Supplementary Estimates 19 November 2013 pg 84

**Question: 339 (continued)**

- d) Please refer to Hansard, Senate Supplementary Estimates 19 November 2013 pg 84
- e) Please refer to Hansard, Senate Supplementary Estimates 19 November 2013 pg 84
- f) Please refer to Hansard, Senate Supplementary Estimates 19 November 2013 pg 85
- g) Please refer to Hansard, Senate Supplementary Estimates 19 November 2013 pg 86
- h) Please refer to Hansard, Senate Supplementary Estimates 19 November 2013 pg 86
- i) The Government is developing terms of reference for its commitment to review invasive marine species with a view to implementing improved management of invasive marine pests.
- j) Please refer to Hansard, Senate Supplementary Estimates 19 November 2013 pg 86
- k) Please refer to Hansard, Senate Supplementary Estimates 19 November 2013 pg 85
- l) Please refer to Hansard, Senate Supplementary Estimates 19 November 2013 pg 86

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

**Agriculture**

**Question:** 340

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management

**Topic:** Stereo-video monitoring system for Southern Bluefin Tuna industry

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator STERLE asked:**

What is the current status of the stereo-video monitoring system for the Southern Bluefin Tuna industry?

- a) If it has been cut, who made the decision to scrap stereo-video monitoring?
- b) Did the Minister or Parl Sec speak to Japan or any other member of the CCSBT before making that decision?
- c) What was the reaction of the Japanese or other members of that commission?
- d) What interactions or briefings has AFMA provided to the minister or Parl sec on making that decision?
- e) What was the cost for stereo video monitoring to date? What cost would it have required to complete the job? Could this have been cost recovered from industry?
- f) What representations did industry make to the Parl sec or minister before the decision to scrap stereo-video monitoring?
- g) Could the government have used part of its \$100m boost to R&D funding to provide support for the industry to adjust to the monitoring?

**Answer:**

At the 20<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna, held in Adelaide from 14-17 October 2013, the Australian Government advised that the implementation of stereo video monitoring had been postponed until the technology is fully automated and cost effective.

- a) Senator, the Hon. Richard Colbeck, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture made the decision to postpone the implementation of stereo video monitoring until the technology is fully automated and cost effective.

**Question: 340 (continued)**

- b) The department is not able to advise on discussions held by the Minister or Parliamentary Secretary prior to making the decision.
- c) The other members of the Commission, most notably Japan and New Zealand, were disappointed that they had not been informed prior to the Compliance Committee of the decision to delay the implementation. The Australian negotiating framework was approved at ministerial level on 8 October 2013 following the federal election on 7 September 2013. Members of the Commission were informed of the reason for the late notification.
- d) AFMA provided briefing to both the Minister for Agriculture and the Parliamentary Secretary.
- e) If stereo video monitoring was implemented in the SBT Fishery from 1 December 2013 the costs would have been approximately A\$854,420 per year. This would have resulted in an increase of approximately A\$453,470 from the current sampling method. The increase in costs recovered from industry as a result of implementing stereo video was expected to be in the order of A\$164,460 per annum, approximately 0.4 per cent of the GVP of the fishery. The cost of implementing stereo video would normally be cost recovered from industry as it is an operational cost within the fishery.
- f) The department is not able to advise on representation made to the Minister or Parliamentary Secretary as the department has not briefed for or participated in any meetings with industry on these issues.
- g) The allocation of the A\$100m for RDCs is yet to be decided. The cost of implementing stereo video would normally be cost recovered from industry as it is an operational cost within the fishery. The level of cost recovery of any research component depends on a range of factors including the level of public benefit and contributions from research levy funds collected from the fishery.

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**Agriculture**

**Question:** 341

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Briefing the Minister or Parl Sec regarding Southern Bluefin Tuna quota

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator STERLE asked:**

Have you briefed the Minister or Parl Sec on the incorporation of the recreational catch into the Southern Bluefin Tuna quota?

**Answer:**

No.



**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

**Agriculture**

**Question:** 342

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Statutory Fishing Rights Allocation Review Panel reviewed

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator STERLE asked:**

Has the Statutory Fishing Rights Allocation Review Panel reviewed any AFMA decisions recently? If so, what?

**Answer:**

No.

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

**Agriculture**

**Question:** 343

**Division/Agency:** Sustainable Resource Management Division

**Topic:** Sea fish or Sea fish pelagic discussion

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator STERLE asked:**

1. Has AFMA spoken to intends to speak to the company Sea Fish or Sea Fish pelagic since the last estimates?
  - a) Is so, can you provide details
2. Was the Parl sec or minister briefed on this?
3. Has the Parliamentary secretary or Minister spoken to or intends to speak to the company Sea Fish or Sea Fish pelagic?
  - a) Provide details
  - b) Can you provide the meeting brief?

**Answer:**

1. Since the last Senate estimates on 27 May 2013, Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) has spoken to representatives of Seafish Tasmania Pty Ltd regarding general licensing inquiries (such as payment of amounts owing), research programs, and use of quota in the current and future fishing seasons.

Mr Gerry Geen, a Director of Seafish Tasmania Pty Ltd and Seafish Tasmania Pelagic Pty Ltd, is a member of AFMA bodies providing advice on management and research in the Small Pelagic Fishery. In facilitating and progressing the business of the South East Management Advisory Committee (management advisory body) and the Small Pelagic Fishery Resource Assessment Group (research advisory body) AFMA corresponds with Mr Geen and other members including recreational fishers and conservationists on a regular basis. Discussions of these bodies include: research projects; advice on total allowable catches for Small Pelagic Fishery species; bycatch mitigation; localised depletion; resource sharing between jurisdictions; budgets for the management of the Small Pelagic Fishery and the Harvest Strategy for the Small Pelagic Fishery. Meeting records are available on the AFMA website as they are finalised.

**Question: 343 (continued)**

Mr Geen was invited to and attended an AFMA hosted function in Hobart on 23 October 2013. This was attended by members of AFMA's Commission, AFMA Executive and staff and representatives from the fishing industry, recreational fishing sector, environmental non-government organisations and fisheries scientists. This function was held in conjunction with the AFMA Commission meeting on 24 October.

2. The Parliamentary Secretary and Minister were not briefed specifically about discussions between AFMA and Seafish Tasmania Pty Ltd and Seafish Tasmania Pelagic Pty Ltd.

The Parliamentary Secretary was made aware of key outcomes arising from the discussions above as well as parallel discussions with other key stakeholders the recreational sector and environmental non-government organisations.

3. Has the Parliamentary secretary or Minister spoken to or intends to speak to the company Sea Fish or Sea Fish pelagic?

- a) The Minister has not met with Seafish or Seafish pelagic.

The Parliamentary Secretary met with Seafish Tasmania on 15 October 2013. Representatives of Seafish Tasmania were also present at the following events attended by the Parliamentary Secretary - Seafood Directions (27-30 October 2013), the Commonwealth Fisheries Association Board Meeting (13 November 2013) and informal drinks hosted by AFMA (23 October 2013).

- b) No meeting brief has been provided by the department or AFMA for the Parliamentary Secretary or Minister, to meet with the company Seafish or Seafish pelagic.