

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

Question No: 11
Hearing: Additional Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 1
Programme: Wildlife Heritage and Marine Division
Topic: Supertrawler Expert Panel
Hansard Page: N/A
Question Date: 7 March 2014
Question Type: Written

Senator Whish-Wilson asked:

1. With regard to the work being done by the Expert Panel on the Declared Commercial Fishing Activity that is the subject of the Final (Small Pelagic Fishery) Declaration 2012:
 - a. What proportion of the total funding for the expert panel, its activities, and data needs is coming from internal departmental funding?
 - b. For this non-internal funding what are the sources and what proportion of this non-internal funding is connected with industry and what proportion is independent of industry?
 - c. Have there been any changes to the composition of the expert panel since it was announced?
 - d. What progress has been made by the Expert Panel review?
 - e. Has there been any correspondence between Parliamentary Secretary Richard Colbeck and the Expert Panel or regarding the Expert Panel and its activities via the Department?
2. Has there been any correspondence with other Departments, agencies, stakeholders, or businesses including with the Hong Kong-based Pacific Andes Corp regarding its factory freezer vessel Lafayette?

Answer:

1.
 - a. The funding allocated to the expert panel, its activities, and data needs is primarily coming from Departmental funding allocated to the National Environmental Research Program's Emerging Priorities stream. There is also some funding, sourced from the general Departmental budget, to support the expert panel's secretariat and other activities, such as the preparation of maps.
 - b. There is no "non-internal" funding.
 - c. There have been no changes to the composition of the expert panel since it was announced.
 - d. As of February 2014 the expert panel has:
 - considered the substantive submissions that were received through the consultation process for making the declaration under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act);
 - invited the authors of those substantive submissions to suggest additional experts from whom the panel could seek further advice;
 - undertaken 12 face-to-face interviews with identified key experts; and

- considered four written submissions.

The expert panel has also commissioned three literature reviews and a technical review to inform its assessment, particularly in relation to:

- the likely nature and extent of direct interactions with species protected under the EPBC Act;
- the potential for any localised depletion of target species to result in adverse impacts to the Commonwealth marine environment, including the target species' predators that are protected under the EPBC Act;
- actions that could be taken by operators of the declared commercial fishing activity or relevant regulatory authorities to avoid, reduce and mitigate adverse environmental impacts of the activity; and
- monitoring or scientific research that would reduce any uncertainties about the potential for adverse environmental impacts resulting from the declared commercial fishing activity.

e. There has been no correspondence between Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck, and the expert panel, nor has there been correspondence via the Department. There has been correspondence between Parliamentary Secretary Colbeck and the Minister for the Environment, the Hon Greg Hunt MP, regarding the expert panel and research being undertaken in relation to the Small Pelagic Fishery.

2. The expert panel has had no correspondence with any departments, agencies, stakeholders or businesses regarding the Pacific Andes Corp's factory freezer vessel, *Lafayette*.