

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

Answers to questions on notice

Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities portfolio

Budget Estimates, May 2011

Program: Division or Agency: 3: AAD

Question No: 057

Topic: Tourists to Antarctica

Proof Hansard Page and Date 116 and 117 (24/5/11)
or Written Question:

Senator Birmingham asked:

Senator BIRMINGHAM: Thank you. I want to shift to some policy issues. I have previously asked about global policies and policies developed as part of treaty cooperation in regard to tourism and visitation to Antarctica. I gather that there was some work taking place at that level. Ms Maddock, are you or others able to update me with regard to what policies have been put in place through treaty discussions and what the continued growth in numbers of tourists to Antarctica is?

Ms Maddock: I will quickly find the growth in numbers, because they are probably a little out of date. There were 21,622 passengers who landed ashore in 2009-10. That was about 20 per cent down on the previous season. Lots of people go without landing because they are on bigger ships and both the Antarctic Treaty parties and the shipping association have agreed that large ships will not land people. There were about 15,000 people on that in 2009-10. The big ones do not go for very long. The ones that put people ashore are now subject to a range of restrictions, some of which I outlined before. If you go ashore, you have to do proper environmental impact statements beforehand. You go ashore in groups of no more than 10 people. You do not have more than one ship in an area at one time so you are not putting too much pressure on it. You have to have proper insurance and you have to agree that you will bear the insurance costs of damage, including environmental damage, if anything happens as a result of the cruise ship.

The other big development— but it is not for us; it is for, I think, AMSA—is the development of the polar code in maritime law. It goes to questions of what ships need to have to be travelling below 60 degrees. That goes to things like the fuel they can carry, the way in way they have lifeboats and a range of other things. The polar code is obviously for both poles. It is being negotiated through the maritime organisations, which we do not represent, but we obviously have close relationships with them.

Senator BIRMINGHAM: On notice, if you could provide me with a bit of a summary of the conditions and safety arrangements that have been put in place as part of the tourism management strategies through the treaty process, that would be helpful. Thank you. ...

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Answer:

The Antarctic Treaty Parties continue to focus on the management of Antarctic tourism at annual Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings (ATCM). Australia is an active participant in ATCM tourism discussions, and has pursued a range of successful initiatives.

Antarctic tourism is subject to the provisions of the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty (the Protocol), which provides the foundations for management of the environmental aspects of Antarctic tourism through general environmental principles, environmental assessment requirements, a scheme of establishing protected areas and restrictions on waste disposal.

In addition to the Protocol, there are mandatory ATCM measures in place to manage tourism activity which are implemented (or in the process of being implemented) by each Treaty Party. There are also non-mandatory guidelines. These address matters such as:

- guidelines for visitors to the Antarctic, and for those organising and conducting Antarctic tourism;
- site-specific guidelines for sites regularly visited by tourists;
- requirements for contingency plans and insurance;
- restrictions on landing of passengers from large vessels (carrying more than 500 passengers);
- limits on the number of passengers ashore at any site (100 maximum);
- a requirement for operators to coordinate to ensure only one ship is present at a landing site at a time;
- maintenance of a guide to client ratio of 1:20 on shore visits;
- sharing of information on tourism and non-governmental activities between Treaty parties; and
- arrangements for visits to Antarctic stations.

Protected areas established under the Protocol also provide for tourist visits. Such management plans may include a permit system for visits, such as at Mawson's Huts Historic Site.

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Budget Estimates, May 2011

Program: Division or Agency: 3: AAD

Question No: 58

Topic: Antarctic Treaty Meeting

Proof Hansard Page and Date 117 (24/5/11)
or Written Question:

Senator Birmingham asked:

Senator BIRMINGHAM: Thank you. When is the next major meeting or forum of the Antarctic Treaty?

Ms Maddock: It is the Antarctic Treaty meeting in Buenos Aires starting on 20 June.

Senator BIRMINGHAM: Okay. What are the lead items for decision at the 20 June meeting—or is that agenda still to be determined?

Ms Maddock: I retire on the 16th, Senator. Can I come back to you on what they are, because I just do not have them with me at the moment.

Senator BIRMINGHAM: Certainly, yes.

CHAIR: This is your last estimates.

Senator BIRMINGHAM: If you could provide those on notice to us, that would be appreciated.

Ms Maddock: Yes, sure.

Answer:

A copy of the agenda for the 35th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting is attached.

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Preliminary Agenda for ATCM XXXIV

1. Opening of the Meeting
2. Election of Officers and Creation of Working Groups
3. Adoption of the Agenda and Allocation of Items
4. Operational of the Antarctic Treaty System: Reports by Parties, Observers and Experts
5. Operation of the Antarctic Treaty System: General Matters
6. Operation of the Antarctic Treaty System: Review of the Secretariat's Situation
7. Report of the Committee for Environmental Protection
8. Liability: Implementation of Decision 1 (2005)
9. Safety and Operations in Antarctica
10. Tourism and Non-Governmental Activities in the Antarctic Treaty Area
11. Inspections under the Antarctic Treaty and the Environment Protocol
12. Science Issues, Scientific Cooperation and Facilitation, including the Legacy of the International Polar Year 2007-2008
13. Implications of Climate Change for Management of the Antarctic Treaty Area
14. Operational Issues
15. Education Issues
16. Exchange of Information
17. Biological Prospecting in Antarctica
18. Development of a Multi-Year Strategic Work Plan
19. Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the entry into force of the Antarctic Treaty
20. Preparation of the 35th Meeting
21. Any Other Business
22. Adoption of the Final Report