

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee**
Answers to questions on notice
Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities portfolio
Budget Estimates, May 2013

Program: Division: 1.1 BCD **Question No:** 001
Topic: Indigenous protected areas
Proof Hansard Page and Date 47
or Written Question: (28/05/13)

Senator Siewert asked:

Mr Sullivan:However, in terms of the budget that has been notionally set aside for Indigenous protected areas, we do have a nominal increase in funding over the forward estimates based—

Senator SIEWERT: And how much is that?

Mr Sullivan: It is in the order of 10 to 15 per cent, but I will correct that on the record. Perhaps I should take that on notice to give you a final—

Senator SIEWERT: If you could give us the breakdown on how it is going to apply, that would be really useful.

Answer:

Caring for our Country makes a notional annual allocation of budgets each year based on the available funds, existing priorities and emerging issues. For the Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA) program for 2013-14 this notional amount is \$13.9 million. This compares to approved IPA funding in 2012-13 of \$11.9 million.

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Program: Division: 1.1 BCD **Question No:** 002
Topic: Indigenous protected areas
Proof Hansard Page and Date 48
or Written Question: (28/05/13)

Senator Siewert asked:

Senator SIEWERT: The Indigenous protected area funding comes out of CFOC?

Mr Sullivan: Yes.

Senator SIEWERT: Can you take on notice to give me a breakdown of the different components and all the funding so I can look at what it was the last time?

Answer:

The following table shows a breakdown of investment in projects under the National Priority Areas category under the first phase of the Caring for our Country initiative. Expenses are shown up to 2011-12 and notional budgets are shown for 2012-13.

| National Priority Areas | 2008-09 | 2009-10 | 2010-11 | 2011-12 | 2012-13 | Total |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| National Reserve System | 30.3 | 46.7 | 56.5 | 43.9 | 18.0 | 195.4 |
| Biodiversity and natural icons | 34.4 | 45.0 | 48.8 | 48.2 | 57.6 | 234.0 |
| Coastal environments and critical aquatic habitats | 65.7 | 62.5 | 62.2 | 68.3 | 71.1 | 329.8 |
| Sustainable farm practices | 41.2 | 39.4 | 37.4 | 37.5 | 36.6 | 192.2 |
| Community skills, knowledge and engagement | 21.3 | 31.3 | 38.3 | 69.5 | 70.5 | 230.9 |
| Regional base-level funding | 159.0 | 138.0 | 138.0 | 138.0 | 138.0 | 711.0 |
| Other | 32.4 | - | - | - | - | 32.4 |
| Total | 384.3 | 363.0 | 381.2 | 405.4 | 391.9 | 1,925.8 |

Investment on the Indigenous Protected Areas under the first phase of the Caring for our Country in previous years was part of the National Reserve System priority area. In 2012-13 this was \$11.9 million

All figures are provided in GST exclusive terms. Some figures may not add to totals due to rounding.

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| Program: Division: | 1.1 BCD | Question No: | 003 |
| Topic: | Caring for our Country - GhostNets Funding | | |
| Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question: | 51 (28/05/13) | | |

Senator Heffernan asked:

Senator HEFFERNAN: Could we see the details in writing of how you analysed that?

Ms Lane: I can give you details of how those applications were treated in the assessment process, Senator, yes.

Answer:

Applications were assessed by two assessors including one external assessor. All applications were then subject to a moderation process. Applications are assessed against eligibility and assessment criteria as set out in the program guidelines.

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| Program: Division: | 1.1 BCD | Question No: | 004 |
| Topic: | Caring for our Country - assessors | | |
| Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question: | 51 (28/05/13) | | |

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD: Can you give me the names of the assessors, please? I would like to check them out. This, to me, stinks.

Mr Sullivan: We can give you a list of—

Answer:

Assessors were selected from the community through an open process to evaluate applications for funding under Caring for our Country and a number of other programs.

The application in question was assessed by both an internal and community assessor consistent with the approved assessment process. It is not normal practice for the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities to disclose the details for assessors for individual projects because this may compromise assessment processes and impact on our ability to attract suitable, quality assessors for future rounds.

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| Program: Division: | 1.1 BCD | Question No: | 005 |
| Topic: | QLD Cattle Grazing | | |
| Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question: | 56 (28/05/13) | | |

Senator Macdonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD: Can you tell me when they were? Again, I do not want to know what your advice was.

Mr Thompson: I would have to take it on notice. I cannot recall.

Senator IAN MACDONALD: Can you take on notice, please, the dates when you provided advice to the minister or his office, starting on 14 May, and any advice you have given verbally or otherwise? If you would not mind, do that on notice.

Answer:

Written briefs were provided to Minister Burke on 29 and 30 May, and 6 June 2013. Additional verbal briefings on the matter were also provided to the Minister and discussions held with his office, on a number of occasions both prior to and subsequent to these dates.

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Program: Division: 1.1: BCD **Question No:** 006

Topic: Caring for our Country – regional delivery component

Proof Hansard Page and Date 67

or Written Question: (28/05/13)

Senator RUSTON: I am just trying to work out what the actual reduction in the regional delivery component of that would be. There is a \$32 million reduction in the amount of money that is provided through those two programs if you add last year's \$144 million to your departmental line. So there is a \$32 million discrepancy. I wonder if there is any capacity to actually break that down, or is that just too hard?

Mr Sullivan: We can give you that figure of what that \$32 million is made up of. It is made up of other payments to states that were done under the federal financial relations process. I am happy to take that on notice if you would like that detail, Senator.

Answer:

The budget allocated to Regional Delivery under the Caring for our Country initiative will decrease from \$138 million in 2012-13 to \$133.352 million in 2013-14, a decline of \$4.648 million. This decline represents a portion of the savings of \$11.1 million which was applied to the Caring for our Country as a result of decisions taken in the budget context.

Other items included savings to Environmental Stewardship Program and Landcare which were directed to other Government priorities.

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| Program: Division: | 1.1 BCD | Question No: | 007 |
| Topic: | Structural adjustment payments for regional sawmillers, haulage and harvest contractors | | |
| Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question: | 70 (28/05/13) | | |

Senator Milne asked:

Senator MILNE: I want to know whether the design parameters for this exit package have been redesigned to make sure that the compliance for people who take them is part of the design before they are actually advertised for people to take them up? If you take it on notice, I would appreciate that.

Ms Howlett: I will take it on notice.

Answer:

As part of the Tasmanian Forests Intergovernmental Agreement 2013, the Tasmanian Government is responsible for the development and implementation of the structural adjustment programs for regional sawmillers and harvest and haulage contractors. These programs are designed and delivered consistent with the Tasmanian Government's financial management framework, including the requirements for the administration of grant programs.

The regional sawmiller structural adjustment program has already been developed and released by the Tasmanian Government. The program to support affected harvest and haulage contractors is currently being developed by the Tasmanian Government. The Tasmanian Premier has given public undertakings to ensure learnings from the Auditor-General reports and the Senate Inquiry, are appropriately considered and addressed during the design and implementation of the program.

We are advised by the Tasmanian Government that ongoing compliance with the requirements and obligations under the programs by successful proponents will be monitored closely through conditions set out in individual funding deeds, including through annual reporting by proponents on ongoing compliance with those requirements and agreed exit strategies. Any allegations of potential fraudulent activity under the programs will be appropriately investigated and addressed on a case by case basis by the Tasmanian Government.

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| Program: Division: | 1.1 BCD | Question No: | 008 |
| Topic: | Structural adjustment payments for regional sawmillers, haulage and harvest contractors | | |
| Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question: | 71 (28/05/13) | | |

Senator Milne asked:

Senator MILNE: Will you give me an unequivocal guarantee that the compliance obligations for the exit package will be built in and actually in the program prior to them being advertised for application?

Mr Sullivan: I think we were going to take the actual details of the compliance timing et cetera on notice to make sure that we are correct. So I think giving you an unequivocal guarantee, given that we are taking the details of that on notice, would be a bit of a bridge too far. I take your point, and we will get you that information.

Answer:

Please refer to Budget Estimates May 2013 question 007.

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| Program: Division: | 1.1 BCD | Question No: | 009 |
| Topic: | Biodiversity and Conservation Strategy 2010-30 | | |
| Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question: | 72 (28/05/13) | | |

Senator Waters asked:

Senator WATERS: On the biodiversity conservation strategy 2010-30, particularly regarding the implementation plan for that document, what actions have been taken to support preparation of that implementation plan? Will that be ready, as planned, for the end of 2013?

Mr Thompson: I will take the second part of your question on notice, unless other officers at the table have a ready answer to that. There are a wide range of actions that have been taken at the Commonwealth level, certainly, to underpin the implementation of that strategy, including the range of investments we make under Caring for Our Country, the Biodiversity Fund and the recent finalisation of the National Wildlife Corridors Plan, which serves that.

Answer:

Refer to the answer provided Budget Estimates May 2013 question 043 on this matter.

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| Program: Division or Agency: | 1.1 BCD | Question No: | 010 |
| Topic: | Wildlife Corridor program - staffing | | |
| Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question: | 73 (28/05/13) | | |

Senator Waters asked:

Senator WATERS: How many staff are working on that national wildlife corridor program at the moment?

Ms Howlett: I would have to take that on notice.

Answer:

The Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities staffing allocation for the development and implementation of the National Wildlife Corridors Plan is 3.3 staff members.

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Program: Division: 1.1 BCD **Question No:** 011
Topic: Caring for our Country – Reef Rescue
Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question: Written

Senator Macdonald asked:

In answer to written Question on Notice at last estimates, the department indicated that the \$200 million Reef Rescue Program that operated from 2008/9 to 2012/13 had sought to improve the GBRMP's ability to respond to climate change. Four principal areas of programming are identified by the Department in its answer:

Water Quality Grant and Partnerships

Research and Development Programs

Monitoring and Reporting Programs

Land and Sea Country Indigenous Partnership Programs

What performance measures are being used by the Department to assess the success and/or failure of the programs listed above (and in the answer to QON 011)?

- a) How many of the programs continue to operate/will continue to operate beyond 2012/13?
- b) What funding has been allocated to the continuation of programs beyond 2012/13?
- c) To what extent is the GBRMP being monitored to assess both its current status, and any deterioration that may occur following the 2012/13 end of the programs?

Answer:

To ensure Caring for our Country funding delivers the best results, the Australian Government defined specific outcomes that Caring for our Country would achieve for each of the six national priorities in its first five years of operation. Delivery of the first phase of Reef Rescue contributes to a number of national priority areas, including the Coastal Environments and Critical Aquatic Habitats, Sustainable Farm Practices and Community Skills, Knowledge and Engagement national priority areas. The specific outcomes used to assess the delivery of Reef Rescue include:

- To reduce the discharge of dissolved nutrients and chemicals from agricultural lands to the Great Barrier Reef lagoon by 25 per cent.
- To reduce the discharge of sediment and particulate nutrients from agricultural lands to the Great Barrier Reef lagoon by 10 per cent.
- Deliver actions that sustain the environmental values of priority sites in the Ramsar estate.
- Increase the community's participation in protecting and rehabilitating coastal environments and critical aquatic habitats.

- Ensure the continued use, support, and reinvigoration of traditional ecological knowledge to underpin biodiversity conservation.
- a) All four program components referenced will continue in the second phase of Reef Rescue from 2013-14.
 - b) Funding of \$200 million has been allocated for the Reef Rescue program over five years from 2013-14 to 2017-18.
 - c) Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) has delivered the marine monitoring and Land and Sea Country Indigenous Partnership components of the first phase of Reef Rescue. This funding is delivered under a Memorandum of Understanding with performance measures for each component. It is anticipated that GBRMPA will continue to deliver these two components through the second phase of Reef Rescue and that funding for these components to GBRMPA will be no less than what they are currently receiving. These components are currently being designed in consultation with stakeholders.

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Program: Division: 1.1: BCD **Question No:** 012

Topic: Protection of National Parks under the EPBC Act

Proof Hansard Page and Date 71

or Written Question: (28/05/13)

Senator Waters asked:

Senator WATERS: As I am sure you are well aware, almost two years ago at the National Press Club, the minister committed to protecting national parks from activities such as logging, grazing, mining and large-scale land clearing. Did the department brief him on how to implement that commitment?

Dr Dripps: You would appreciate that there are a lot of briefings with the minister on a lot of topics, not all of which immediately spring to mind in this scenario. We will take that question on notice. I am almost certain that we have provided advice on that topic over the intervening period.

Answer:

Yes, the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities has provided advice to the Minister in relation to increased protection for national parks.

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Program: Division: 1.1: BCD **Question No:** 013
Topic: Caring for our Country –
Environmental Stewardship
Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Macdonald asked:

How many Environmental Stewardship Agreements have been entered into by the department?

- a. What is the total value of funding that has been allocated to these agreements?
- b. What is the total value of funding that has been allocated to these agreements in 2012/13?
- c. What is the total value of funding that has been allocated to these agreements for 2013/14?
- d. How many agreements – and to what value – are operating in Northern Australia (Nth Queensland, Northern territory and the Kimberley and Pilbara regions of WA)?
- e. What ratio of funding has been allocated to:

horticulture management;

grazing management; and

re-forestation.

Answer:

Since 1 July 2008, there have been 297 agreements entered into to support grants under the Environmental Stewardship Program.

- a. As at 15 June 2013, \$158.6 million has been approved for grants under the Environmental Stewardship Program, with payments out to 2026-27.
- b. In 2012/13, a total of \$11.05 million was allocated to these projects under the program.
- c. There is \$10.2 million allocated to Environmental Stewardship projects in the 2013/14 financial year.
- d. There are currently no Environmental Stewardship Program projects operating in Northern Australia, as the five threatened ecological communities targeted under the program to date do not occur in this region.

- e. The Environmental Stewardship Program provides payments to land managers to actively maintain or improve the ecological condition of a contracted site. Funding is for a range of activities that involve monitoring and managing weeds and pests, monitoring and managing grazing pressure from domestic livestock and monitoring the site to observe changes in the condition of the ecological community arising from management.

Funding is not directed towards horticultural management as cultivation is not permissible on Environmental Stewardship sites. Similarly, funding for specific reforestation activities is not provided under the Environmental Stewardship Program as sites are selected on their existing high conservation value, although regrowth of native vegetation is a common benefit across Stewardship sites as a result of reducing grazing pressure and managing weeds and pests.

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Program: Division: 1.1: BCD **Question No:** 014

Topic: Caring for our Country – Natural
Resource Management Funding

Proof Hansard Page and Date Written

or Written Question:

Senator Macdonald asked:

How much of the Caring for Country \$669 million has been/will be allocated in Northern Australia?

Answer:

Using the definition applied under the first phase of Caring for our Country, \$100,581,298.00 under Caring for our Country Phase 2 has been allocated through the Regional Delivery component through regional organisations in Northern and Remote Australia.

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Program: Division: 1.1: BCD **Question No:** 015

Topic: Caring for our Country – Natural Resource Management Funding

Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question: Written

Senator Macdonald asked:

Why were applications for this critical round of funding only open for less than one month (23.04.2013 – 21.05.2013)?

- a) What measures were taken by the Department to advertise the funding round, and the application process for the funding round?
- b) How many applications were received?
- c) How much of the funding has been awarded/allocated?
- d) Where are the projects that have received funding?

Answer:

Applications for this round of funding opened for one month (23/04/2013 – 21/05/2013). This followed extensive communication with stakeholders in anticipation of the commencement of the program opening.

- a) The following measures were taken by the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities to advertise the funding round, and the application process for the funding round:
 - Direct email to applicants preceding the round.
 - Discussions with stakeholders preceding the round.
 - Consultation via the department's out posted officer network preceding the round.
 - Internet posting of guidance and background information.
- b) 54 applications were received.
- c) As at 10 July the Minister is yet to approve funding.
- d) The Minister has yet to approve funding. The program will support projects located across Australia (in every NRM Region).

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Program: Division: 1.1: BCD **Question No:** 016

Topic: Caring for our Country – funding round

Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question: Written

Senator Siewert asked:

How many projects proposed under Caring for Our Country in this funding round did not get beyond the Expression of Interest stage?

- a) How many applications were there in total?
- b) Of those that did not get past the EOI stage, how many were for funding renewal?

Answer:

135 projects proposed under Caring for Our Country Target Area Grants (Expression of Interest) funding round did not proceed beyond the Expression of Interest stage.

- a) A total of 200 applications were received in the Caring for Our Country Target Area Grants funding round.
- b) All applications were for projects to commence after July 2014.

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Program: Division: 1.1: BCD **Question No:** 017
Topic: Caring for our Country – GhostNets
Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Siewert asked:

What were the factors that caused the Ghost Net program to fail to pass the EOI stage?

Answer:

The GhostNets proposal was assessed by the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities and independent community based assessors and was not considered as competitive as other proposals and did not proceed to the second stage. Feedback was provided to the applicant on 21 May 2013.

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Program: Division: 1.1: BCD **Question No:** 018
Topic: Caring for our Country - funding
Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Siewert asked:

How many programs were funded in 2011/12, 2012/13, and how many will be funded in 2013/14?

Answer:

Caring for our Country is funded through six programs jointly administered by the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. All six programs provided funding for Caring for our Country in 2011/12 and 2012/13 and have funding in 2013/14. The six programs are: Caring for our Country – Special Account, Caring for our Country – Environment Stewardship, Caring for our Country – Working on Country, Caring for our Country – National Wildlife Corridors, Caring for our Country – Landcare, and Treasury.

Details of projects contracted through Caring for our Country are available on the websites for the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry at the following addresses:

<http://www.environment.gov.au/about/contracts/index.html>

<http://www.daff.gov.au/about/obligations/grants-reporting-requirements>

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Program: Division: 1.1: BCD **Question No:** 019
Topic: Caring for our Country
Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Siewert asked:

What is being done to ensure that programs which support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to undertake land management get funded?

Answer:

The Caring for our Country Sustainable Environment stream has three strategic objectives which prioritise investment over the next five years (2013–2018). One of the strategic objectives is to achieve *enhanced capacity of Indigenous communities to conserve and protect natural resources*. This strategic objective will continue to ensure that Indigenous landholders and Indigenous communities (including urban communities) have ongoing access to opportunities for education, training, employment and business relating to natural resource management. The Sustainable Environment stream will achieve this through its suite of programs, including through the continuation of the successful Working on Country and Indigenous Protected Areas programs.

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| Program: Division: | 1.1: BCD | Question No: 020 |
| Topic: | Working on Country and Indigenous Protected Areas | |
| Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question: | Written | |

Senator Siewert asked:

What funding is available to establish new indigenous protected areas?

Answer:

The Government continues to see Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) as a priority for funding within the Caring for our Country initiative. The notional budget allocated for 2013-14 (\$13.9 million) will meet the program's expected needs with support being provided for on-ground works as part of the plans of management for existing and newly declared IPAs. There is no funding available to initiate additional IPA projects that are not already being supported under the IPA program.

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Program: Division: 1.1: BCD **Question No:** 021

Topic: Working on Country and Indigenous Protected Areas

Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question: Written

Senator Siewert asked:

Why is there only a relatively small level of anticipated growth in the number of rangers employed by this program between June 2014 and June 2015 (15 new positions in total)?

Answer:

The Australian Government recently announced continued funding arrangements between 2013-14 and 2017-18 for the existing 680 ranger positions across Australia. In addition to this announcement the implementation of the expansion of Working on Country in the Northern Territory (an element of the Stronger Futures Northern Territory package) between 2012-13 and 2014-15 continues. This expansion in the Northern Territory will deliver 50 new ongoing Indigenous ranger jobs by June 2015 in a staged roll out as follows: 12 new positions in 2012-13 (delivered); 25 new positions in 2013-14 (under assessment) and 13 new positions by June 2015.

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Program: Division: 1.1: BCD **Question No:** 022
Topic: National Wildlife Corridors Plan
Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Waters asked:

Will these 'wildlife corridors' be legislative instruments? Will they have any additional legal protection by virtue of their declaration?

- a) How many staff are working on this program at the moment?
- b) Does the process rely on the community to undertake the work to nominate a 'corridor'?
- c) What resources will the Department put into facilitating nominations?
- d) When will the committee be appointed?
- e) When will the corridor nomination process begin?

Answer:

The National Wildlife Corridors Plan introduces a non-legislative approach to landscape-scale conservation based on voluntary cooperation and the efforts of communities, landholders, governments and industry.

The declaration of a National Wildlife Corridor will promote biodiversity conservation and connectivity across a mosaic of land tenures but will not result in any additional regulations or restrictions on property rights or land uses.

- a) The Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (the department) staffing allocation for the development and implementation of the National Wildlife Corridors Plan is 3.3 staff members.
- b) The National Wildlife Corridors Plan identifies that the process for the nomination of National Wildlife Corridors will be voluntary and collaborative, enabling community partnerships to identify and nominate existing or developing corridors for declaration. Specific details of the nomination and declaration process will be finalised in consultation with the newly established National Wildlife Corridors Committee under the Land Sector Carbon and Biodiversity Board.
- c) The role of the Australian Government in the implementation of the Corridors Plan is to enable and coordinate the efforts of all participants in wildlife corridor initiatives.

The National Wildlife Corridors Committee (the Committee) was established in June 2013 to assist the Land Sector Carbon and Biodiversity Board (the Board) to provide advice to the Minister on matters relating to the implementation of the Corridors Plan. Specifically, the role of the Committee is to provide advice on the effective, long-term implementation of the

Corridors Plan and to ensure that the declaration of National Wildlife Corridors is based on robust and independent assessment.

The Department will support the Committee in undertaking this role.

- d) The National Wildlife Corridors Committee was appointed on 5 June 2013 by the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, the Hon Tony Burke MP and the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Senator the Hon Joe Ludwig.

The six committee members have been selected for their combined expertise across the fields of wildlife corridor design and management, conservation ecology, conservation genetics, climate change, sustainable agriculture, natural resource management, regional development and collaborative governance.

The National Wildlife Corridors Committee members are:

Dr Graeme Worboys (Chair)
Dr Beverley Henry
Professor Richard Hobbs
Ms Keelen Mailman
Professor Craig Moritz
Ms Vicki-Jo Russell AM

- e) It is anticipated that the National Wildlife Corridors nomination process will be launched before the end of 2013.

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Program: Division: 1.1: WHMD **Question No:** 023
Topic: Commonwealth Marine Reserves
Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Macdonald asked:

1. What is the size of the catch currently extracted in the areas to be declared under the new Commonwealth Marine Reserves?
2. How many commercial fishing operators currently fish the areas to be declared under the new Commonwealth Marine Reserves?
3. How many commercial fishing licences are in operation on the North Queensland coast in 2012/13?
 - a. How many were there in 2011/12?
 - b. In 2010/11?
4. What measurement model/criteria will be applied to determine the conservation values of the new Commonwealth Marine Reserves?

Answer:

1. Analysis undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences shows that the new Commonwealth marine reserves are likely to displace around 1460 tonnes of annual catch; which represents one per cent of the average annual value of wild catch fisheries production in Australia catch.
2. The question is best referred to Commonwealth and State fisheries management agencies as they hold the data confidentially.

As part of the socio economic impact assessments conducted by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences, around 260 fishers identified themselves as being potentially impacted by the draft marine reserves and having to change their fishing activity.
3. See response to question 2 above. In addition, many fisheries are active across large geographic areas and licences issued may not be specific to the North Queensland coast.
4. Conservation values for the new marine reserve have been defined and a full list of these values are contained within the management plans for each of the five Commonwealth marine reserve networks declared around Australia and the Coral Sea Commonwealth Marine Reserve.

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Program: Division: 1.1: WHMD **Question No:** 024
Topic: Supertrawlers – Ban end date
Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Siewert asked:

Late last year, following huge concern from the Australian public and in particular, recreational fishers and their families, the Federal Parliament amended the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* (EPBC Act), to allow the Federal Government to institute a two year ban on major industrial fishing operations such as that proposed with the MV Margiris Supertrawler.

Can you confirm the date in 2014 that the current Supertrawler ban ends, and what that means when it does. Specifically, should the ban not be renewed by the Federal Government of the day, can you confirm that without the ban being renewed, the MV Margiris or other similar industrial fishing operations, could be able to operate in Australian waters.

Answer:

The Final (Small Pelagic Fishery) Declaration 2012 is to be in force until the earliest of the following times:

- a. the end of the day on which the report of the Expert Panel on a Declared Commercial Fishing Activity is published on the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities' website under paragraph 390SL(a) of the EPBC Act
- b. midnight on 18 November 2014, or
- c. if this declaration is revoked—when the revocation comes into force.

Similarly, the Final (Small Pelagic Fishery) Declaration (No.2) 2013 is to be in force until midnight on 24 April 2015, or when the resulting Expert Panel report is published, or when any revocation comes into force, whichever is earliest.

Section 390SM of the EPBC Act provides that new declarations under Part 15B (declared commercial fishing activities) may not be made later than 12 months after the day the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Declared Commercial Fishing Activities) Act 2012* commenced; that is, after 18 September 2013.

If the declarations were to cease to be in force, entry of a new fishing vessel or operation into an Australian fishery would be subject to the relevant fisheries legislation and fishery management arrangements under fisheries legislation in force at the time.

Under national environmental law, the environmental performance of the fishery management arrangements for commercial fisheries will continue to be assessed if product from the fishery is to be exported, the fishery is to operate in Commonwealth waters and/or the fishery is to be managed by the Commonwealth (see Question 028).

Also under national environmental law, large scale industrial pelagic fishing, such as conducted by supertrawler type vessels, is prohibited in highly protected zones within Commonwealth marine reserves (see Question 025).

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Program: Division: 1.1: WHMD **Question No:** 025
Topic: Supertrawlers
Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Siewert asked:

Can you confirm the size of the area of Australia's EEZ that is protected from large scale industrial pelagic fishing including supertrawlers through Australia's marine reserves networks?

Answer:

All new commercial fishing activities in Australia's Exclusive Economic Zone are subject to existing fisheries legislation and the protections provided by the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999* (EPBC Act).

Large scale industrial pelagic fishing, such as conducted by supertrawler-type vessels, is prohibited in the 1.09 million square kilometres of highly protected zones within the Commonwealth Marine Reserves. For the remaining 1.81 million square kilometres that make up the Commonwealth Marine Reserves estate, an environmental assessment by the Director of National Parks would be required to determine whether a proposed activity was permissible. This requirement would apply over and above the general protections provided by the EPBC Act.

The total area of Australia's Exclusive Economic Zone, excluding the area of the Exclusive Economic Zone off Antarctica, is 8.15 million square kilometres.

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Program: Division: 1.1: WHMD **Question No:** 026
Topic: Supertrawlers – Marine Reserves
Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Siewert asked:

If the Federal Government in 2014 does not ban the Supertrawler following the expiry of the two year initial ban, will Australia's marine reserves be the only places where supertrawlers would be banned from operating?

Answer:

In addition to the protection afforded by Commonwealth, State and Northern Territory marine reserve networks, fisheries management legislation in each jurisdiction governs where commercial fishing operations can occur.

For example, the requirements for operating a boat in Australia's Commonwealth fisheries include that the vessel be an Australian boat for the purposes of the *Fisheries Management Act 1991* and that the operator hold relevant concessions in the fishery to operate the vessel. Other requirements may include having to observe spatial closures for fisheries management purposes. Operators are also constrained within the geographical extent of a given fishery.

State and Northern Territory legislation contain similar provisions.

Under national environmental law, the environmental performance of the management arrangements for commercial fisheries are assessed if product from the fishery is to be exported, the fishery is to operate in Commonwealth waters and/or the fishery is to be managed by the Commonwealth. The assessments evaluate the capacity of the management arrangements for the fishery, including any spatial management measures, to ensure ecological sustainability over time.

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Program: Division: 1.1: WHMD **Question No:** 027
Topic: Supertrawlers – Independent Inquiry
Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Siewert asked:

What process is underway to complete an independent inquiry into the impacts of a super trawler in the Australian marine environment?

- a. What funding has been allocated to this inquiry?
- b. Will the inquiry call for submissions?
- c. Will those submissions be publicly available?

Answer:

- a. In January 2013, the former Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, the Hon Tony Burke MP, gave approval for expenditure of up to \$880,000 (GST exclusive) from the National Environmental Research Program Emerging Priorities funding stream to support the research and operations of the Expert Panel on a Declared Commercial Fishing Activity, with the following profile:

| Year | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | TOTAL |
|--------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Allocation \$ (ex GST) | 280,000 | 350,000 | 250,000 | 880,000 |
| Allocation \$ (inc GST) | 308,000 | 385,000 | 275,000 | 968,000 |

- b. The expert panel must comply with the terms of reference determined by the former Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities in conducting the assessment of the declared commercial fishing activity. The terms of reference for the first declaration are available on the department's website at <http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/fisheries/commonwealth/pelagics/pubs/tor-expert-panel.pdf>.

The terms of reference provide for the expert panel to consult with and seek submissions from experts in relevant scientific disciplines where the panel believes this is necessary to clarify areas of uncertainty about the environmental impacts of the declared commercial fishing activity.

- c. A decision on whether such submissions would be made publicly available has not yet been made.

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Program: Division: 1.1: WHMD **Question No:** 028
Topic: Supertrawlers
Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Siewert asked:

Can the government ban fishing vessels and/or companies from operating in the Australian marine environment based on a history of illegal fishing activity elsewhere in the world?

Answer:

Under national environmental law, the environmental performance of the management arrangements for commercial fisheries are assessed if product from the fishery is to be exported, the fishery is to operate in Commonwealth waters and/or the fishery is to be managed by the Commonwealth. These assessments evaluate the capacity of the management arrangements for the fishery to ensure ecological sustainability over time. Decision making under national environmental law focuses on the operation of the fishery as a whole.

National environmental law also currently provides that if the Environment Minister and the Fisheries Minister agree that there is uncertainty about the environmental impacts of a commercial fishing activity and agree that the commercial fishing activity be prohibited in a Commonwealth marine area while an expert panel conducts an assessment of the commercial fishing activity, the Environment Minister may declare that activity to be a declared commercial fishing activity. New declarations under this provision may not be made after 18 September 2013.

Entry of a particular company or individual into Commonwealth managed fisheries is governed by the Commonwealth fisheries management legislation. This legislation is administered by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and the Australian Fisheries Management Authority.

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| Program: Division: | 1.1: WHMD | Question No: | 029 |
| Topic: | TeachWild Funding | | |
| Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question: | 48 (28/05/13) | | |

Senator Whish-Wilson asked:

Senator WHISH-WILSON: There is a national program that you mentioned in your answers on notice called TeachWild. That is a joint venture between Shell, the federal government and state governments. Could you tell me how much money that has received?

Mr Richardson: My understanding is that the TeachWild program is essentially a Shell-CSIRO tie-up, but I will have to take on notice if there is any government money put into that.

Senator WHISH-WILSON: I did speak to a scientist there that said they did not get any federal funding or they did not think they did. I want to check that.

Mr Richardson: I would need to take that on notice.

Answer:

TeachWild is a national three year marine debris research and education program developed by EarthWatch Australia in partnership with the CSIRO Wealth from Oceans Flagship and founding partner Shell Australia.

The Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities understands that the TeachWild program is funded through a three year, \$2.4 million agreement under Shell Australia's social investment portfolio 2011–2014.

In addition to Australian government funding supporting the participation of the CSIRO, TeachWild is using software developed by the Atlas of Living Australia. The Atlas of Living Australia is an information system developed and administered through national collaboration between the Australian museums, herbaria and biological collections, and the Australian government.

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Program: Division: 1.1 WHMD **Question No:** 030

Topic: TeachWild Funding

Proof Hansard Page and Date 49

or Written Question: (28/05/13)

Senator Whish-Wilson asked:

Senator WHISH-WILSON: The department website says the Australian government is working in close cooperation with state and territory governments to implement the plan. When was the last time the government met with your state and territory counterparts to discuss the issues on the plan?

Mr Richardson: I would have to take that on notice, Senator. I apologise.

Answer:

In May 2013, an officer from the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities participated in a marine debris workshop in South Australia to discuss implementation of the threat abatement plan and other marine debris issues in that state. The workshop was funded by Caring for our Country and included participants from state government agencies, natural resource management bodies, local government, non government organisations and industry.

There have been no recent meetings involving all jurisdictions.

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| Program: Division: | 1.1: WHMD | Question No: | 031 |
| Topic: | GhostNets | | |
| Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question: | 49 (28/05/13) | | |

Senator Whish-Wilson asked:

Senator WHISH-WILSON: It also said that you are working with Border Protection Command to retrieve ghost nets, which are nets that float at sea that do not have any owners and that do a lot of damage. Are you able to provide any data on how many nets have been collected and what the data is telling you about where they are coming from?

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

Answer:

Since records of ghost net incidents began in 2007, Border Protection Command or vessel operators working on behalf of Border Protection Command, have been able to retrieve 15 ghost nets. These nets were transported to an appropriate mainland facility for destruction.

The Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities holds a range of samples of ghost nets. These samples were collected from ghost nets found in northern Australian waters, predominantly from the Ashmore and Scott reefs, the Timor Sea east and west of Darwin, the Gulf of Carpentaria and the Torres Strait.

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| Program: Division: | 1.1: WHMD | Question No: | 032 |
| Topic: | Caring for our Country - Grants for fishing industry | | |
| Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question: | 50 (28/05/13) | | |

Senator Whish-Wilson asked:

Senator WHISH-WILSON: This is my last question on fishing. Having been on fishing boats and clean beaches in the south-west of Tassie, I know how much fishing gear is actually found in these projects. Is there any government support available for fishing industry bodies to implement measures such as plastic-free fishing or baiting materials? Is there any work going on with biodegradable bags, for example?

Mr Sullivan: We may have to take a question like that on notice.

Senator WHISH-WILSON: Are there any other initiatives that you can think of that you are discussing or talking with the fishing industry about in terms of their contribution to this problem?

Mr Sullivan: My colleagues from the marine area may have additional information for you, Senator. In terms of innovation grants and grants that are available through Caring for Our Country through the agriculture stream, one of the targets is fishing. I am not prejudging the outcome of the processes with respect to the agriculture stream, but that does cover innovation with respect to agriculture as well.

Answer:

The Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities is not providing support to fishing industry bodies to implement measures such as plastic-free fishing or baiting materials.

There are a number of Australian Standards regarding biodegradability of plastic bags.

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Program: Division: 1.1: WHMD **Question No:** 033
Topic: Fisheries adjustment package
Proof Hansard Page and Date 68
or Written Question: (28/05/13)

Senator Ruston asked:

Ms Musgrave: The conversation has gone on and the government has put out the elements of the package and they are not part of the package. So the view is that the measures, from support to transition plus a sector-wide, fishery-wide element, plus the licence buyout element to enable catch rates and economic sustainability to be maintained, as a suite of measures actually will address any perceived asset value issue. So the asset value question is off the table, in essence. But it is an element that not necessarily all of industry agrees will be addressed by the package.

Senator RUSTON: So that currently remains a point of contention between—

Dr Dripps: I think it is worth reiterating that there have been a number of answers to questions like this in previous estimates which we would be very happy to provide to you.

Senator RUSTON: Thank you

Answer:

Please refer to the response provided in the October 2012 Supplementary Budget Estimates Question on Notice 011.