

**Fisheries and Forestry**

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

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Portfolio**

**Department**

Additional Budget Estimates, 15 February 2005

**Question: F&F 01**

**Topic: Fisheries Resources Research Fund**

**Hansard Page: 87**

Senator O'Brien asked:

In which areas are there significant reductions expected?

This question was in response to advice from the Department that the funding base of the Fisheries Resources Research Fund (FRRF) was expected to fall in the future, as the Gross Value of Production (GVP) of Australia's seafood industry continues to drop.

Answer:

Advice provided by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARE) indicates that over the next 3 financial years (including 2004-05), the GVP for the tuna, prawn, rock lobster, abalone and "other fish" species (which includes a number of commercially significant finfish species) is expected to decline.

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**Question: F&F 02**

**Topic: Illegal Fishing**

**Hansard Page: 88**

Senator O'Brien asked:

What about charges laid against crews? Have you any statistics on that?

Answer:

In the current financial year (2004/2005), as of 20 February 2005, 153 foreign fishing vessel crew members were charged with offences under the *Fisheries Management Act 1991* or the *Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984*.

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#### **Question: F&F 03**

#### **Topic: Illegal Foreign Fishing**

#### **Hansard Page: 89**

Senator O'Brien asked:

What proportion of those apprehended actually end up receiving jail terms in Australia?

Answer:

Under Article 73 of the *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea*, penalties for violations of fisheries laws must not include imprisonment. However, gaol terms for illegal foreign fishers can result from the non payment of fines or breaches of good behaviour bonds or from other non-fishing offences (eg. obstruction of an officer).

Consequentially, there are no crew goaled for fisheries offences under the FMA and TSFA. AFMA does not hold records of the number of crew that have been goaled for non payment of fines or breaches of good behaviour bonds.

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#### **Question: F&F 04**

#### **Topic: Illegal Fishing**

#### **Hansard Page: 93**

Senator O'Brien asked:

How many boardings did not lead to an apprehension or a catching gear forfeiture?

How many boardings were requested? On how many occasions did you request pursuit and apprehension of a vessel?

Answer:

During 2004, there were 195 boardings of foreign fishing vessels by officers of the Customs National Marine Unit and Australian Defence Force that did not lead to an apprehension or a legislative seizure of catch and equipment. Many of these vessels were within the MoU Box, where Australia is only able to exercise its fisheries legislation on non-traditional fishers, or transiting through the Australian Fishing Zone, as entitled under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Other actions taken by officers during these boardings included issue of cautions, and activities performed by Customs in accordance with Service Level Agreements with client agencies, such as Department of the Environment and Heritage.

AFMA requests responses to sightings of suspected illegal foreign fishing vessels via Coastwatch, which coordinates responses by the Australian Customs Service National Marine Unit or the Royal Australian Navy. AFMA does not request boardings nor does it hold data on the number of boardings undertaken.

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#### **Question: F&F 05**

#### **Topic: Ghost nets**

#### **Hansard Page: 93**

Senator O'Brien asked:

Back to ghost nets. On 1 December the Minister announced an allocation of \$2 million for the removal of abandoned foreign fishing nets and debris from the Gulf of Carpentaria. Is that the same \$2 million that was announced for the same purpose back on 28 July?

Answer:

Yes both media releases are for the same National Heritage Trust (NHT) project.

The media release on the 28 July 2004 announced the NHT Board decision to grant the \$2 million project.

The 1 December 2004 media release coincided with the formal launch of the project by Minister Campbell at Parliament House.

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**Question: F&F 06**

**Topic: Ghost nets**

**Hansard Page: 94**

Senator O'Brien asked:

What is the process of removal of the ghost nets?

Answer:

Nets and other anthropogenic marine debris are removed from shorelines by hand, with the assistance of support vehicles to transport the large volumes of debris generally found. In the Gulf of Carpentaria project, vessels may also be needed to work in places that are inaccessible to shore based operations.

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**Question: F&F 07**

**Topic: Ghost nets**

**Hansard Page: 95**

Senator O'Brien asked:

Has the process started?

Answer:

The process of removing ghost nets has not yet started. Funding has been provided under the NHT project, a steering committee has been established (consisting of representatives from the Gulf region and conservation organisations, a fishing industry environmental extension officer), and initial planning of operations has been carried out.

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#### **Question: F&F 08**

#### **Topic: Southern Ocean Patrols**

#### **Hansard Page: 95**

Senator O'Brien asked:

- (1) When did the *Oceanic Viking* commence patrolling our southern fishery?
- (2) How many voyages has the *Oceanic Viking* made into our southern fisheries to date?
- (3) When you are giving me the other information you can tell me how much actual time was spent there.

Answer:

- (1) The *Oceanic Viking* was ready for deployment to the Southern Ocean from 19 November 2004.
- (2) & (3) Operational details are important tactical information and if made public could compromise future monitoring, surveillance and enforcement activity by Australia against illegal fishing activity in the exclusive economic zone surrounding Heard Island and McDonald Islands.



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**Question: F&F 09**

**Topic: Southern Ocean Patrols**

**Hansard Page: 96**

Senator O'Brien asked:

(1) When does the two years run from? 1 July, 1 November, 1 January?

Answer:

(1) The two years for the patrol programme runs from 1 July 2004. The civil vessel *Aurora Australis* was chartered on a temporary basis to meet patrol requirements between July and November 2004. The *Oceanic Viking* is under contract for the period 17 November 2004 to 30 June 2006.

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#### **Question: F&F 10**

#### **Topic: Aquaculture Initiative**

#### **Hansard Page: 98**

Senator O'Brien asked:

Where is the Aquaculture initiative up to at the moment? I recall that it aimed to find a better-structured aquaculture science and policy research and it was scheduled to conclude sometime this financial year.

Answer:

The Aquaculture Industry Action Agenda (AIAA) is a whole of government initiative aiming to work with industry to assist growth.

One of the projects undertaken during the AIAA was the Research and Development initiative entitled the *Australian Aquaculture Research and Innovation strategy*. This project was commenced by consultant Ridge Partners on 16 April 2004.

The final report of this consultancy was endorsed by the AIAA Implementation Committee out of session and launched by Senator the Hon Ian Macdonald at the sixth meeting of the AIAA Implementation Committee on Thursday 24 February 2005.

The report presents an innovation policy framework for the Australian aquaculture industry. The framework identifies and recommends four innovation pathways for sustainable development of the Australian aquaculture industry and cost \$34,265, paid from AIAA funds.

The final report is available on the Australian Aquaculture Portal website at [www.australian-aquacultureportal.com](http://www.australian-aquacultureportal.com).

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**Question: F&F 11**

**Topic: Tasmanian forest policy**

**Hansard Page: 104**

Senator O'Brien asked:

I am asking when the work commenced on preparing these various forms of descriptors of the areas sought to be protected.

Senator Ian Macdonald—I think the officer said it is ongoing.

—No. I am asking when it commenced. It is ongoing from a certain date. I want the date.

Answer:

The Department's preparations commenced when the Prime Minister announced the policy on 6 October 2004.

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**Question: F&F 12**

**Topic: Tasmanian forest policy**

**Hansard Page: 104**

Senator O'Brien asked:

When before the election did you commence work on these maps and various documents describing the area of 170,000 hectares? Can you give me a date.

Answer:

See response to F&F 11.

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#### **Question: F&F 13**

**Topic: Tasmanian forest policy – extension of Regional Forest Agreement**

**Hansard Page: 111**

Senator O'Brien asked:

Were that to occur, is the extended agreement protected under the regional forest agreement? I think the answer is yes.

Mr Quinlivan—I would say that is a speculative question because it would depend on the terms of the extension and so on. It would be a matter of agreement.

—Are there any provisions of the legislation which have specific impact on such an extension

Answer:

There are no explicit provisions of the Regional Forest Agreements Act 2002 (the Act) which specifically impact on extending the life of the RFA. However, there is an implicit requirement that the amended RFA continues to comply with the definition of a RFA as set out in Clause 4 of the Act.

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**Question: F&F 14**

**Topic: Tasmanian forest policy - reservation boundaries**

**Hansard Page: 112**

Senator O'Brien asked:

Can you provide us with a map showing the boundaries of the Tarkine?

Answer:

This is part of ongoing discussion between the Australian and Tasmanian Governments.

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**Question: F&F 15**

**Topic: Tasmanian Pulp Mill**

**Hansard Page: 114**

Senator O'Brien asked:

Has there been consultation with this department to date about that matter?

Answer:

No. The Department has no role in environmental approvals, project facilitation and strategic investment and has not been consulted in relation to the proposed Tasmanian pulp mill. Environment approval processes are administered by the Department of the Environment and Heritage. Major project facilitation and strategic investment attraction are administered by Invest Australia, which is part of the Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources.

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**Question: F&F 16**

**Topic: Tasmanian CRC**

**Hansard Page: 115**

Senator O'Brien asked:

What is the status of funding for the CRC? What programs have been funded and for how long?

Answer:

The Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Forest Landscapes is to commence on 1 July 2005 for a period of seven years. The Australian Government is providing funding of \$26.6 million over this period through the Cooperative Research Centres Programme administered by the Department of Education, Science and Training.