

ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS COMMITTEE
QUESTIONS ON NOTICE – 2014/15 BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARINGS

FRIDAY, 13 JUNE 2014

DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES

**THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS
ASKED –**

1. We refer to Budget Paper 2, page 589 - The spending changes table omits spending associated with the shark drumline measure and the 2013-14 Voluntary Separation Scheme. [Questions on Notice 6c] The Department omitted the drumline policy because it 'is not a Department of Fisheries policy initiative and funding will be recouped to the Department from the Department of Premier and Cabinet', and ask –
 - a) Has the Department's total cost of services changed as a result of the shark drumline measure?
 - b) Has the Department's expense limit changed as a result of the shark drumline measure?

Answer:

The shark drumline measure was not a policy of the Department of Fisheries and no funding was provided in the budget for this measure.

- a) No, the Department's total cost of services has not changed in the budget as a result of the shark drumline measure; and
 - b) No, the Department's expense has not changed in the budget as a result of the shark drumline measure.
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2. We refer to Budget Paper 2, page 589 and the 2013-14 Government Mid-Year Financial Protection Statement, page 129 - The Department has an additional \$28.9 million over the forward estimates to 'address a structural deficit... arising from cost and demand pressures, expanded services and revised (lower) revenue estimates'. It appears that the measure is a mix of funding and expense related issues, and ask –
 - a) How will the Budget Deficit Funding measure address that structural position?
 - b) Does the Budget Deficit Funding measure relate to an increase in the expense limit or a change in the funding mix or a mixture of both?

Answer:

The Department received an additional \$28.9 million over the forward estimate period to allow it to undertake the totality of services requested by Government to be undertaken by the Department in the 2013-14 financial year and out years. This funding addressed a long running funding shortfall that was brought to a head in 2012-13 when the agency recorded a \$7.5 million budget deficit.

- a) The budget deficit funding enabled the Department to fully fund its FTE target of 461 FTE in 2013-14 and 465 FTE in 2014-15 and out years to deliver its agreed outcomes and service targets; and
 - b) The Budget Deficit funding relates to an increase in appropriation funding and an equivalent increase in expense limit.
3. We refer to Budget Paper 2, page 590 – “Government’s goal in ensuring economic activity is managed in a socially and environmentally responsible manner” which was said in the 2012-13 Budget Estimates Hearing (Legislative Council), and ask –
- a) How many white pointer sharks were reported as caught as bycatch in WA in 2013-14 and over the previous 4 years?
 - b) Please provide a breakdown of locations (identification of the fishery is sufficient) and time of year of the catches.
 - c) Which three fisheries in WA have the highest bycatch of protected or endangered species? Please list the bycatch of each protected/endangered fishery for 2013 and the previous 4 years. (Where catches of sharks has been provided in part 1(a), this information does not need to be repeated.

Answer:

- (a) - (b) The reported TEP data have not yet been compiled for 2014. Therefore the data have been given for the previous four calendar years including which fisheries this occurred within:

Year	No.	Location (fishery*)
2010	8	(7 in the TDGDLF; 1 in the GDS)
2011	13	(All in the TDGDLF)
2012	23	(22 in the TDGDLF; 1 in SCOA)
2013	20	(18 in the TDGDLF; 2 in WCDS)

* Fishery acronyms are: GDS = Gascoyne Demersal Scalefish; TDGDLF = Temperate Demersal Gillnet and Demersal Longline Fishery (covers the Joint Authority and the West Coast Demersal Gillnet and Demersal Longline Fisheries; WCDS = West Coast Demersal Scalefish fishery; SCOA = South Coast Open Access

Time of year of white shark captures are currently only available for 2010 and 2011 (the 2012 and 2013 data were unable to be extracted in the timeframe required for the question to be responded to).

Month of capture and number caught*

Jan	1
Feb	1
Mar	1
Apr	1
May	1
July	4
Aug	4
Sep	1
Oct	3
Nov	2
Dec	2

- c) In terms of determining the fisheries with the highest rate of bycatch of protected species, rather than just use numbers, in accordance with the principles of Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management, a risk-based assessment of the impact of the capture of protected species by commercial and recreational fishing activities is undertaken by the Department. The latest assessment of risks to protected species by each fishery and at the bioregional level from all fishing is reported in the annual *Status reports of the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources of Western Australia*.

These risk-based assessments are used as the basis for commercial fisheries to submit an application to obtain export certification under the Commonwealth Government's *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* requirements. Only those fisheries that generate a moderate or higher level of risk to protected species are required to develop specific management systems and annual reporting schemes. The fisheries that currently have been assessed as generating moderate risk levels associated with a protected species, either from a stock perspective or a social acceptability perspective, are (1) the West Coast Rock Lobster fishery [given that the number of whale entanglements that have occurred in the last two years have risen beyond 30]. New management arrangements to reduce the risk of entanglement are currently being developed in collaboration with industry, some of which have already been implemented; (2) the South Coast Purse Seine fishery in terms of their capture of flesh-footed shearwaters. A risk mitigation strategy has also been developed and implemented for this fishery (see answer to B13); (3) the capture of dolphins by the Pilbara trawl fishery. A significant level of work has been undertaken over the past 5 years to understand the reasons for capture and to develop strategies to reduce the rate of capture (see answer to question 4).

4. In the 2012-13 Legislative Council Estimates Hearing with the Department, the Committee was provided with information on dolphin mortality in the Pilbara Trawl Fishery, with 73 dolphin fatalities being reported since the introduction of exclusion grids in 2007. There were also deaths of other protected species in the net. The Department stated it had recently commenced a six month collaborative research trial into a new net type, with results of the trial to be available in 2013, and ask –

- a) Please provide the recorded dolphin mortality in the Pilbara Trawl Fishery since 2012.
- b) Please update the Committee on the results of the trial of the new net type in the Pilbara Trawl Fishery and whether dolphin mortality has been reduced.

Answer:

- a) The recorded dolphin mortalities in the Pilbara Trawl Fishery since 2012 were:

Year	Total number of dolphins	Total released alive	Total dead	Source
2012	29	5	24	(page 206, Newman et al. 2013)
2013	26	4	22	(Newman et al. in prep.)

- b) The trial of modified trawl-net cod ends and escape openings has been completed and the findings are contained in Fisheries Research Report No. 244 *Independent observations of catches and subsurface mitigation efficiencies of modified trawl nets for endangered, threatened and protected megafauna bycatch in the Pilbara Fish Trawl Fishery* (Wakefield et al. 2014). This collaborative trial was undertaken between the Department of Fisheries (Research and Management Divisions) and the Fishing Industry – which included the trawl fishery sector (led by J. Wakeford, M.G. Kailis Group) and the WA Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC). Fisheries Research Report No. 244 is publicly available on the Department of Fisheries website. This report has already provided the basis for the fishery receiving a three year Wildlife Trade Operation approval from the Commonwealth Government's Department of the Environment to underpin the ongoing operation of the fishery in respect to interactions with protected species.

References –

- Newman, S.J., Wakefield, C., Skepper, C., Boddington, D. and Dobson, P. 2013. North Coast Demersal Fisheries Status Report. In: Status reports of the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources of Western Australia 2012/13: State of the Fisheries eds. W.J. Fletcher and K. Santoro, Department of Fisheries, Western Australia, pp. 193-211.
- Newman, S.J., Wakefield, C., Skepper, C., Boddington, D., Blay, N., Jones, R. and Wallis D. in prep. North Coast Demersal Fisheries Status Report. In: Status reports of the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources of Western Australia 2013/14: State of the Fisheries eds. W.J. Fletcher and K. Santoro, Department of Fisheries, Western Australia.

Wakefield, C. B., Blight, S., Dorman, S. R., Denham, A., Newman, S. J., Wakeford, J., Molony, B. W., Thomson, A. W., Syers, C. and O'Donoghue, S. 2014. Independent observations of catches and subsurface mitigation efficiencies of modified trawl nets for endangered, threatened and protected megafauna bycatch in the Pilbara Fish Trawl Fishery. Fisheries Research Report No. 244. Department of Fisheries, Western Australia. 40 pp.

THE HON STEPHEN DAWSON MLC ASKED –

5. I refer to page 590, “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency”, second dot point, and ask –
- a) What are the fuel costs for Fisheries vessels deployed during the shark drum line deployment for the metropolitan and South West marine monitored areas for the period January to April 2014?

Answer:

- a) \$163,000

6. I refer to page 590, “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency”, second dot point, and ask –
- a) What was the cost of materials used specifically for the shark drumline policy in metropolitan and South West marine monitored areas for the period January to April 2014? (eg, hooks, lines, guns, ammunition, etc?)

Answer:

- a) \$100,000

7. I refer to page 590, “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency”, second dot point, and ask –
- a) How many overtime hours did fisheries staff work to perform duties related to the drumline policy?

Answer:

The officers undertaking the drum line operations off the metropolitan coast are Fisheries and Marine Officers who operate under the Department of Fisheries Agency Specific

Agreement. This Agreement establishes an annualised hours working arrangement providing flexibility for service to be delivered according to seasonal needs including extended working hours, work on weekends and work on public holidays.

A total of 1,440 overtime hours were worked. These hours cost \$170,000 including the appropriate penalty rates for weekday, weekend and public holiday work.

8. I refer to page 589, "Appropriations, Expenses and Cash Assets – Total Appropriations", and ask –

- a) There is a significant increase in total appropriation from the 2012/13 actual figures. What is the reason for this?

Answer:

The increase in appropriation from the 2012-13 Actual figures to the 2013-14 Estimated Actual budget was due mainly to:

- \$4.7million additional appropriation for the Aquatic Biosecurity project;
- \$6 million additional appropriation for the Budget Deficit Funding; and
- \$1.4 million additional appropriation because of a reduction in procurement savings between 2012-13 and 2013-14.

9. I refer to page 589, "Appropriations, Expenses and Cash Assets – Spending Changes", and ask –

- a) In 2013/14 there was an estimates actual figure of \$665,000 for procurement savings, how were these savings made?

Answer:

The procurement saving in 2013-14 was based on a 10% saving on procurement over the last three months of the 2013-14 financial year. The Department was able to meet this target by tighter control over contract spending, reduction of non-essential spending and cancelling low priority projects.

10. I refer to page 589, "Appropriations, Expenses and Cash Assets – Spending Changes", and ask –

- a) In 2014/15, there is a budget figure of \$2.343 million for procurement savings. How were these savings made?

Answer:

In 2014-15, the Department has been given a \$2.343 million procurement savings target, which is based on 15% of “non-essential” goods and services, which includes:

- Consultancy
- Staff travel
- Equipment Repairs and Maintenance
- Communications expense
- Consumable expense
- Administration expense; and
- All other expenses.

The Department plans to meet part of its saving target by reducing staff travel expenses. The target will also be achieved by greater use of online facilities, rather than attending conferences. Consultancy costs will be rationalised by utilising internal resources rather than consultants where possible. Equipment repairs and maintenance, communications expense and consumables will be reduced by careful management of contracts and common user agreements to get maximum value for procurement.

11. I refer to page 589, “Appropriations, Expenses and Cash Assets – Spending Changes”, and ask –

- a) Across the forward estimates, there are savings indicated for aquatic biosecurity. How does the Government intend to make these savings?
- b) Is this a cost shift to ports and marinas and have those who will become responsible for biosecurity in these areas been informed?

Answer:

This answer was provided in estimates hearings and recorded at Page 28 of Hansard.

- a) The funds that are listed for aquatic biosecurity were in last year’s budget and related to contingency for the port authorities in the event that the authorities did not put in place remedial action to reduce the biosecurity risk. That amount listed was the full and maximum amount of contingency that could result if the authorities did not take any action, bearing in mind that the plan is for aquatic biosecurity to move to a cost recovery model that will involve the ports. It was never envisaged that the ports would take no action as it is in their interests to do so. Discussions with the Department of Transport have reinforced the expectation that the ports will take action, further reducing the need for the contingency. Treasury now share this view, so the contingency has been removed from the accounts to better reflect the actual situation.

- b) The Government has provided aquatic biosecurity funding until the end of the current calendar year. The Department is looking at having some arrangements either in place from 1 January next year or soon after. Any new arrangement will be developed in consultation with key stakeholders.

12. I refer to page 590, “Outcomes, Services and Key Performance Indication – Service Summary”, and ask –

- a) What accounts for the difference in the 2013/14 budget figure for Enforcement and Education and the estimate actual for that same year?

Answer:

The increase in Enforcement and Education service costs from 2013-14 *Budget to 2013-14 Estimated Actual* budget is mainly due to additional funding provided by Government in the 2013-14 Mid-Year review to address the Department’s baseline funding deficit.

13. I refer to page 592, “Services and Key Efficiency Indicators – Research and Assessment”, and ask –

- a) The estimated actual for 2013/14 is \$46,869, up from a budget figure of \$40,638 in 2013/14. At the same time, FTE positions are down to 180 from a budgeted 216 for 2013/14. What accounts for the smaller number of FTE positions?

Answer:

The numbers quoted above are for the “Services and Key Efficiency Indicators – Enforcement and education” rather than “Research and assessment”.

The difference in full-time employee equivalents between the 2013-14 Budget and the 2013-14 Estimated Actual budget is due to a difference in allocation of operational and administrative staff mainly caused by the “funding gap” in the 2013-14 Budget. The change in staffing allocations occurred when the 2013-14 Estimated Actual budget was reworked to include the \$6 million Deficit Funding budget adjustment.

It should be noted that the FTE for the whole Department did not change between the 2013-14 Budget (461 FTE) and the 2013-14 Estimated Actual Budget (461 FTE) and therefore the variation is due to the revised allocation of FTE between services. This allocation of FTE is consistent between the 2012-13 Actual, 2013-14 Estimated Actual and 2014-15 Budget Estimate while the 2013-14 Budget FTE allocation was inconsistent with other years.

14. I refer to page 592, “Services and Key Efficiency Indicators” – research and Assessment”, and ask –

- a) Estimated actual FTE positions are down up to 201 from a budgeted 152 for 2013/14. What accounts for the higher number of FTE positions?

The difference in full-time employee equivalents between the 2013-14 Budget and the 2013-14 Estimated Actual budget is due to a difference in allocation of operational and administrative staff mainly caused by the “funding gap” in the 2013-14 Budget. The change in staffing allocations occurred when the 2013-14 Estimated Actual budget was reworked to include the \$6 million Deficit Funding budget adjustment.

It should be noted that the FTE for the whole Department did not change between the 2013-14 Budget (461 FTE) and the 2013-14 Estimated Actual Budget (461 FTE) and therefore the variation is due to the revised allocation of FTE between services. This allocation of FTE is consistent between the 2012-13 Actual, 2013-14 Estimated Actual and 2014-15 Budget Estimate while the 2013-14 Budget FTE allocation was inconsistent with other years.

15. I refer to '593, “Asset Investment Program – Works in Progress”, and ask –

- a) There is a significant funding gap across the forward estimates for the Abrolhos Islands Airstrips rolling program. With the total program estimated to cost \$2.281 million and with a spend of \$221,000 to date, a short fall exists across the forward estimates for the total cost. When is this project expected to be completed?

Answer:

The Abrolhos Islands Airstrips Rolling Program is an annual allocation of funding to upgrade facilities on the Abrolhos Islands. This funding is generally spent in the year allocated although in some years unspent funds may be “rolled over” to the next year.

The Estimated Total Cost for program funding such as the Abrolhos Island Airstrips Rolling Program should reflect the estimated expenditure to the 30th June 2014 plus budgeted expenditure for 2014-15 to 2017-18, that is \$681,000. The Estimated Total Cost shown at Page 593 is in error and will be adjusted in the Department’s Asset Investment Program.

16. I refer to page 592, “Enforcement and Education”, and ask –

- a) Can the Minister provide the number of safety checks of recreational fishers conducted by Fisheries and Marine Officers on a month by month basis during the 2012/13 separated by those in the metro area and by those in regional areas, and separated by checks done “at-sea” and those done on boat ramps?
- b) Can the same month-by-month data be provided from 2013/14 to date?

- c) Can the same date be provided for safety checks of commercial fishers?

Answer:

- (a) – (c) Please see Attachment 1.

17. I refer to page 592, “Enforcement and Education”, and ask –

- a) How many lives are lost each year in boat accidents involving recreational fishers in boats? Does the Department keep records as to the reasons for each death, ie weather, faulty equipment, etc?
- b) Can those figures be given for the last five years?
- c) How many lives are lost from rock fishing each year? Can the Minister provide figures for each of the last ten years?
- d) Can the Department give an evaluation of dollars spent compared to lives saved between boat safety and rock fishing?
- e) Can the Department give an evaluation of dollars spent compared to lives saved between boat safety, rock fishing and the shark mitigation program?
- f) Dollar for dollar, which program saves the most lives?

Answer:

- a) - f) The Department of Fisheries role is determined by the objects of the Fish Resources Management Act, which are to develop and manage fisheries and aquaculture in a sustainable way; and to share and conserve the State’s fish and other aquatic resources and their habitats for the benefit of present and future generations. As the Department of Fisheries has a considerable compliance presence in coastal locations, it has also performed marine safety checks under an arrangement with the Department of Transport. The Department of Fisheries does not have primary responsibility for boating safety or rock fishing.

Attachment 1

Table 1: Recreational Vessels - Number of Safety Checks

Location	Patrol Platform	2012												2013												2014											
		Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun												
Metropolitan	Land	198	183	291	555	420	850	619	474	813	455	275	135	110	285	225	475	537	583	438	284	275	306	115	11												
Regional	Vessel	27	102	212	121	97	291	341	223	174	190	89	38	45	33	36	58	132	154	118	139	83	137	43	0												
	Land	88	109	3	10	0	1	4	5	1	21	26	17	54	14	3	0	0	0	2	1	13	0	1	0												
	Vessel	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	4	6	27	3	1	5	0	0	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0												
Monthly Totals		313	394	506	686	517	1143	965	706	994	693	393	191	214	332	264	557	669	737	558	424	371	443	159	11												

Table 2: Commercial Vessels - Number and Type of Safety Checks

		2012												2013												2014											
Type of Safety Check		Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun												
Full Safety Check	Equipment	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0												
Partial Safety Check	Equipment	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0												
Manning Check Only		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0												
Monthly Totals		0	9	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	4	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0												

Notes to Tables 1 and 2:

Data are incomplete from March 2014 onwards as the data is still being entered by the Unit responsible for data collection and verification.

It is not possible from the information collected to determine from the data collected whether Commercial Safety Checks were performed at sea, alongside a wharf etc., or on a hardstand.