

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



Fifty-seventh meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 14-18 July 2008

Reports

Reports of regional representatives

OCEANIA

This attached document is submitted by Australia.



Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

SC57 Regional Report – Oceania

- Australia
- Fiji
- New Zealand
- Palau
- Papua New Guinea
- Samoa
- Solomon Islands
- Vanuatu



Australian Government

Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts

This regional report has been prepared by the CITES Management and Scientific Authorities of Australia, as Oceania regional representative to the CITES Standing Committee. The report covers the intersessional period between SC54 and SC57. All CITES Parties in the region were consulted and, where possible, have provided input on the activities of their CITES Management and Scientific Authorities. Please direct all comments or enquiries to:

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1. Introduction

This report outlines the activities undertaken by the Parties of the Oceania region to implement and enforce CITES during the period between the Fifty-fourth Meeting of the Standing Committee (2 – 6 October 2006) up to the Fifty-seventh Meeting of the Standing Committee (14 – 18 July 2008).

Australia, as the CITES regional representative for Oceania to the Standing Committee, has prepared this report on behalf of the Parties of the Oceania region – Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

Regional Activities

Regional activities have included collaboration between Oceania CITES Management Authorities on improved regional compliance, the provision of identification materials, the identification of issues such as regionally appropriate tools and techniques for non-detriment findings and enriching legislative frameworks.

Capacity building activities in Vanuatu

Vanuatu signed up to CITES in 1989 and has been working since then to implement CITES. As part of these efforts, the Australian Government placed an Australian Youth Ambassador for Development (AYAD), Narelle Hallion, with the Vanuatu Environment Unit to assist on a range of issues, including implementation of Vanuatu's CITES legislation, policy and procedures. AYAD is a program funded and managed by Australia's aid agency, AusAID.

Torres Strait compliance

The CITES Management Authorities of Australia and Papua New Guinea are currently collaborating on an approach to improve CITES compliance in transborder trade in the Torres Strait. The Torres Strait separates the two countries, and is mostly inhabited by traditional communities.

Palau legislation project

As part of this project, a representative of the CMA of Australia visited Palau and, alongside local CITES officials, gave presentations on the overall objectives of CITES, specific goals of the legislation project and practical advice for border enforcement officers. Following the visit, the CITES Management Authority of Australia provided input on draft legislation prepared by the CITES Management Authority of Palau, with assistance from a local consultant engaged under the project.

Regional Customs training

The CITES Management Authority of Australia contributed to the Pacific Customs Management Forum (PCMP) hosted by Australian Customs Service and the Centre for Customs and Excise Studies in May 2007 and May 2008. Participants from Customs in the Pacific region attended the training initiative. Australian experiences were used as a case study of how relationships between agencies can help protect wildlife and strengthen regional capacity. Participants inspected wildlife specimens seized by Australian Customs and shared information on their own experiences with wildlife trade enforcement.

The CITES Management Authority of Australia presented a half-day training and awareness session to Customs representatives from the Pacific, South East, Central and Western Asia at the annual

Customs International Executive Management Program (CIEMP) hosted by Australian Customs Service and the Centre for Customs and Excise Studies at the University of Canberra. The session, held in November 2007, addressed the global significance of wildlife trade, reinforced the important role of enforcement in global initiatives, and helped to facilitate discussion about regional organisation and communication, significant taxa and enforcement strategies.

Resources

The CITES Management Authority of New Zealand provided 'Saving Paradise' CITES education and awareness products on CITES listed species commonly in trade in the Oceania region for distribution to regional Parties. Other resources distributed to regional Parties by the CMA of Australia includes the Interactive Training Course for Enforcement Officers, the Traditional Asian Medicines Identification Guide and CITESwoodID.

2. Australia

Participation in CITES activities and projects

Australia has continued as the Oceania regional representative on the Standing Committee (SC) since CoP13. Ms Kerry Smith, Assistant Secretary, Wildlife Branch, welcomes the opportunity to represent the region in this capacity. Australia is also the regional representative for Oceania to the Finance and Budget Subcommittee.

Australia has been an active participant in several working groups. Australia has provided input to the personal and household effects, Scientific Committee review and Strategic Plan working groups. Australia also attended the CITES 14th Conference of the Parties (CoP14) in June 2007 and provided financial assistance, along with the Government of the Netherlands, for the attendance of a representative of the Solomon Islands to the meeting as an observer prior to becoming a Party to CITES.

CITES Timber Officer

The Australian Government provided funding to enable the establishment of a Timber Officer staffing position in the CITES Secretariat. The key role of this position is to combat illegal logging, through promoting sustainable forest management and trading, to reduce the rate of global deforestation and associated greenhouse gas emissions and to protect timber and other forest species threatened by international trade. The position's duties include promoting sustainable forest management practices, building technical capacity in timber exporting countries, assessing conservation measures for timber and developing timber recovery programs. Initially, the Timber Officer is focussing on timber trade in the Asia-Pacific region.

Changes to domestic legislation implementing CITES

Australia previously had a stricter domestic measure in place where the Scientific Authority of Australia requested information from the country of export to confirm the non-detriment finding before the Management Authority would approve the commercial import of wild sourced Appendix II specimens. This requirement was amended in February 2007 to make this requirement less restrictive by limiting it to the below listed Appendix II wild sourced specimens:

- Ramin (*Gonystylus* spp.)
- Beluga sturgeon (*Huso huso*) originating from the Caspian Sea
- South African Ghaap (*Hoodia gordonii*)

- All specimens originating from countries not Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

Additionally, a stricter domestic measure came into effect in February 2007 where all Cetaceans are treated as if they were Appendix I for the purposes of import to, and export or re-export from, Australia.

Compliance and enforcement activities

As a result of an organisational restructure within Australia's CITES Management Authority (the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts), a Compliance and Enforcement Branch has been established. The Branch deals with a wide range of compliance matters considered to be of national environmental significance under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). The Branch also has resources which are dedicated to CITES law enforcement - contained in Part 13A of the EPBC Act.

During the report period, a number of intelligence-led investigations into suspected exotic bird smuggling activities were undertaken. This resulted in over eighty birds being seized and a number of cases proposed to be brought before Australian courts. The investigations were conducted in cooperation with state and territory wildlife law enforcement agencies, together with the Australian Customs Service and the Australian Federal Police.

Where participants in the program are able to demonstrate a satisfactory level of knowledge in these areas, they are awarded accreditation which may be used in their business advertising material. The accreditation is expected to give Australian consumers a greater level of confidence when buying traditional medicine products that the wildlife ingredients have been legally sourced.

The Australian Environmental Law Enforcement and Regulators Network (AELERT) is a network of environmental regulatory agencies responsible for the management of natural resources, cultural heritage or the protection of the environment. It aims to build relationships between jurisdictions, to facilitate the sharing of information and to improve the regulatory compliance capacity of member agencies. At the annual AELERT conference held in Adelaide (November 2007), it was agreed to establish a sub-committee called the Wildlife Crimes Working Group for the purpose of developing Australia's capacity in areas such as:

- the application of DNA forensic science in wildlife matters;
- developing national standardised information reports for intelligence sharing;
- developing training courses;
- establishing a list of wildlife expert witnesses;
- profiling offenders;
- improving communication between agencies when issuing CITES export / import permits; and
- examining the feasibility of developing officer exchange programs.

The introduction of a new compliance program is expected to achieve improved environmental outcomes. Under the new program, the level of compliance by permit holders with conditions set on CITES export and import permits is assessed. The program aims to review approximately one per cent of wildlife permits issued annually by the Australian CITES Management Authority. To achieve improved wildlife regulation outcomes, industry operators are given the opportunity to provide feedback to the Australian CITES Management Authority staff on the regulatory process, and raise compliance issues relevant to their industry.

Education and awareness activities

Since 2006, Australia has focussed predominantly on increasing awareness and compliance in trade in live birds, timber, and complementary medicines. Australia has taken a two pronged approach, targeting stakeholders through advertising and media, and raising compliance and enforcement capacity within Australia and Oceania through education activities.

Advertising and media initiatives include:

- Ads in popular press aimed at personal importers of *Hoodia gordonii* products.
- Development of “Get the Facts on Hoodia” brochure and fact sheet.
- Advertisements in the Australian Acupuncture and Chinese Medicines Association (AACMA) magazine, newsletter and wall-chart.
- Placements in the AFTA Travel Industry Yearbook.
- Placements in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade “Hints for Traveller” website and handbook.
- Placements in the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service (AQIS) Travel Guides.
- Ongoing advertisements in exotic bird keeping popular press (Parrot Society magazine & Talking Birds newspaper).
- Placements in all regional editions of the Pet Directory. A definitive resource for pet owners and suppliers in Australia.
- Continuing advertisements in in-flight magazines to target outgoing passengers.
- Review and re-distribution of the “If in doubt – Check it Out” brochure to Australian ports and travel industry professionals Australia wide.

Education activities include:

- Funding and assistance to the AACMA Endangered Species Certification Scheme under which practitioners, traders and users of complementary medicines would receive recognition for undertaking to be aware of, and complying with, international and Australian wildlife trade regulations in their use of wildlife ingredients in complementary medicine. The scheme will be launched on 24 May 2008.
- Support of the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) Bear Bile Detection Kits project. Facilitated the distribution and testing of products thought to contain bear bile using the WSPA kits.
- Sponsorship of “Thin Green Line” - a documentary movie about the work of park rangers around the world in protecting many of the species threatened by illegal international trade.
- Presentations on CITES enforcement given to Pacific Customs Management Forum (PCMP) 2007 & 2008 for regional Customs Officers.
- Presentation on CITES enforcement given to Customs International Executive Management Program (CIEMP) 2007 for Customs executives from the Pacific and Asian regions.
- Customs Recruit and In-service training - 26 sessions, approximately 700 officers trained since last report.
- AQIS Information Sessions: Delivered to approximately 200 officers since last report.

The Australian Government in cooperation with India, the Philippines and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, has prepared identification sheets for *Carcharodon carcharias* and for two other Appendix –II shark species: *Rhincodon typus* (whale shark) and *Cetorhinus maximus* (basking shark). The identification sheets were produced in English, French and Spanish, as well as in Cantonese, Indonesian and Mandarin.

3. Fiji

Workshops/ meetings/ implementation activities

The Fiji Island CITES management Authority (FICMA) has for the first time been provided with a fund of F\$60,000 by the present Government for CITES related work in Fiji in 2008. Under this funding service:

- FICMA is organising Training Workshops for Customs and Quarantine Officers in Fiji in May on CITES related issues.
- FICMA will also assist Fisheries Department (FD) and a group of scientists from the University of the South Pacific (USP) in Suva, through this fund to carry out Non Detriment Findings (NDF) of live corals in certain areas of extraction in Fiji. FD are already embarking on this project from their own research fund, with the assistance of USP scientists.
- The CITES allocation will also enable us to enforce Fiji's CITES related Legislations (The Endangered and Protected Species (EPS) Act of 2002 and its Regulations of 2003) such as in the registration of companies trading in CITES and EPS Act listed species.
- The fund will also enable us to print awareness materials for schools and the communities.

Scientific Authority activities

Quarterly meeting of the Fiji Island CITES Scientific Council (FICSC) and the Fiji Islands CITES Management Authority (FICMA) are on track. In February 2008, a joint meeting was concluded for the first time due to the need to sort out matters on coral extraction and reduction of export quota.

The quota for all CITES listed products, such as live corals and live rocks or coral rocks (Sclerantinia species) have been reduced by 25% from the 2007 quota. This will be reviewed by FICSC and FICMA in the last quarter of this year after the result of the NDF work by FD is obtained.

Reporting

The 2006 Annual report was submitted to the Secretariat in early 2007. The 2005 and 2004 reports were compiled in 2006 and submitted to the Secretariat. The 2007 Annual Report is being prepared now and we should submit by end of the month as we are organising our Scientific Council and Management Authority meetings and training programmes for our Customs and Quarantine Division people this month also.

4. New Zealand

Implementation tools

A new data base for supplying input into New Zealand's annual report and for issuing permits, logging seizures and permits presented came into operation on 1 January 2007. Work is continuing on refining its operation and this is due for completion by 30 June 2008.

Education and awareness activities

Training courses were held during the year for border control officers from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and Customs.

CITES information cabinets at airports in Wellington and Palmerston North have been or are in the process of being upgraded.

A seminar was held in Christchurch with representatives of the New Zealand Chinese community in June 2007 with particular emphasis on the use of parts and derivatives of endangered species in traditional Asian medicine.

The Traditional Asian Medicine manual produced by the Department of Conservation's Auckland Conservancy office is being updated and will be distributed to border control agencies in May 2008.

A display of specimens of endangered items which have entered illegally and been seized is due to open at Auckland Museum in May 2008.

The Department of Conservation's Canterbury Conservancy Office has prepared information material for use at Orana Park zoo.

Participation in CITES activities and projects

New Zealand participated in CoP14 in The Hague in June 2007 with a delegation of five, our largest delegation yet to a CoP, with representatives from the Department of Conservation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Ministry of Fisheries. New Zealand chaired the Shark Working Group at CoP14. The New Zealand Minister of Conservation attended the Ministerial Round Table hosted by the Dutch Government in conjunction with CoP14. New Zealand participated as Oceania representative in the meeting of the Strategic Vision Working Group in Geneva in January 2007.

Enforcement

There have been three successful prosecutions since October 2006.

In May/ June 2006 25 kilograms of powder exported from China via Australia were intercepted. At least half of the total powder was made from seahorses (12.5 kilograms) representing some 62,000 seahorses. The importing company pleaded guilty and was fined \$NZ 10,000.

A company in Australia is facing prosecution for its handling of the powder when it was imported into Australia and exported to New Zealand. Both of the importations (Australia and New Zealand) were without the appropriate CITES documentation.

A South African national was intercepted at Auckland International Airport on 29 October 2007 on arrival from South Africa. His ticketing had taken him from South Africa to Australia, where he stayed in transit in Sydney, before continuing his trip to New Zealand. On his arrival he was intercepted by Customs and found to be in possession of 44 parrot eggs. The eggs were located in a purpose-built vest he was wearing at the time.

He admitted to carrying the bird's eggs prior to undergoing a personal search, but before the personal search had been conducted and while he was sitting in the Customs search area, one of the eggs hatched.

He pleaded guilty to importing the parrot eggs and was sentenced to a fine of \$NZ 20,000, which included \$NZ 10,000 for a Biosecurity Act charge; \$NZ 5,000 under the domestic legislation implement CITES in New Zealand and \$NZ 5,000 for making a false declaration under the Biosecurity Act.

The third case involved the importation of approximately 700 kilograms of coral exported from China to New Zealand in December 2006. This was discovered by Customs in a container, the contents of which had been declared as furniture items and ornaments.

The importer pleaded guilty and was fined \$NZ 8,500. The scientist who did the formal identification of the coral – confirming that it was all Scleractinia and therefore CITES-listed, identified also that it was one of the worst cases of environmental vandalism he had seen in New

Zealand. In addition to the CITES issue Dr O'Shea and his team identified 695 'hitch hiker' species which was by their own admissions a gross underestimation of the original number. This was also a huge biosecurity threat to New Zealand if the coral had ended up in the ocean here.

A number of cases are pending involving local importers of Traditional Asian Medicines where shipments of medicines have been intercepted containing specimens of musk deer, Saiga antelope, sea turtle, pangolin, gastrodia, dendrobium or indeed the raw products. These have either not been declared or have been mislabelled to avoid detection by border agencies.

CITES Officers participated in national enforcement conferences in December 2006 and December 2007.

Changes to domestic legislation implementing CITES

Changes to the Schedules to the Trade in Endangered Species Act 1989 to reflect changes made to listings in the CITES Appendices at CoP14 were approved by the New Zealand Government in February 2008 and took effect in March 2008.

5. Palau

Legislation and Policy

The CITES Management Authorities of Palau and Australia have collaborated to develop Palau's domestic CITES implementation legislation. The legislation has been drafted and is the process of being reviewed by legal counsels prior to being put forward to the National Congress.

Workshops and meetings

Representatives from the CITES Management Authority, and Quarantine (who are responsible for border enforcement of CITES) of Palau met with a representative of the CITES Management Authority of Australia who gave presentations on Australia's experience of CITES implementation and border enforcement.

6. PNG

Legislation and Policy

Following the signing of amendments to domestic CITES implementation legislation, the gazettal process is underway.

Workshops and meetings

1. A workshop on Sustainable Use of PNG's Wildlife convened in January 2007.
2. A public awareness exercise on CITES, domestic government policies and regulations as well as cross-border issues undertaken in border town of Vanimo, Sandaun Province in January 2008.
3. Various inter-agency meetings held between Department of Environment & Conservation, Forestry and Fisheries Departments regarding development of management plans for Agarwood and humphead wrasse.

CITES reports

Annual CITES reports produced for years 2005, 2006 and submitted to CITES Secretariat. CITES reports for 2007 in the process of compilation.

Surveys/species inventory

Annual surveys of both crocodile species carried out in 2005, 2006 and 2007. Saltwater crocodile surveys carried out in 2008 with surveys of freshwater crocodiles to be carried out on a bi-annual basis.

Torres Strait compliance

The CITES Management Authorities of Australia and Papua New Guinea are currently collaborating on an approach to improve CITES compliance in transborder trade in the Torres Strait. The Torres Strait separates the two countries, and is mostly inhabited by traditional communities.

7. Samoa

Samoa became a Party in February 2005, and would benefit greatly from assistance with establishing systems and procedures to administer CITES.

A number of areas need addressing, including:

- reviewing a number of CITES-related pieces of legislation (e.g. Land and Environment Act, Fisheries Act and marine wildlife regulations) to ensure consistency and complementarity;
- technical assistance to establish administrative, operational and implementation by the Samoan Management and Scientific Authorities; and
- capacity building in areas such as non-detriment finding, reporting requirements, community awareness, and enforcement mechanisms.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, acting as the Scientific and Management Authority, issues permits to visitors mainly entering and leaving Samoa to take back seashells as souvenirs.

8. Solomon Islands

Legislation and Policy

The CMA of the Solomon Islands held a consultative stakeholder workshop and a review of the Solomon Islands' wildlife trade legislation, the *Wildlife Protection and Management Act (1998)* and associated regulations. As a result of the review and workshop, the legislation is in the process of being amended to ensure it fulfils CITES implementation requirements.

Implementation tools

In consultation with the CITES Secretariat, the Solomon Islands are in the process of developing a compliant CITES permit format.

Participation in CITES activities and projects

A representative of the Solomon Islands attended CITES CoP14 as an observer just prior to becoming a Party to CITES to gain experience in CITES CoP processes. Attendance was funded by the Governments of Australia and the Netherlands.

9. Vanuatu

Education and awareness activities

Since SC54, Vanuatu has been taking steps to increase the awareness of CITES-related issues around the nation. In spite of the limited technical assistance and human resources at its disposal, the CITES Management Authority, the Vanuatu Environment Unit, has been proactive in its approach to the education and awareness of the residents and communities of Vanuatu with regards to CITES-related issues.

Vanuatu has been active in its promotion of CITES-listed species around Vanuatu, particularly in the nation's capital, Port Vila. As a large tourist destination, Port Vila is the gateway for Vanuatu and as such there is significant tourism-related trade, particularly with shells. Therefore, education is becoming increasingly necessary for the larger hotel chains and tour operators, particularly within Port Vila. The CMA enjoys a good relationship with tour operators where information is freely exchanged and well received. This positive relationship has enabled Vanuatu to continue its substantial tourist trade while ensuring that the environment is not compromised.

Species specific management

Commercial exporting is on the rise with coral of particular interest to exporters in overseas markets and as such funding is necessary to determine the immediate and long-term effects on the affected communities. While the CMA has been mindful of the effects of considerable commercial trade, there is insufficient funding and technical assistance to establish accurate baseline data to address the effects. However, the CMA has, as an interim measure, established quotas for commercial exports as a short-term solution only while waiting for funds to be made available. Vanuatu is currently in the process of approaching donor-funding organisations such as SPREP, the EU and CRISP for financial and technical assistance in order to achieve this target.

Cooperation with other agencies

The CMA continues to work well with other relevant departments within the country such as Fisheries, Forestry and Customs, where in-country training is conducted and information disseminated accordingly between the departments. The CMA works in conjunction with these departments to provide accurate information to targeted groups. The CMA is currently working on designs for posters and brochures to be placed strategically in the airport to alert passengers to CITES species and related issues. They will also be placed in areas of high tourist-traffic such as the markets, tourist shops, hotels and resorts. The CMA is currently looking at expanding CITES advertisements, with tourists the specific target, by way of in-flight announcements on all incoming international flights. Funding proposals are currently being drafted so as to finance this project.

Legislation and policy

The CMA has recruited a volunteer to help implement policy and procedural review of CITES issues. The volunteer's position involves looking into current procedures with a view for improving

the efficiency of the present system and to streamline the existing legislation. The CMA will be applying for future volunteers to continue with this work.

The Vanuatu Environment Unit is largely responsible for the organisation of environment-themed events. For example, the VEU, together with other departments and NGOs, is organising community awareness, information sessions and exhibitions for World Environment Day, and there will be an emphasis on CITES, together with the importance of biodiversity for a sustainable ecological future.

While Vanuatu is doing all that it can to ensure that its obligations under CITES are being fulfilled and that the interests of the environment are of primary importance, funding and technical assistance will be very much appreciated to ensure that this can continue and indeed improve.