

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Environment portfolio

Question No: 43
Hearing: Supplementary Budget Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 1
Programme: Science
Topic: CSIRO REPORT - AN UPDATED SYTHESIS OF THE IMPACTS OF OCEAN ACIDIFICATION ON MARINE BIODIVERSITY
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Question Date: 20 October 2014
Question Type: Spoken

Senator Whish-Wilson asked:

Senator WHISH-WILSON: Can I ask the department about a CSIRO collaborative report entitled *An updated synthesis of the impacts of ocean acidification on marine biodiversity*. It provides evidence that the rate of ocean acidification is accelerating and puts potential evaluations on risks to fisheries. I just wanted to know if you were aware of that report and if you had had any briefings on the impacts on fisheries and ecosystems and any flow-on effects on various industries and communities.

Mr Johnson: I am aware that there has been research on ocean acidification under the Australian Climate Change Science Programme. I am not familiar with the exact paper that you referred to by CSIRO. There has been a range of work undertaken, and I am not sure whether that is one of the reports that has come out that we are familiar with or not. I would be happy to take it on notice to get back to you.

Senator WHISH-WILSON: If you could, because it was only released in the last couple of weeks. It has got some modelling around flow-on effects to various industries and food security. I would be interested to know on notice.

Answer:

The Department is aware of the report *An Updated Synthesis of the Impacts of Ocean Acidification on Marine Biodiversity*¹. The report was prepared by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity at the request of Parties to the Convention for an updated systematic review on the impacts of ocean acidification on biodiversity and ecosystem functions which provides a targeted synthesis of the biodiversity implications of ocean acidification for marine and coastal systems (COP11, decision XI/18).

Australia has been a Party to the Convention on Biological Diversity since 1993 and was supportive at COP11 of the decision to prepare this report. Australian experts contributed to the preparation of this report, including Professor Maria Byrne (University of Sydney), Dr Richard Matear (CSIRO) and Professor Philip Munday (James Cook University).

In January 2014 Parties to the CBD were invited to review a draft version of the synthesis report prior to its finalisation. The Department of the Environment led Australia's response and provided input into the review.

¹ Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (2014). *An Updated Synthesis of the Impacts of Ocean Acidification on Marine Biodiversity* (Eds: S. Hennige, J.M. Roberts & P. Williamson). Montreal, Technical Series No. 75, 99 pages

Australian research contributes significantly to international efforts to understand the impacts of ocean acidification:

- The Australian Climate Change Science Programme recognised the significance of this threat in national climate science planning, and has supported research by the CSIRO and the Antarctic Climate and Ecosystems Cooperative Research Centre into the effects of ocean acidification on marine ecosystems in the Southern Ocean and the Great Barrier Reef since 2006.
- Scientists from the Australian Antarctic Division and the Antarctic Climate and Ecosystems Cooperative Research Centre, based in Hobart, have been undertaking research since 2006 on the impacts of ocean acidification in the Southern Ocean, including impacts on organisms such as calcifying zooplankton, krill and deep sea corals.
- Research into the implications of ocean acidification for the Great Barrier Reef has also been supported for several years through the National Environmental Research Programme and its predecessors and partners, including the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

The Australian Government is committed to helping Australian communities and businesses better understand and manage the impacts of climate change. To that end, the Government has committed \$9 million over three years (2014-17) to the National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility (NCCARF) at Griffith University on the Gold Coast. This funding will deliver practical, hands-on tools and information to help governments, businesses and communities manage climate risks, particularly in the coastal zone.