

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee**

Answers to questions on notice

Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities portfolio

Supplementary Budget Estimates, October 2011

Program: Division or Agency: 1.2: IMD

Question No: 17

Topic: Environmental information

Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Waters asked:

1. The State of the Environment report is due this year – is it still on track, when can we expect it to be published?
2. The National Environmental Information Plan says legislation will be introduced to underpin the Plan (especially BoM's role) – where is this legislation at, when will it be introduced?
3. Also under the National Environmental Information Plan, the Department is to review Australian Government activity in environmental information to identify opportunities for cooperation, consolidation, improvement or efficiencies
 - a. How has this progressed to date? What opportunities for better quality and accessibility of information have been identified to date?
4. The National Environmental Information Plan itself seems to focus on coordination / standardisation of data. What are Department's priorities and resourcing in relation to collection of new environmental data to support better decision-making?

Answer:

1. The State of the Environment report 2011 is on track to be finalised by the end of the calendar year. In accordance with s516B of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, the Minister is required to table the report in both houses of the Parliament within 15 sitting days after receiving the report.
2. The Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (the department) is currently preparing a consultation paper on the scope and function of the legislation to be introduced under the National Plan for Environmental Information initiative. The paper will be used as the basis for consulting with relevant parties.
3. (& 3a). The independent *Review of Australian Government environmental information activity* commenced in mid November 2011 and will run for up to 12 months.
4. The department is currently contributing to the development of a *Statement of Australian Government Priorities for Environmental Information* (due for release in 2012) by the Environmental Information Advisory Group, established to guide the development of the National Plan for Environmental Information initiative.
5. In conjunction with this whole-of-government priority-setting approach, the department is considering how to address our environmental information needs in a more cost-effective and strategic manner, including how to make better use of existing information before undertaking costly new data collection. The need for the department to invest in new data collections, or to invest in the re-use or re-analysis of existing data, is considered when planning specific programs, and is prioritised by the department accordingly.

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Program: Division or Agency: 1.2: Marine **Question No:** 18

Topic: South-west Marine
Bioregional Planning -
submissions

Proof Hansard Page and Date 108 (17/10/11)
or Written Question:

Senator Siewert asked:

Senator SIEWERT: How are they now going to be dealt with and treated? Will the 39,266 be treated as individual submissions?

Mr Oxley: You will be delighted to know that staff of the marine division have read every single one of those 39,266 submissions.

Senator SIEWERT: I would expect nothing less.

Mr Oxley: Each of those submissions has been reviewed by the department. A proportion of those submissions—I do not have the numbers in detail; that would need to be taken on notice—a significant number, probably over 50 per cent, are straight up and down the recommended words that were associated with those campaigns. Nonetheless, there are a significant number of campaign derived submissions in which the individuals who made those submissions have made an effort to reflect their own personal views or experiences of the marine environment.

Answer:

All submissions received during the public consultation period were reviewed by the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (the department) and the comments considered in finalising the Marine Bioregional Plan and proposal for the marine reserves network for the South-west Marine Region. Of the submissions received that were generated from organised campaigns, approximately 95 per cent contained the suggested template text and made no further comments on the Marine Bioregional Plan or proposed reserve network for the South-west Marine Region.

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Program: Division or Agency: 1.2: Marine **Question No:** 19

Topic: Marine Bioregional Planning
South-west consultation
process

Proof Hansard Page and Date 109 (17/10/11)
or Written Question:

Senator Siewert asked:

Senator SIEWERT: Was Save Our Fish Stocks from Denmark, Albany/South Coast invited or participated?

Mr Clark: I have not got the details of that group specifically here, but at Margaret River we had representatives from local fishing groups attend the open day. There were a number of them who were not able to make specific times earlier on in the day, so they came in the evenings as individuals but had an interest obviously from that recreational fishing sector.

Senator SIEWERT: The Denmark group were likely to have gone to Albany. Could you take on notice to see if Save Our Fish Stocks were invited?

Mr Clark: Yes.

Answer:

Information sessions were advertised through local media and on the department's website and were open to public attendance. In addition, state-level sectoral organisations circulated invitations to regional members on behalf of the department.

Members of Save our Fish Stock attended a meeting with the department in Manjimup on 11 July 2011.

The Save our Fish Stock Committee made a submission to the department on the South-west marine reserves network proposal.

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Program: Division or Agency: 1.2: Marine **Question No:** 20

Topic: South-west marine reserve

Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. Has a socio-economic assessment of the proposed South-west Commonwealth marine reserves network been completed? Has it been made public? If not, will it be?

Answer:

1. The socio-economic assessment of the South-west Commonwealth marine reserve network proposal is in progress. The assessment report will be a public document.

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Program: Division or Agency: 1.2: Marine **Question No:** 21

Topic: Coral Sea marine bioregional
planning process

**Proof Hansard Page and Date
or Written Question:** Written

Senator Boswell asked:

1. The Minister has recently advised that the Coral Sea Bioregional Process will be fast tracked. Is there a date set for the release of the draft proposal?. Will the fast tracking of the Coral Sea Bioregional process alter the length of the consultation period?
2. Can the Minister advise if the Management plan for the Coral Sea will be provided as part of the public consultation process?
3. Will the department provide budgeted management costings for the Coral Sea bioregional proposal?
4. The Coral Sea Island territories extend up to 600 Nautical miles off shore in some areas - has the cost of management enforcement been taken into consideration for these areas?
5. Has the science used to justify any additional closures or restrictions been independently peer reviewed and if so will that data be made available during the public consultation period?

Answer:

1. The Coral Sea Conservation Zone is being assessed as part of the marine bioregional planning process. At the time of the Supplementary Budget Estimates in October 2011, public consultation for the East Marine Region, including temperate waters and the Coral Sea, was expected to commence in late 2011. On 25 November 2011, the Government released the Coral Sea Commonwealth Marine Reserve proposal for public consultation. The length of the public consultation process will be consistent with processes undertaken for the South-west, North and North-west marine regions, which is 90 days.
2. Under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, a management plan for each network of reserves will be prepared following its proclamation. All management plans are subject to a separate period of statutory public consultation.
3. In line with the public consultation processes for the South-west, North and North-west marine regions, detailed management cost estimates will not accompany the Coral Sea marine reserves proposal. Management costs will be addressed in the budget context during the development of management plans once the marine reserves have been finalised and proclaimed.
4. Yes. Compliance costs are considered in the overall process for establishing marine reserves.
5. Scientific input and advice has been obtained at key points throughout the marine bioregional planning process. A detailed analysis document outlining how the proposed marine reserves meet the Goals and Principles for the establishment of the National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas in Commonwealth Waters has been made available on the web when each regional marine reserves proposal has been released for public consultation, including the Coral Sea marine reserve proposal. Reports on risks posed by commercial fishing methods have been independently peer reviewed.

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Program: Division or Agency: 1.2: Marine

Question No: 22

Topic: East Marine region

Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Boswell asked:

1. When does the public consultation for the East Marine region commence and will this include the Coral Sea.
2. Can you provide information on the proposed zoning for these Areas for Further Assessment and the Coral Sea.
3. What types of fishing operations are conducted in these areas and how will this proposed zoning impact on these various fishing operations.
4. Are there any specific fishing operations that will be excluded under the proposed zoning. If so, what is the rationale behind any potential exclusion of fishing types. I note in the South West draft plan trawl gear is excluded from any of the zones, can you advise why this is the case and if the intention is to adopt similar zoning approach to the North and East regions of Queensland. I take this opportunity to remind the Minister there remains an active well managed trawl fishery in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (a world heritage listed reserve) and any attempts to single out and exclude trawling will be met with very real concern.
5. As you would be aware trawling in multiple use areas occurs in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park however under the draft plan released in the South West, North and North West trawling is excluded from multiple use areas. Can you provide a detailed explanation and rationale for this significant change.
6. Has your department done an assessment of the individual business and real cost to impacted communities of closing further areas for marine protection and does this assessment include provision for future prospectivity losses.

Answer:

1. The Australian Government released a draft Marine Bioregional Plan and Commonwealth Marine Reserves Network proposal for the Temperate East Marine Region on 11 November 2011 and the Coral Sea Commonwealth Marine Reserve proposal on 25 November 2011 for public consultation.
2. Information on zoning is outlined in the marine reserves proposals.
- 3-4. There are a number of fisheries operating in the East region using a wide variety of methods. They include demersal trawl, mid-water trawl, beam trawl, mesh nets (gillnets), demersal longline, pelagic longline, handline, dropline, trolling, fish traps, crab and lobster traps, squid jig, shell dredge, hand collection/diving, purse seine and Danish seine.

The South-west marine reserves proposal excluded demersal trawl because the fishing gear risk assessment undertaken for the areas for further assessment in the region concluded that this method was incompatible with the conservation values of all areas for further assessment due to the level of risk it posed to benthic and demersal communities and habitats. The risks posed to threatened, endangered and protected species and to sharks and rays were also assessed as making this gear incompatible with the primary objective of biodiversity conservation.

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A separate risk assessment has been conducted for the East region and has been considered in determining those fishing methods proposed to be excluded from operating in the East marine region reserves. The marine reserves proposals for the Temperate East marine region and the Coral Sea released for public consultation outline those fishing methods that are proposed to be excluded from operating in the different zone categories.

5. Trawling is excluded from the proposed Commonwealth marine reserves networks for the South-west, North and North-west marine regions as this fishing method has been assessed as incompatible with the conservation values of the proposed reserves (refer to answer to questions 3 and 4 above). All aspects of the marine reserve proposals, including zoning arrangements are open for comment as part of the public consultation period.

6. A socioeconomic assessment is being conducted for each region by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences to determine the extent of impact and the flow-on effects on regional communities. The assessments are being done in consultation with stakeholders and government agencies, in parallel with the public consultation process for each marine region. The outcomes of these assessments, together with the submissions received about the proposed marine reserve networks, will inform Government decisions on the final networks. As part of the assessment process, issues of importance to the fishing industry and regional communities are considered. This may include the issue of prospective fishing.

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Program: Division or Agency: 1.2: Marine **Question No:** 23
Topic: Marine Bioregional Planning -
Budget
Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Siewert asked:

1. Is there a Budget for the Marine Bioregional Planning program – specifically to fund the election commitment to implement a national system of marine reserves by 2012?
2. How is cost being assessed by the Department with respect to the proposals for marine reserves? Is it a flat rate GVP only, or have other measures been considered?

Answer:

1. Yes. \$9.7 million was allocated in the 2011-12 budget. Future funding requirements will be considered in the budget context.
2. The Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences is carrying out socio-economic assessments of the proposed marine reserve networks in each Marine Region. The assessments look at both the direct and indirect impacts of the proposed networks on the fishing industry, including possible impacts on the communities that rely on these industries for jobs and economic activity.

The cost of any fishing industry adjustment assistance program cannot be estimated until the regional marine reserves have been finalised and their impacts assessed. The cost of any adjustment program is dependent on the detail of the specific elements of any such program.

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Program: Division or Agency: 1.2: Marine **Question No:** 24
Topic: North-west bioregional
planning
Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Siewert asked:

1. I seek further information about the use of seismic data to establish the ecological values of the bioregion
 - a) What are the sources of the data used to develop the NW Bioregion?
 - b) What independent data been used?
 - c) What Department commissioned data has been used?
 - d) What data collected in the process of granting oil and gas leases has been used?
2. Is the NW considered of lesser ecological value than the other bio-regions?
 - a) If not, why does it have substantially fewer marine protected areas?
 - b) Have DRET had any input into the development of these plans?
 - c) Has the oil and gas industry had any input into the development of these plans?

Answer:

1a. Key biophysical data used in the marine bioregional planning process for the North-west marine region include:

- Commonwealth of Australia (2006), A Guide to the Integrated Marine and Coastal Regionalisation of Australia, IMCRA 4.0. Department of the Environment and Heritage, Canberra, Australia
- Interim Marine and Coastal Regionalisation for Australia Technical Group (1998). *Interim Marine and Coastal Regionalisation for Australia: an ecosystem-based classification for marine and coastal environments*. Environment Australia, Canberra.
- Baker, C., Potter, A., Tran, M & Heap, A.D., 2008, *Sedimentology and Geomorphology of the North West Marine Region of Australia*, Geoscience Australia, Canberra.
- Brewer, D., Lyne, V., Skewes, T. & Rothlisberg, P., 2007, *Trophic Systems of the North West Marine Region*, Report to the Department of Environment and Water Resources, CSIRO Marine and Atmospheric Research, Cleveland.
- Ellis, N., Pitcher, C.R., and Lawrence, E. (2009) *Predicted seabed assemblage patterns of marine fauna in the North-West Marine Region (NWMR) - Product Description* (NWMR: Electronic resource.) CERF Marine Biodiversity Research Hub, Hobart, Australia <http://www.marinehub.org/predicted-seabed-assemblage-patterns-marine-fauna-north-west-marine-region-nwmr-product-description>
- Last, P.R., Lyne, V.D., Yearsley, G., Gledhill, D.C., Gomon, M., Rees, T. and White, W.T. (2005). *Validation of national demersal fish datasets for the regionalisation of the Australian continental slope and outer shelf (>40m depth)*. CSIRO Marine Research. Hobart, Australia. 99 p.

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- Lyne, V.D., White, W.T., Gledhill, D.C., Last, P.R., Rees, T. and Porter-Smith, R. (2009). *Analysis of Australian continental shelf provinces and biomes based on fish data*. CSIRO Marine and Atmospheric Research. Hobart, Australia. 40 p.
- Geoscience Australia (2006): Australian Maritime Boundaries (AMB) v2.0.
- Geoscience Australia (2005): Australian Bathymetry and Topography.
- Geoscience Australia (2004): Geomorphic Features of the EEZ
- DSEWPaC (2011): Key Ecological Features in the North-west Marine Planning Region
- DSEWPaC (2011): Biologically Important Areas in the North-west Marine Planning Region
- DSEWPaC (2011): Species of National Environmental Significance Database
- DSEWPaC (2010): Historic Shipwrecks Register
- DSEWPaC (2010): Collaborative Australian Protected Areas Database (CAPAD)
- DSEWPaC (2010): Biomes within Australian waters

b. Independent data, as reflected in the list above, has been provided by Geosciences Australia and CSIRO Marine and Atmospheric Research, amongst others.

c. The Department commissioned a range of biophysical data and analysis from CSIRO, the University of Western Australia, Geosciences Australia and through the Marine Biodiversity Research Hub which was funded through the Commonwealth Environment Research Facilities Program (CERF); CERF collaborators included the University of Tasmania, CSIRO, Geosciences Australia, the Australian Institute of Marine Science and Museum Victoria, as well species experts from leading science and academic institutions who assisted in the identification of biologically important areas for species.

For a full list of data used in the marine bioregional planning process for the North-west marine region please refer to the North-west Bioregional Profile, the draft Marine Bioregional Plan for the North-west Marine Region, the Consultation Paper for the Proposed North-west Commonwealth Marine Reserve Network and the Detailed Analysis of the Proposed North-west Commonwealth Marine Reserve Network. These documents can all be found at:

<http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/mbp/publications/north-west/index.html>

d. Data on oil and gas prospectivity in the North-west marine region and on existing oil and gas leases was drawn from the following sources:

- Geoscience Australia (2009) Relative petroleum prospectivity of the North-west marine planning region
- Encom Petroleum Information (2011): GPInfo Petroleum Exploration Database
- DRET (2011): Offshore Petroleum Permits
- DRET (2011): Offshore Petroleum Exploration Acreage Release Areas
- DRET (2010): Offshore Petroleum Exploration Acreage Release Areas
- DRET (2009): Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Areas

2. The North-West is not considered of lesser ecological value than other regions.

a. The development of a representative Commonwealth marine reserve network for each marine region is based on the application of the *Goals and Principles for the Establishment of the National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas*.

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The proposal for the North-west Commonwealth marine reserve network consists of 10 reserves within a total network area of 377 297 km². The proposed network covers 35 per cent of the region. The proposal represents all provincial and meso-scale bioregions, all but one of the depth ranges within bioregions, all of the biological seascapes, all of the seafloor feature types, and all but three of the 13 key ecological features in the North-west marine region.

b. The department has worked collaboratively with all relevant Australian (and State) government agencies throughout the marine bioregional planning process including with the Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism.

c. The department has consulted with all key stakeholders throughout the marine bioregional planning process, including conservation groups, the fishing industry, recreational fishers and the Australian Petroleum Production & Exploration Association Ltd.

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Supplementary Budget Estimates, October 2011

Program: Division or Agency: 1.2: Marine

Question No: 25

Topic: Dieback TAP

Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Siewert asked:

1. What is the status of the new Threat Abatement Plan?
2. Can you please provide information on:
 - a. The timeline to completion
 - b. Who has been consulted
 - c. Any research that has been commissioned by the Department
3. Will the TAP contain SMART goals? If not, what format will it take?

Answer:

1. The department is currently developing a revised draft Threat Abatement Plan.
- 2a. The department is working to present a revised threat abatement plan for dieback caused by *Phytophthora cinnamomi* to the Threatened Species Scientific Committee in the first quarter of 2012. Prior to this a draft will be provided to a small group of experts for review and revise the draft in light of any comments.

Following review by the Threatened Species Scientific Committee and subject to the Minister's approval, the draft plan will be released for public comment for a three month period.

2b. The department has contacted key stakeholders (refer **Attachment A**) to obtain an update on new research and information relating to the management of *Phytophthora cinnamomi*.

2c. *P. cinnamomi* research projects funded by the department are as follows:

	Project	Agency	Funding
2003-2004 (final report 2006)	A project that reviews current best practice approaches to the management of sites in Australia that are or could be threatened by <i>Phytophthora cinnamomi</i> .	MurdockLink Pty Ltd	\$364,213
2004-2005 (final report 2008)	Research into induced resistance in native vegetation of <i>Phytophthora</i>	MurdockLink Pty Ltd	\$1,500,263

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	<i>cinnamomi</i> and innovative methods to contain and/or eradicate within localised incursions in areas of high biodiversity in Australia.		
2004-2005 (final report 2008)	Defining Plant resistance against <i>Phytophthora cinnamomi</i> and application of resistance to revegetation.	Deakin University	\$512,923

3. The revised threat abatement plan will meet the requirements of SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound) project management principles.

List of stakeholders contacted to obtain an update on new research and information relating to the management of *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, as of November 2011

Contact	Organisation
Victoria	
Associate Professor	School of Life and Environmental Sciences, Deakin University
Research Fellow	School of Life and Environmental Sciences, Deakin University
Senior Research Fellow	School of Forest and Ecosystem Science, University of Melbourne
Senior Science Officer, Senior Research Officer and Acting Manager	Plant Standards Branch, Biosecurity Victoria Department of Primary Industries
Manager	Department of Sustainability and Environment
New South Wales	
Senior Research Scientist	Forest Health Management, Forest Resources Research Department of Primary Industries
Threatened Species Coordinator	Department of Environment and Climate Change
Chief Plant Protection Officer	Department of Primary Industries
Senior Threatened Species Officer	Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water
Executive Officer	Gondwana Rainforests World Heritage Area National Parks And Wildlife Service
Professor	Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources The University of Sydney
Western Australia	
Consultant	Project Dieback South Coast NRM, Albany
Dieback Response Group's Executive Office	Department of Environment and Conservation
Director	Plant Biosecurity Department of Agriculture and Food
Manager	Centre for Phytophthora Science and Management School of Biological Sciences and Biotechnology Murdoch University
Senior Research Scientist	Department of Environment and Conservation
Queensland	
Chief Executive Officer	Biosecurity Queensland
Plantation Health Officer	Forest Policy Forestry Plantations Queensland
South Australia	
ARC Research Associate	School of Agriculture, Food and Wine, The University of Adelaide
Professor	School of Agriculture, Food and Wine, The University of Adelaide
Project Officer	Department of Environment and Natural Resources
Researcher	School of Agriculture, Food and Wine University of Adelaide
Tasmania	
Project Officer	Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment
Northern Territory	
Principal Plant Pathologist	NT Department of Resources - Primary Industry
Australian Capital Territory	
Senior Invasive Weeds Officer	ACT Government

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Program: Division or Agency: 1.2: Marine **Question No:** 26

Topic: South-west marine bioregional
planning process

**Proof Hansard Page and Date
or Written Question:** Written

Senator Colbeck asked:

1. Please provide details of any changes to the original SWB marine reserves network proposal put to the fishing industry by SEWPaC in May 2011.
2. What is the consultation process regarding changes to the original SWB marine reserves network?
3. What consultations have taken place with industry regarding changes to the original SWB marine reserves network?
4. Provide details of the science and other data that support to the location of the original SWB marine reserves network and of any proposed changes to the original proposal.
5. What is the anticipated cost of implementing these marine reserves?
6. What is the total expected compensation cost?
7. What is the anticipated value of the compensation package for the Rock lobster industry?
8. How were these expected compensations costs calculated?
9. Has the fishing industry and other affected industries agreed to those calculations?
10. What are the ongoing annualised costs of administering these reserves, including the costs of ensuring compliance with the reserves?
11. How will these costs be recouped?
12. Have any agencies or organisations been approached regarding the administration and compliance monitoring of these reserves?
13. If so, at what stage are the negotiations?

Answer:

1. The Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (the department) is currently considering revisions to the South-west Commonwealth marine reserves network proposal in response to submissions received during the 90-day public consultation period.
2. The department has held discussions with key stakeholder groups to discuss aspects of their submission and to ascertain or clarify the implications of potential changes to the original proposal. Once the final network proposal is agreed by government, it will be subject to a further 60 day period of public consultation prior to proclamation under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.
3. Meetings have taken place with representatives from the commercial fishing industry, the recreational fishing sector and the conservation sector, to discuss potential changes to the original network proposal. Specifically, a two day meeting was held in Perth with representatives from the Commonwealth, Western Australian and South Australian fishing industries.

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4. The scientific data and approaches that underpin the proposed South-west Commonwealth marine reserves network are described in detail in the document *Detailed Analysis of the Proposed South-west Marine Region Network*, available publicly at:

<http://environment.gov.au/coasts/mbp/south-west/consultation/index.html>. Datasets used included; Australia's marine regionalisation and data on spatial distribution of biologically important areas; key ecological features; seafloor features; depth ranges, ecological seascapes, commercial fishing catch, petroleum prospectivity and the location of mining titles. Information from submissions received during the public consultation process will assist in finalising the proposal.

5-9. The estimated costs of implementing the marine reserves, including industry structural adjustment costs, will be considered by the government as part of the process for finalising the marine reserves proposals. The fishing industry will be consulted in the development of any assistance measures consistent with the Fisheries Adjustment Policy.

10-11. The costs of managing the new marine reserves will be determined once they are finalised and informed by consideration of the extent of activity needed to achieve effective management in areas such as compliance. Management costs would be funded through the budget.

12-13. The department has agreements with a number of service providers around the management of the existing Commonwealth marine reserves. These include state and Commonwealth agencies. The department will seek to enter into similar arrangements for the new reserves. Discussions are at an early stage as the reserves networks are not finalised.