

**Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**  
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009  
**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** BRS 01

**Division/Agency:** Bureau of Rural Sciences

**Topic:** Fishing Industry Support

**Hansard Page:** 41 (19/10/2009)

**Senator COLBECK asked:**

**Senator COLBECK**—But there is effectively no support from government as part of the process, by the sound of it? Apart from turning up to consult and having meetings, there is no support from government in assisting the fishing industry to deal with the issues that they have in responding to DEWHA.

**Dr O'Connell**—Do you mean financial support?

**Senator COLBECK**—Well, any support. BRS are consulting with DEWHA and providing them with industry information, but it does not appear—and I will check that later; we will go through that later—whether or not that is being correlated with the industry themselves.

**Dr O'Connell**—But BRS are part of this department, and they are playing that role to ensure that potentially—

**Senator COLBECK**—But we have not been able to establish yet what support is being provided to the industry. It is all very well for the department to provide information, but is that information being shared and checked with industry? What if industry disputes the information that is being provided? What happens to them then is that DEWHA says, 'We've been provided this information by BRS which is prepared from your information.'

**Dr O'Connell**—I am not sure that that has happened. I have not heard that that has happened. We could certainly check that.

**Answer:**

The Bureau of Rural Sciences is undertaking a project on behalf of Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts to examine the impact of marine protected area (MPA) network options on the fishing sector, with a particular focus on commercial fishers. The initial assessment will be based on logbook data provided to the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) and relevant state/territory jurisdictions from commercial fishers. The Commonwealth data are provided at a detailed level with latitude and longitude information provided. Fisheries data from state/territory jurisdictions varies in scale and is often only available at a coarser resolution (e.g. 60 square nautical miles for Western Australia).

It is possible that there will be industry concerns linked to how reported catch data is interpreted in terms of actual fishing activity within proposed MPAs, in particular for the coarser resolution state/territory data. During the statutory consultation phase, DEWHA, as lead, and BRS will consult with industry to validate the initial

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assessment of impacts and, where relevant and possible, obtain further information about the distribution and value of fisheries within the proposed MPAs. Input received during the statutory consultation will inform the final impact assessment report.