

Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

Parliamentary inquiry – Implications of Climate Change for Australia’s National Security

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Defence

Topic: SSCFADT - Implication of climate change for Australia's national security - 20
March 18 – Q16 – Gallacher

Question reference number: 16

Senator: Alex Gallacher

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 6 April 2018

Question:

The Climate Council pointed out military bases rely on civilian infrastructure such as water, power and transportation networks. How is Defence ensuring this civilian infrastructure is maintained?

Answer:

Defence does not maintain utilities infrastructure that is not on the Defence estate. This is the responsibility of individual utilities providers.

Defence has an assessment and maintenance program to ensure the good working order of utilities infrastructure on the estate.

Defence works with utilities providers to ensure that maintenance activities on the estate do not conflict with, or otherwise impact, the provision of services to civilian users.

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Question:

Are any Defence services working towards specified targets for the use of alternative fuel sources?

Answer:

Defence does not work towards specified targets for the use of alternative fuel sources.

The 2016 Defence Industry Policy Statement identifies that Defence will continue to need access to a secure and resilient fuel supply chain that provides the right fuels to a flexible number of locations in scalable volumes to meet capability needs, in a safe, efficient and cost effective manner.

Defence is committed to implementing programs aimed at building energy resilience, improving energy efficiency, reducing energy costs, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Defence recognises the significance of developments in alternative fuels and their certification for sea, land and air platforms. Although wholesale commercialisation of alternative fuel products is not expected in Australia for several years, Defence continues to follow the development of alternative fuels, especially where these fuels may improve interoperability and enhanced resilience. However, these fuels must also represent value for money to ensure funding is available for other essential elements of Defence capability.

The United States Department of Defense has tested and certified platforms to prepare for bulk purchases of cost competitive, drop-in alternative fuels. The Royal Australian Navy's priority for alternative fuels is to maintain interoperability with USN and other key allies, and has therefore adopted a position of 'fast follower' to the US. Defence will leverage USN experience for certifying the use of alternative fuels, which are expected to be direct 'drop in' replacements. Accordingly, trials on RAN platforms are likely to be unnecessary. The RAN successfully operated a Seahawk helicopter on US sourced alternative fuel in 2012 during Exercise Pacific Rim.

In 2016 the Great Green Fleet sailed to Australia to partake in Exercise Pacific Rim on a blend of 90% regular ship diesel and 10% biofuel. Like the Australian Defence Force, the United States considers cost and availability through commercial suppliers to be a barrier to widespread adoption of this initiative.