

Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

Parliamentary inquiry – Implications of climate change for Australia's national security – 20 March 2018

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Defence

Topic: SSCFADT - Implication of climate change for Australia's national security - 20 March 18 – Q9 – Gallacher

Question reference number: 9

Senator: Alex Gallacher

Type of question: Written

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

Question:

Does Defence collect climate data? If so, how does it share it with government agencies and civilian organisations?

Answer:

Data is primarily collected by RAN ships via in situ observations. This data depicts the current state of the environment and thus is not specifically climate data. However, as is the case for most observations, it can be utilised for various means including climate applications. The observations also contribute to national long term climate datasets and statistics. Three forms of observations at various intervals are undertaken by RAN ships. These are transmitted from the ships to the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) except when ships are engaged in classified operations, or when for any reason it is undesirable to disclose the geographic position of the ship.

The three observations taken by RAN ships are below, all are coded into World Meteorology Organisation Standard codes:

1. Weather observations, including date, position, cloud, visibility, wind, temperatures, pressure changes, present and past weather, sea surface temperature, sea period, and height and swells.
2. Upper air observations, including atmospheric profile of wind, pressure, temperature and humidity are collected as a sensor ascends through the atmosphere.
3. Oceanographic observations of the temperature and depth as a probe descends through a column of water.

The Naval Air Station Weather and Oceanography Centre at HMAS *Albatross* also transmits coded weather observations and Upper Air observations to the BoM.

Once received by the BoM the above observations are then transmitted to the Global Telecommunications System. The data is also accessed by the BoM for their ocean and atmospheric models. It sits in the BoM database for that purpose and is accessible by other National agencies.

In addition to the weather data collected and provided by the RAN, the BoM provides meteorological services to Air Force and Army units, often using equipment installed at Defence establishments. Furthermore, as with civilian aircraft, Defence aircraft can provide meteorological reports during transit.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Defence

Topic: SSCFADT - Implications of climate change for Australia's national security - 20 March 18 – Q10 – Gallacher

Question reference number: 10

Senator Alex Gallacher

Type of question: Written

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

Question:

How does Defence report internally and publicly on its response to climate security threats?

Answer:

Defence assesses climate security threats as part of its normal threat and risk assessment processes. This includes assessments by the Defence Intelligence Organisation, Strategic Policy Division, Joint Operations Command, the Directorate of Preparedness and Mobilisation, and the Enterprise Governance Branch. Where appropriate, these assessments are included in classified Defence reports and submissions to Government.

Furthermore, elements of these assessments are incorporated into the Defence enterprise performance management architecture, as outlined in the publicly available Defence Strategy Framework 2017. Additionally, the Government issued and publicly available 2016 Defence White Paper recognises climate threats as part of its Defence policy (on pages 16, 41, 48, 55, 56 and 102).

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Defence

Topic: SSCFADT - Implication of climate change for Australia's national security - 20 March 18 – Q11 – Gallacher

Question reference number: 11

Senator: Alex Gallacher

Type of question: Written

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

Question:

Has Defence assessed its response to climate security threats compared to the responses of countries such as the United States, United Kingdom or New Zealand? If so, did Defence find its response to be lagging compared to these countries?

Answer:

Defence has not conducted formal benchmarking of its climate change response with that of the United States, United Kingdom or New Zealand. The spectrum of responses from these four nations' ranges from primarily embedding climate change in business as usual (Australia and New Zealand) to developing dedicated plan/s supported with specific responsibilities or resources (United States and United Kingdom). The difference in the scale of organisations, level of environmental impact and nature of response makes direct comparisons difficult.

However, Defence regularly participates in a range of international climate related fora where best practice climate change responses and lessons are shared. For example, Joint Operations Command engages annually with the United States Pacific Command, and other Pacific nations, through the annual Pacific Environmental Security Forum, which addresses environmental impacts including climate change, and the Australian Defence Force Headquarters participates monthly in the Climate Security Working Group Asia- Pacific.

Further, whilst noting Defence is unable to comment on the specifics of another sovereign nation's capability commitments or performance, it is assessed that Australian Defence Force responses are consistent with those of the United States, United Kingdom and New Zealand.