

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

**Question No:** 1  
**Hearing:** Additional Estimates  
**Outcome:** Outcome 1  
**Program:** Biodiversity Conservation Division (BCD)  
**Topic:** National Reserve System – percentage targets  
**Hansard Page:** 78  
**Question Date:** 27 February 2017  
**Question Type:** Spoken

**Senator Chisholm asked:**

Senator CHISHOLM: In terms of the National Reserve System, to what extent has it reached the national criteria for comprehensive, adequate and representative?

Ms Barnes: In terms of reaching the percentage target we are certainly there as a country. In terms of covering each bioregion and each ecosystem there is probably still more work to do.

Mr Thompson: We could get you on notice some specific figures on that. As Ms Barnes said, we have reached the Aichi target under the Convention on Biological Diversity for 17 per cent of the land mass to be in protected estate. But in terms of the representative proportion of each of the habitats or bioregions that are represented within the protected area estate, no, we have not reached that. There are large parts of the Murray-Darling Basin, for example, that have been cleared for over a century and a half and for which we do not have a large number of protected areas covered.

Senator CHISHOLM: Who is responsible for reviewing that? Is it a federal department or are state based agencies responsible?

Mr Thompson: It is a collaborative exercise, because the National Reserve System is a mosaic of properties that are owned mostly by the states in the national park estate and also by the Indigenous traditional owners, through the Indigenous protected areas, which the Commonwealth does continue to fund—Indigenous protected areas—through the Office of Indigenous Affairs, in the Prime Minister's portfolio. There is a funding stream still for that, which contributes to the National Reserve System. The smallest portion really—land based, at least—is held by the Commonwealth. We have colleagues in the department who work with the states and territories about the nature of the National Reserve System and its current state.

Senator CHISHOLM: If there is more information to be provided on notice about the shortfall, I would be interested in that, as well.

Mr Thompson: We are happy to do that.

Senator CHISHOLM: Is more funding required to get closer to achieving the full CRM/NRS system? Is that why there is a shortfall?

Mr Thompson: I think there is a debate about that. There are probably some parts of Australia and some bioregions that are never going to be comprehensively, or adequately or representatively covered, because the landscape has been modified so much. There is a debate about whether putting more money into it and purchasing property or whether there are other means by which we can enter into covenants with existing landholders, and those sorts of things, which we do with the farming community. There are still working properties that are still producing agricultural outcomes, but they also have protected areas on them.

**Answer:**

The Collaborative Australian Protected Area Database (CAPAD) compiles information on the status of terrestrial protected areas across Australia, and is updated by the Department every two years drawing on information provided by a range of owners of National Reserve System properties including State and Territory Governments. CAPAD 2016 is currently being consolidated and is due to be released in the first half of 2017.

The National Reserve System seeks to protect a representative sample of Australia's landscapes and biodiversity. It is a collaborative exercise, as the majority of properties are owned by the states and territories, Indigenous and private land holders and conservation non-government organisations. The Australian Government is working with our partners to consider the best tools to achieve conservation outcomes and build ecosystem resilience while delivering mutual benefits.