

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

Question No: 20
Hearing: Budget Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 1
Programme: Director of National Parks (DNP)
Topic: Percentage of marine protected areas
Hansard Page: 65
Question Date: 25 May 2015
Question Type: Spoken

Senator Singh asked:

Senator SINGH: I am specifically asking about the marine protected areas. Thirty-six per cent of Australia's marine areas are covered by marine protected areas, and so I am specifically asking about those. You have 36 per cent. You have the five marine reserve networks. We all know that the management plans have been revoked from those five marine reserve networks. What I am trying to ascertain is, out of the 36 per cent of marine areas that are covered by marine protected areas, of the five marine reserve networks what amount is made up of that 36 per cent? I am sure you have information there about the five marine reserve networks, because they once had management plans and so I am sure you are aware of the marine protected areas.

Ms Barnes: The Commonwealth marine protected area estate comprises 60 reserves in total. It covers over 3.1 million square kilometres. It includes the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and, of course, Heard Island and McDonald Island marine reserves. Then there are the other ones that I manage. I can get you the hectares of the reserves. They are all still in the marine system and they are all protected but they do not have management plans. I can get you a breakdown of the hectares that have management plans across that whole marine protected area estate as a follow-up. I do not have that with me at the moment.

Senator SINGH: If you could relate it to the 36 per cent of waters that are within Australia's jurisdiction which now make up the marine protected estate.

Ms Barnes: Yes. The 36 per cent of the waters is 100 per cent of the Commonwealth marine reserves.

Senator SINGH: Yes, but are we clear on what you are taking on notice?

Ms Barnes: Yes. I think I know.

Answer:

The 36 per cent of Australia's Commonwealth marine reserves includes the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, the five Commonwealth marine reserve networks (the North, North-west, South-west, Temperate East and South East), the Coral Sea Commonwealth marine reserve and the Heard Island and McDonald Islands marine reserve.

The four Commonwealth marine reserve networks (the North, North-west, South-west and Temperate East) and the Coral Sea Commonwealth marine reserve that are currently under review represent approximately 27 per cent of Australia's Commonwealth marine areas.

Commonwealth marine areas exclude state waters, waters off Australia's Antarctic Territory and the extended continental shelf approved by the UN for which Australia has rights to the seabed but not the water column.