

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

**Question No:** 44

**Hearing:** Supplementary Budget Estimates

**Outcome:** Outcome 5

**Programme:** Environment Assessment and Compliance Division

**Topic:** Burrup Industrial Emissions

**Hansard Page:** 32

**Question Date:** 18 November 2013

**Question Type:** Spoken

**Senator Ludlam asked:**

Senator WATERS: Lastly on the Burrup, Senator Ludlam, on whose behalf I am asking these questions, received an answer this morning to a question on notice about industrial emissions on the Burrup being recorded as rain on the Bureau of Meteorology's weather radars. The question he had asked the minister was, 'Was the minister aware that these emissions are being reported as rainfall?' The response was rather brief. It simply stated that the minister was aware of a media report. What is the department doing to follow this up?

Ms Rankin: I am not aware of that within my division. I cannot provide any answer that question. We might have to see whether we can find the appropriate area and get some further information for you.

Senator WATERS: Are they in the room at the moment?

Mr Knudson: No, Senator.

Senator WATERS: This is not the right section to be asking these questions?

Mr Knudson: It sounds as though it is an issue which would straddle a couple of areas. Obviously the Bureau of Meteorology is part of this, as well as the area that would be reporting on the conditions with respect to that project. That is why we will have to take it on notice and pull together an integrated response.

Senator WATERS: That would be great. As soon as you could would be welcome. Obviously if there is a misreporting and it is presumably something the department will be charged with investigating, given that the Burrup is on that heritage list. So if there is any information about the extent of those investigations—the time frames, the parameters—that would be great. Obviously if there is likely to be a significant effect on the heritage values of the Burrup what actions are being taken to correct those emissions being misrecorded or indeed emitted.

**Answer:**

This Question on Notice was partially addressed by Dr Rob Vertessy in later discussions during the same Senate Estimates Hearing on 18 November 2013. In Dr Vertessy's response to Senator Waters' question on the accuracy of reports that Bureau of Meteorology radars are detecting industrial emissions as rainfall, Dr Vertessy noted that the examination of Bureau radar readings are undertaken to determine whether or not the data collected represents rain, and that the Bureau does not determine individual causes for detection of non-rain events, known as 'radar echoes'.

It is relevant to highlight that 'radar echoes' are a common occurrence, noting that the radar may sometimes detect echoes from aircraft, areas of smoke/ash from large fires, swarms of insects, flocks of birds or even the ground or sea surface, when unusual atmospheric conditions bend the radar beam back down to the surface.

The Department of the Environment is not aware of specific Bureau documented incidents that relate to media reports that industrial emissions on the Burrup Peninsula are being detected as rainfall.