

Environment and Communications Legislation Committee

The committee met on Monday, 25 May 2015 from 9 am until 11 pm.

The committee called the Department and agencies of the Environment portfolio, including the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM), the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA), the Clean Energy Regulator and the Director of National Parks.

Among other issues, the following matters were discussed:

- a breakdown of departmental staffing and staffing reductions, and industrial action by employees in relation to the pay offer,
- the registration of environmental organisations and the legality of green groups collecting tax deductions to pay penalties for unlawful acts,
- the inquiry into the Register of Environmental Organisations conducted by the House of Representatives Environment Committee,
- the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act assessment process,
- with regard to BOM, global warming and weather patterns and the number of staff working on climate change, the number of staff working on offshore oil and gas industry services, and staff pay negotiations,
- with regard to GBRMPA and the Great Barrier Reef, forecasting circulation patterns in the Reef, Reef protection funding, the relationship between the Reef Trust and GBRMPA, the GBRMPA Reef outlook report, coral bleaching, Reef dredging and water quality, the coastal management regime, climate change projections and effects on the Reef, and GBRMPA funding cuts, new initiatives and tourism costings,
- control programs to manage yellow crazy ants,
- the Clean Energy Regulator's membership in the Clean Energy Council,
- a breakdown of the number of wind turbines,
- the Energy Reduction Fund auction,
- with regard to Antarctica, funding of the new Antarctic icebreaker, Australia's bi-lateral relationship with China in Antarctica, planes landing at the Wilkins runway, and Herd Island research activities,
- with regard to the MDBA, the review of and cost of implementing the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, and discussion of the MDBA's funding profile, staffing levels and work plan for 2015-16,
- the Living Murray Program,
- the progress of Bioregional plans,
- the effect of coal seam gas extraction on the Great Artesian Basin,
- new emissions reduction fund methodologies,
- the number of meetings held by the Emissions Reduction Assurance Committee, and
- abatement purchased under the Emissions Reduction Fund auction.