



Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee
Budget Estimates 2024–25
Wednesday, 29 May 2024
Daily Summary

The committee met from 9.00am until 10.06pm.

The committee called the following departments and agencies:

- Department of Climate Change, Energy the Environment and Water
- Bureau of Meteorology
- Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

Outcome 2 – Program 2.1 – Commenced at 9.02am, Recommended at 11.03am

- The Samuel review and the timing of revised Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) legislation;
- Establishment of the Environment Protection Australia (EPA), staffing levels being moved from the department when the agency is formed;
- Ministerial reconsideration of the Macquarie Harbour salmon farming approval, engagement with the community, and updated documents regarding the Maugean skate that inform actions taken in the harbour;
- Funding for projects assessments by the department and environmental approvals by the Minister;
- Full time equivalent (FTE) staffing levels for the environmental reform taskforce;
- How the State of the Environment report informs legislation and reform;
- Environmental conservation funding in the 2024-25 Budget;
- Listing decisions for threatened species made during the 47th Parliament and species listed as a result of the 2019-20 bushfires;
- Increased rate of species assessment by the Threatened Species Scientific Committee;
- Funding for conservation organisations such as Landcare Ranges Program and Conservation Volunteers Australia;
- Trials for the oxygenation of Macquarie Harbour, the timeline for completion of the trials and data collection on the tonnage of oxygen required to stabilise the Maugean skate population;
- Engagement with state governments and officials on the EPBC Act reforms;
- Issues with the EPA being created before other elements of the EPBC Act reform;
- Funding arrangements for the Nature Repair Market;
- Departmental investigation of alleged compliance breaches in the Northern Territory; relating to Defence Housing clearing at Lee Point in Darwin;
- Funding provisions in relation to the Saving Native Species Program;
- Progress of the EPBC referral for the Stage 1 Coomera Connector road upgrade;
- Dredging of the Darwin Harbour for the Darwin Pipeline Duplication Project;
- Five million dollar commitment to reduce the impact of crown of thorns on the Great Barrier Reef;
- Offshore windfarms approval process;
- Status of the department’s coal-related projects on its caseload;

- Funding allocation towards addressing the issue of feral cats and goats; and
- The Middle Arm industrial development precinct on Darwin harbour.

Outcome 2 – Program 2.2 – Commenced at 3:58pm

- World Heritage listing nomination for Murujuga petroglyphs and the timeline for evaluation of the application by the World Heritage Committee;
- Report detailing concerns surrounding the impact of Woodside’s industrial emissions on Murujuga petroglyphs; and
- Leaking (or breaches of confidentiality) of Murujuga custodians’ Section 10 Aboriginal Heritage Act application report.

Outcome 2 – Program 2.3 – Commenced at 5:05pm

- Monitoring of persistent PFAS chemicals;
- Strategies for the minimisation of harm from asbestos found in construction waste and in other more uncommon sources;
- Regulations regarding reporting of hazardous waste;
- 2030 targets for the National Waste Policy Action Plan;
- Cost recovery relating to recycling and waste export ban;
- Jabiluka inclusion in Kakadu National Park;
- Protection of Kakadu national park from the effects of uranium mining and the role of the Supervising Scientist;
- Proposals regarding the safe disposal of lithium ion batteries;
- Government investment in recycling capability and capacity, with a focus on solid and complex plastics that are recyclable; and
- Illegal dumping of tyres and strategies to monitor and reduce illegal dumping.

Bureau of Meteorology

- Changes in budget figures from the 2023-24 Budget to the 2024-25 Budget;
- Culture and morale within the agency reflected in the Australian Public Service census
- Details regarding a range of historic BOM contracts;
- Acquisition of state-based flood warning systems;
- Discrepancies between forecasts and observational weather data;
- Updates to the Australian Climate Observations Reference Network – Surface Air Temperature (ACORN-SAT) in the long term; and
- Impact of BOM forecasts on cattle prices.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA)

- Progress on the upgrade of the Great Barrier Reef Aquarium as part of the 2021-2041 master plan;
- Climate impacts on the health of the Great Barrier Reef;
- Categorisation system to understand the severity and impact of particular bleaching events;
- Different stresses that can cause coral reefs to bleach;
- Actions taken to prepare for summer in order to keep track of changes in the reef during high temperature periods;
- Collaboration between government agencies to prepare the reef snapshots;
- Information and reports provided to UNESCO regarding its consideration of the status of the reef as a World Heritage site; and
- Crown of Thorns starfish management on the Great Barrier Reef.

The following agencies were released from the program

- Director of National Parks;
- Threatened Species Scientific Committee;
- Australian Institute of Marine Science; and
- Program 3.1: Contribute to Australia's national Antarctic interests through science, environmental management and international engagement, including delivering Australia's scientific research and operations in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean.

The committee will next meet at 9.00am on Thursday, 30 May 2024 in Committee room 2S3 for examination of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts, excluding Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development.