



Australian Government

Department of the Environment

Department of the Environment Submission

Senate Environment and Communications References
Committee – *Inquiry into Australia's Environment*



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INTRODUCTION

The Department of the Environment welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission to the Senate Environment and Communications References Committee. The role of the Department is to advise on and implement environmental policy to support the Australian Government in achieving a healthy environment, strong economy, and thriving community now and for the future.

This submission relates to work being undertaken across the Department, and is broadly structured around the terms of reference for the Inquiry.

CLIMATE AND RENEWABLE ENERGY INITIATIVES

Repeal of the carbon tax

The Government has repealed the carbon tax to reduce cost of living pressures on households and businesses, and to pave the way for the Direct Action Plan.

Abolishing the carbon tax places downward pressure on rising electricity and natural gas prices, benefitting businesses and households. Modelling by the Treasury suggests that removing the carbon tax will, on average, reduce the cost of living across all households in 2014–15 by around \$550, compared with what it would have been under a carbon tax of \$25.40 per tonne. The modelling suggests that, on average, household electricity bills will be \$200 lower and gas bills \$70 lower than they otherwise would have been. Recent figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics show that electricity prices decreased by 5.1 per cent in the quarter following the carbon tax repeal.¹

By removing the carbon tax, the Government has also eliminated an administrative and compliance burden on business, which was estimated to cost \$85 million a year.

Emissions Reduction Fund

In the White Paper on the Emissions Reduction Fund, the Government states that it accepts the science of climate change and is committed to Australia's unconditional target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by five per cent below 2000 levels by 2020. The Government intends to replace the carbon tax with the Emissions Reduction Fund as the centrepiece of the Direct Action Plan.

The Emissions Reduction Fund is a market mechanism that will procure emissions reductions and encourage new business opportunities in those parts of the economy with the greatest capacity to reduce emissions.

The Government has committed \$2.55 billion to establish the Emissions Reduction Fund, with further funding to be considered in future budgets. Reducing emissions through the Fund will also deliver valuable co-benefits to businesses and the community. For example, businesses and households can reduce their energy costs by adopting more energy efficient technologies. In the land sector, projects can reduce salinity and erosion, improve water quality and protect biodiversity. Savanna fire management and revegetation can provide important employment opportunities in Indigenous communities.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2014), "ABS CPI September quarter 2014 rises 0.5%", Media Release 147/2014, <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mediareleasesbyReleaseDate/902A92E190C24630CA2573220079CCD9?OpenDocument>

The Fund will help reduce emissions towards Australia's 2020 emissions reduction target by:

- crediting genuine emissions reductions that make a real and additional contribution to reducing Australia's greenhouse gas emissions
- purchasing lowest cost emissions reductions by using a competitive auction process to identify low cost projects
- making it easy for business to participate by using existing relevant institutions and systems such as the Clean Energy Regulator and the National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Scheme
- employing a safeguard mechanism to ensure that emissions reductions paid for through the Emissions Reduction Fund are not offset by increases in emissions elsewhere in the economy.

Support for renewable energy

Renewable energy has an important role to play in Australia's energy mix. The Renewable Energy Target, which is made up of the large-scale and small-scale schemes, continues to foster renewable energy investment.

On 17 February 2014, the Government announced an independent review of the RET scheme in line with its election commitment and the legislative requirement for biennial reviews. The Report of the Expert Panel was released on 28 August 2014. The Government is currently considering the report.

In the 2014–15 Budget, the Government also committed \$2.1 million over three years for a Solar Towns Programme to support the uptake of solar technologies in seven identified regions. Details of this programme will be made available in coming months on the Department's website.

Climate change science and advisory agencies

The Government has dissolved the Climate Commission. This action is part of the Government's commitment to streamline processes and avoid duplication of services.² The Government is well-placed to continue to receive authoritative and independent advice on climate change science and policy matters from existing bodies, including the Bureau of Meteorology, the CSIRO and the Department.

The Government has amalgamated the National Environmental Research Programme and Australian Climate Change Science Programme. The new National Environmental Science Programme integrates the various elements of environmental science research, including climate science, and will have ongoing funding of \$25.5 million a year.

Funding has been provided to continue the National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility, with \$9 million in funding for three years from 2014–15. The research facility focuses on developing Australia's resilience and capacity to manage climate change. The Government has three priorities for the research facility's second phase of activities:

1. The research facility will work closely with local communities, researchers, business groups, governments and science agencies to develop and promote the use of a national

² Note the abolition of the Clean Energy Finance Corporation and the Australian Renewable Energy Agency are out of scope of this submission as they are the responsibility of other agencies.

coastal climate risk management framework which will assist decision makers to understand and manage coastal climate risk.

2. Identify existing climate change adaptation information that is directly relevant to policy and decision makers, and communicate it in a format this is easy to understand.
3. Maintain our national capacity in adaptation research by continuing the operation of adaptation networks.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND THE ONE STOP SHOP FOR ENVIRONMENTAL APPROVALS

The one stop shop reform is a key election commitment and part of the Government's agenda to reduce regulation across government, including environmental deregulation. Environmental deregulation has been on the agenda of successive governments, and similar reforms were commenced through a COAG process in 2012.

The one stop shop for environmental approvals will accredit state and territory planning processes that meet the environmental standards required by the Commonwealth. Once implemented, separate Commonwealth assessments and approvals under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) will not be required where a state or territory approval is granted under an accredited process.

The Department is well advanced in implementing the Government's commitment to a one stop shop through a three step approach with the states and territories:

1. Memoranda of Understanding to develop the bilateral agreements under a one stop shop for environmental approvals, which have been signed with all states and territories.
2. Assessment bilateral agreements which are in the process of being agreed with willing states and territories. Assessment bilateral agreements have been agreed with a number of states and territories.
3. Approval bilateral agreements which are in the process of being negotiated with willing states and territories. A number of draft approval bilateral agreements have been released for statutory consultation.

Up to date details on the Department's progress in implementing the one stop shop can be obtained from the Department's website: www.environment.gov.au/epbc/one-stop-shop

Benefits of the one stop shop reform

The one stop shop reform will reduce the regulatory burden on businesses and maintain high environmental standards. The reform will ensure that existing high environmental standards are maintained and environmental outcomes are improved by:

- *National standards* which reflect the need to avoid, mitigate and offset impacts to matters of national environmental significance and use the best available information in decision making. There is scope for the Commonwealth, states and territories to build better environmental outcomes by taking a strategic and cooperative approach to offsets policy.
- *Improvement in the Commonwealth's ability to track and report on the state of matters of national environmental significance and the environment, including more and better data and information about environmental matters.* This will assist communities in protecting the

environment, enable governments and industry to target resources, and support environmental decision making.

- *Increased use of strategic approaches*, such as strategic environmental assessments.³
 - Strategic assessments have been demonstrated to significantly reduce the cost associated with major development projects. For example, Access Economics estimated the strategic assessment of Melbourne's Urban Growth Boundary would result in a total benefit to the private sector of over \$3.2 billion in net present value terms.⁴
 - Strategic assessments also improve environmental outcomes by considering the cumulative impacts of environmental pressures and delivering offsets earlier. For example, under the Melbourne strategic assessment, developers will invest millions of dollars in over 12 000 hectares of new grassland reserves and 1 200 hectares of Red Gum grassland reserves, each of which is large enough to have ecological integrity and protect threatened species in the area.

The Department has estimated that the one stop shop will save business around \$426 million a year, including:

- *Streamlined approval of projects, estimated to save business \$417 million a year.* Business will no longer need to wait for a separate Commonwealth approval after a state or territory approval is granted.
- *Lower administrative and compliance costs, estimated to save business \$9 million a year.* The one stop shop will remove unnecessary administrative and compliance costs for business by making the state or territory the primary regulator. Business will need one application, one environmental assessment and one decision. This means that business will only need to comply with one set of conditions which addresses both state and national matters in a consistent and compatible way.

The one stop shop will also provide more certainty for investors with a simpler, transparent and more predictable national regulatory system which is good for Australia's international investment reputation.

Assurance framework under the one stop shop

To ensure environmental standards are maintained, the one-stop shop will be supported by an assurance framework. The framework provides a cooperative approach to support a stable and durable one stop shop that achieves good outcomes for business and the environment. The assurance framework incorporates:

- *Standards for Accreditation of Environmental Approvals* which reflect the requirements and considerations for a state or territory process to be accredited
- *Performance assurance* to ensure commitments are met under approval bilateral agreements and that the Commonwealth can meet its reporting obligations (such as the

³ Under part 10 of the EPBC Act, the Minister for the Environment can undertake a strategic assessment of the impacts in implementing a policy, plan or program to provide upfront environmental approval for projects in a region. If satisfied, the Minister can endorse the policy, plan or program and approve classes of actions rather than dealing with individual projects on a case-by-case basis.

⁴ Access Economics (2011) *Cost benefit analysis of EPBC strategic assessments*, report to the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities.

annual report to Parliament and international reporting obligations). Performance assurance will be achieved through monitoring, risk-based auditing and review provisions to resolve disputes quickly. In extreme cases the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment can call-in a project for approval

- *Outcomes assurance* to ensure good outcomes for business and the environment. Outcomes assurance will be achieved by open access to environmental information and data and by streamlined advice and guidance. These are recognised by the Productivity Commission as being important to streamlining the development application process for business.⁵ Open access to publicly available information can reduce transaction costs for government and business, expedite environment approvals, lead to a greater understanding of cumulative impacts and facilitate strategic assessments and regional scale planning.

The assurance framework is given effect through the approval bilateral agreements.

MEASURES UNDER THE CLEAN LAND PLAN

The Government is introducing a number of initiatives to continue to achieve environmental outcomes and engage the community. This includes the National Landcare Programme, Green Army, Reef 2050 and complementary measures totalling \$2 billion over the next four years. The Government is also honouring the contracted projects entered into by the previous Government under the Biodiversity Fund.

National Landcare Programme

The Government has allocated \$1 billion funding through the National Landcare Programme over the next four years. This investment will facilitate community involvement in protecting, rehabilitating and restoring priority environmental assets and natural resources. The programme is being designed to increase collaboration across the natural resource management community including Landcare, and to increase community engagement in planning and project delivery. The Government has committed to provide Landcare networks with funding to support community participation, engagement and knowledge sharing.

As part of the National Landcare Programme, the 20 Million Trees Programme will provide \$50 million over the next four years to support projects that deliver environmental benefits at the local level through community participation in re-establishing native vegetation.

The Committee may wish to refer to further information provided in the Department's joint submission with the Department of Agriculture to the Senate Inquiry on the National Landcare Programme, available at:

http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/landcare/Submissions

Green Army

The Green Army is a hands-on, practical environmental action programme that taps into local knowledge and supports grassroots action to meet local environmental challenges. Projects include habitat restoration; revegetating river catchments, coastal foreshores, rainforests and wetlands; constructing boardwalks; working closely with traditional owners and restoring culturally significant sites; weed control; and monitoring threatened species.

⁵ Productivity Commission, *Major Project Development Assessment Processes*, 10 December 2013.

The Green Army Programme provides opportunities for community organisations to engage with the environment and young participants. Involvement in the Green Army Programme will give local community groups ownership of the environmental benefits resulting from Green Army activities. The increased engagement with young Australians also represents an opportunity for community environment organisations to increase their membership base and inspire the next generation of landcarers. The programme will support 250 projects in 2014-15, 500 projects in 2015-16, 750 projects in 2016-17 and 1,500 in 2017-18, involving up to 15,000 participants by 2020.

Savings to related measures

As part of its commitment to fiscal responsibility, the Government has taken some savings that relate to the Environment Portfolio. This includes the return of unallocated funds to Budget from the Biodiversity Fund Programme, savings from the National Landcare Programme and the discontinuation of the Grants to Voluntary Environment, Sustainability and Heritage Organisations Programme (GVESHO).⁶

AUSTRALIA'S COMMITMENTS AND OBLIGATIONS UNDER INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS

Multilateral environmental conventions

Australia is a signatory or Party to a large number of multilateral environmental agreements and remains committed to these conventions.

World Heritage Convention

Australia has played a prominent role in the *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (the World Heritage Convention) since it became a member in 1974. During its 2007–2011 term on the World Heritage Committee, Australia cemented its reputation as an international leader on world heritage issues by strengthening the integrity of the Convention; contributing expertise to improve the policies that conserve World Heritage; and supporting our region's engagement with the Convention. Australia initiated and led the key policy agenda on the future of the Convention, including drafting the Vision Statement and Strategic Action Plan for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention 2012–2022. Australia is currently supporting the World Heritage Centre (Secretariat to the World Heritage Committee) to develop Policy Guidelines for implementation of the Convention. Australia also continues to support, where resources allow, the Pacific Island countries through the provision of advice and assistance regarding world heritage management and implementing the Convention in the Pacific region.

As a State Party, Australia has agreed to identify, protect, conserve and present World Heritage properties domestically. These obligations are enshrined in the EPBC Act and World Heritage properties are recognised as a matter of national environmental significance under the Act. Consequently, any action that is likely to have a significant impact on heritage properties and places must undergo an environmental assessment and approval process.

Convention on Biological Diversity

The Australian Government has been a Party to the *Convention on Biological Diversity* since 1993. Australia is committed to fulfilling its international obligations under the Convention,

⁶ Note the funding for Environmental Defenders Offices is out of scope of this submission as they are the responsibility of the Attorney-General's portfolio.

including the Convention's *Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020*, incorporating the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

Australia implements its responsibilities to the Convention through a wide number of mechanisms and policies, including, but not limited to:

- *Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010–2030*, which will be reviewed by the Department in 2015
- the National Reserve System
- the EPBC Act, and
- contributions to the Global Environment Facility.

Australia's *Fifth National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity*, which covers the reporting period January 2009 to December 2013, provides further detail on Australian implementation of policies, programmes and actions undertaken to implement Australia's responsibilities under the Convention. Australia's fifth national report can be accessed at: <http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/international/fifth-national-biological-diversity-report>.

The Government is further demonstrating Australia's commitment to the Convention by taking on the role of a Bureau member from October 2014 to November 2016. Bureau members assist in the management and advancement of issues before the Conference of the Parties to the Convention and its subsidiary bodies.

Ramsar Convention

Australia has a long-standing and ongoing commitment to the *Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance* and continues to actively ensure the fulfilment of its Convention obligations. The Department is the Administrative Authority for the Ramsar Convention in Australia and implementation is the combined responsibility of the Government and wetland managers, which includes state and territory jurisdictions and private owners.

Ramsar wetlands are a matter of national environmental significance under the EPBC Act and actions which have, will have, or are likely to have a significant impact on the ecological character of a declared Ramsar wetland must be referred under this Act. The Ramsar Convention also provides a constitutional basis for the *Water Act 2007* which includes the requirement that the Murray-Darling Basin Plan promote the conservation of declared Ramsar wetlands in the Murray-Darling Basin.

Other actions taken by the Government in support of Convention obligations include the preparation of national guidance for key processes (site nomination, documentation and management), reviewing the status of Ramsar sites, and undertaking assessments of possible change in ecological character.

Protection of the Great Barrier Reef

The Great Barrier Reef is one of the natural wonders of the world, and is part of Australia's national identity. It is crucial to ensure that the Great Barrier Reef's ecosystems are protected and it is also important to do that in the context of the range of activities that have been occurring in the area for over 150 years – activities such as tourism, fishing, shipping, research, agriculture and defence.

Australia and Queensland are world leaders in marine park management, and have a long history in this area. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority was created almost 40 years ago to protect the reef. The first agreement between the Australian and Queensland Governments to jointly manage the reef was signed in 1979, and just two years later the reef received a World Heritage listing.

Australia's environmental laws provide strict rules and regulations about what activities can take place in the Great Barrier Reef. For example, activities such as mining, oil drilling and gas extraction are banned by law in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and this ban is strictly enforced.

When the World Heritage Committee raised concerns about the state of conservation of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area in 2011, Australia was already part-way through a comprehensive reform programme to ensure the long-term protection and management of the reef. The Australian and Queensland Governments do not consider that the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area warrants inclusion on the List of World Heritage in Danger. There will always be challenges in managing the reef, but the Australian and Queensland Governments are determined to continue to manage and protect the World Heritage site for future generations.

The Committee may wish to refer to the following resources for further information on the protection of the Great Barrier Reef (in order of release):

- The *2014 State Party Report on the State of Conservation of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area*, released in January 2014. This progress report demonstrates how the Park's management system has ensured that the property's outstanding universal value and integrity remain largely intact. The full report can be found at: <http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/publications/state-party-report-state-conservation-great-barrier-reef-world-heritage-area-australia-2014>
- Information regarding the Government's establishment of a \$40 million Reef Trust, including a discussion paper released on 23 April 2014. The Reef Trust will support projects that improve water quality and coastal habitat along the Reef. The Trust is being jointly coordinated between the Australian and Queensland Governments, with advice from the Australian Institute of Marine Science and other experts. Further information can be found at: <http://www.environment.gov.au/marine/gbr/reef-trust>
- The joint Australian and Queensland Governments' submission into the Senate Inquiry into the management of the Great Barrier Reef, submitted in June 2014. A copy of the submission is available at: http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/Great_Barrier_Reef/Submissions (submission 34)
- The comprehensive strategic assessment of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, endorsed on 11 August 2014. The strategic assessment, undertaken by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and the Queensland Government, is a big picture analysis of issues affecting the Reef and what is needed for its protection. It found the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area retains its outstanding universal value and integrity, although some aspects are in decline. Further information on the strategic assessment can be found at: <http://www.environment.gov.au/protection/assessments/strategic/great-barrier-reef>

- The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's *Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2014*, released on 12 August 2014. The second in a five-yearly series, the report identifies climate change, poor water quality from land-based run-off, impacts from coastal development and some remaining impacts of fishing as the greatest risks to the Reef. It concludes that continuing investment in management of the Reef has had some positive results, including progress in reducing pollutant loads entering the Reef and the work with Traditional Owners on sea country management, although the outlook for the Reef remains poor. Further information on the Outlook Report can be found at: <http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/managing-the-reef/great-barrier-reef-outlook-report>
- The draft *Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan for the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area*, released for public comment during October 2014. The Plan is being developed in partnership with the Queensland Government and Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, and will draw together the outcomes of the strategic assessment and resulting management programmes to provide an over-arching framework to guide the protection and management of the reef from 2015 to 2050. More information can be found at: <http://www.environment.gov.au/marine/gbr/reef2050>

Tasmanian forest protection

The Department is working with the Department of Agriculture on the implementation of the Government's commitments for a competitive and sustainable forestry sector that makes a strong contribution to Tasmania's economy. These efforts seek to balance the environmental, social and economic objectives of native forest management.

The Government has accepted the decision of the World Heritage Committee to not approve the Government's proposal for a minor boundary modification to the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. Australia will meet its commitment to report to the World Heritage Committee in 2015 on the state of conservation of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. This will include reporting progress on further study and consultation with the Tasmanian Aboriginal community on the cultural values of the property and how these relate to its Outstanding Universal Value, as well as the review of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Management Plan. This Report will be considered by the World Heritage Committee at its 39th session in Bonn, Germany from 28 June to 8 July 2015.

The Committee may wish to refer to further information provided in the Department's submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, available at:

http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/Tasmanian_Wilderness_World_Heritage_Area/Submissions

OTHER RELATED MATTERS

In addition to those mentioned above, there are other initiatives that the Department is undertaking to implement the decisions of the Government. The following initiatives are designed to achieve robust environmental and heritage outcomes:

- Approval for the procurement of a new icebreaker to replace the *Aurora Australis*, ensuring Australia's strategic involvement in Antarctica continues over the next 30 years
- Funding for the procurement of a new supercomputer for the Bureau of Meteorology, which will vastly improve the scale and timeliness of weather forecasting capabilities

- Implementation of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan on time and in full. This includes the signing of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Implementing Water Reform in the Murray-Darling Basin with the governments of all basin states and territories in February 2014, and re-prioritisation of spending towards investment in infrastructure which helps to reduce the social and economic impacts on Basin communities while delivering the Basin Plan's environmental outcomes
- A continuing commitment to strengthening the science on the water related impacts of coal seam gas and large coal mining development through supporting an Independent Expert Scientific Committee which provides advice to Commonwealth and state government regulators, and by funding bioregional assessments and other research. This ensures that regulatory decisions can be informed by the best available science.
- Release of the draft Heritage Strategy to support the work of individuals, organisations and governments by providing a common direction for the recognition and protection of Australia's heritage
- Better protection for Australia's threatened ecosystems. In the past 12 months three ecological communities have been listed, covering around 1.2 million extra hectares protected under the EPBC Act. Decisions on eight more are due in 2014-15
- Appointment of a Threatened Species Commissioner, bringing a new national focus to conservation efforts and helping to address the growing number of native flora and fauna in Australia facing extinction
- A commitment of \$3.3 million funding for Tasmanian Devil conservation
- Funding for a range of regional conservation projects, including:
 - \$9.3 million over four years from 2014–15 for the establishment of the Coastal River Recovery Initiatives, including the Yarra, Swan-Canning, Tamar, Torrens and Tuggerah waterways
 - \$7.5 million over three years from 2014–15 towards a Cumberland Conservation Corridor in Greater Western Sydney. This is in addition to 15 Green Army projects and one million trees in this area.
 - \$3.0 million over three years from 2014-15 to support weed control and fuel load reduction in the Dandenong Ranges in Victoria
 - \$0.6 million over three years from 2014–15 support Keep Australia Beautiful and Clean Up Australia
 - \$0.5 million over two years from 2014–15 for the Kimberley Cane Toad Clean-Up.
- Funding for a range of regional heritage projects, including:
 - \$1.4 million for the establishment of the Community Heritage and Icons Programme
 - \$1.5 million for the Port Arthur Penitentiary restoration project
- Completion of the Macquarie Island Pest Eradication Programme, with the World Heritage listed island being declared pest-free on 7 April 2014
- Initiation of a \$5.0 million small grants round to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Landcare

- Significant planning and international recognition surrounding Australia's hosting of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature World Parks Congress in Sydney in November 2014
- Funding of \$0.8 million to host an Asia-Pacific Rainforest Summit in Sydney in November 2014, focusing on practical actions to reduce deforestation
- Commencement of a National Review of Environmental Regulation, working with states and territories on multi-jurisdictional reform collaboration
- Completion of the strategic assessment of the environmental management authorisation process for petroleum and greenhouse gas activities administered by the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority, creating a one stop shop for the approval of offshore petroleum and greenhouse gas activities in Commonwealth waters
- Support for Australia's successful International Court of Justice whaling case, which was led by the Attorney-General's Department
- Support for whaling and protest fleet monitoring in the Southern Ocean in the 2013-14 summer season
- The recruitment in October 2014 of six local engagement officers to work with Murray-Darling communities on behalf of the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder
- Funding of \$24 million over three years from 2014–15 for a new Antarctic Gateway Partnership between the Department, the University of Tasmania and the CSIRO to provide for collaborative larger-scale scientific research
- Funding of \$68 million over four years from 2014–15 to maintain functions that support Australia's presence in Antarctica, including the maintenance of station operations and Antarctic science projects
- Commission of an independent 20-year Strategic Plan for Antarctica
- Committing Australia as one of 92 signatory countries to the Minamata Convention on Mercury, signed in Japan on 10 October 2013
- Declaration of the World War Two United States Army Transport vessel, *Don Isidro*, as a protected historic shipwreck under the *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976*
- Implementation of major changes to the Department's compliance and enforcement activities under the EPBC Act to reduce the likelihood that people or companies will breach conditions and improve the Government's ability to detect breaches

The Department can provide further information on these achievements on the Committee's request.