

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

Question No: 273
Hearing: Additional Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 1
Programme: Biodiversity Conservation Division (BCD)
Topic: Tamar River - Matter of National Environmental Significance
Hansard Page: 9-10
Question Date: 04 March 2016
Question Type: Spoken

Senator Whish-Wilson asked:

Senator WHISH-WILSON: : If you could let us know that would be great, but perhaps you, or someone, could explain what is the matter of national environmental significance around raking silt in the Tamar River?

Ms Jonasson: I will have to take that on notice.

Senator WHISH-WILSON: It is a \$3 million grant that was provided over—

Ms Campbell: The Tamar River project and a number of coastal river projects around the country were announced in the 2014 budget. There are other projects in the Yarra River, the Swan River and the River Torrens. I do not know the details about whether they are being raked or not in those particular rivers. The matter of NES that is being addressed, and the environmental significance that is being addressed, is really about species. There are species in those rivers. When assessing projects, we would have been very clear that threatened species and communities are addressed in all those projects.

Senator WHISH-WILSON: Where I live, I look out over the dredger every night that it is out there, so this is of interest to me. I understand there are species in the river, of course, and the river has issues with pollution—heavy metals and that kind of thing. I am just wondering what the raking and silt management has to do with that?

Ms Campbell: I think we will have to take on notice the detail of the specific species that were identified in the proposal and the specific benefits for matters of NES.

Answer:

Listed threatened species are a matter of national environmental significance under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. The upper reaches of the Tamar Estuary and South Esk River is known habitat for the listed fish, Australian grayling *Prototroctes maraena*, and listed seabird, White-bellied sea-eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster*.

Elevated levels of sedimentation at the confluence of South Esk River and Tamar Estuary degrade the fish's preferred habitat, and reduce water quality that could indirectly impact on available food resources of preference to the species.

White-bellied sea-eagles require access to substantial bodies of open water with healthy fish populations. Sedimentation of the Upper Tamar reduces the amount of feeding area available for the species, and the deterioration of water quality could have an adverse effect on local sea-eagle numbers.