

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

Question No: 103
Hearing: Additional Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 2
Program: International Climate Change and Energy Innovation Division (ICCEID)
Topic: Land sector emissions
Hansard Page: -
Question Date: 14 March 2017
Question Type: Written

Senator Urquhart, Anne asked:

There appears to be a discrepancy between the data of the most recent Australian Emission Projections to 2030 and the older 2014-15 projections. In particular, the Land clearing figure dropped from 41Mt to 9Mt per annum over the period 2015-30. Some of this is due to differences between Kyoto and UNFCCC rules, but even if comparing like for like, stakeholders claim there is a discrepancy of 16Mt per year, or 252Mt to 2030. Can you shed some light on this?

Answer:

There is no discrepancy.

The coverage of the land sector is intended to be the same in both sets of projections documents, although one set is reported using UNFCCC inventory classifications and one set using Kyoto Protocol classifications.

Net emissions from 'land clearing' are reported either as 'land clearing' or 'deforestation' in current and past Projections releases. The land sector as a whole also includes net emissions from land converted to forests (a net sink); forest lands (a net sink) and agricultural lands (currently a small net sink).

The *2016 Projections* are available on the Department website: see Figure 15: <http://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/9437fe27-64f4-4d16-b3f1-4e03c2f7b0d7/files/aust-emissions-projections-2016.pdf> and the data at <http://www.environment.gov.au/climate-change/publications/emissions-projections-2016> .

The *2014-15 Projections* are available at <http://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/f4bdfc0e-9a05-4c0b-bb04-e628ba4b12fd/files/australias-emissions-projections-2014-15.pdf> - see Figure 19.

In Figure 15 of the *2016 Projections* release, the net emissions from the land sector as a whole were 9 Mt a year on average from 2015-2030, compared with 40 Mt a year on average over the same period for the *2014-15 Projections*.

The differences between the 2016 Projections and the 2014-15 Projections for the land sector principally reflect the following:

- 1) The effects of the Emission Reduction Fund – the 2016 Projections estimate, as charted in Figure 15, is a 'with measures' scenario that includes the effects of the Emission Reduction Fund whereas the 2014-15 Projections estimate was a 'without measures' scenario that did not include the effects of the Emission Reduction Fund.

- 2) Differences in accounting structures – the 2014-15 projections used the Kyoto Protocol classification system while the 2016 Projections moved to the UNFCCC classification system, consistent with the scope of the Government’s Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement;
- 3) Differences in projected economic conditions – an important driver of outcomes in the land sector in the medium run is the prospect for the recovery of timber harvesting rates (which was assumed to be less strong in the *2016 Projections*, based on scenarios developed by ABARES, than in the *2014-15 Projections*);
- 4) Differences in inventory estimates – and, in particular, our understanding of emissions from land clearing has changed over the period following new investments in monitoring systems – this new information affects the projection as well.

Emissions from ‘land clearing’ were 42 Mt a year on average over the period 2015- 2030 in the *2016 Projections*. By way of comparison, in the *2014-15 Projections* the estimate of emissions from deforestation/ land clearing was 46 Mt a year on average over the period 2015- 2030 while in the *2012 Projections* the estimate of emissions from deforestation/land clearing were 47 Mt a year on average over the period 2015-2030.