

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

**Question No:** 49  
**Hearing:** Additional Estimates  
**Outcome:** Outcome 1  
**Program:** Environment Standards Division (ESD)  
**Topic:** Environmental monitoring - KPIs  
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**Question Date:** 06 March 2017  
**Question Type:** Spoken

**Senator Urquhart asked:**

Senator URQUHART: How is the department monitoring the environment in Australia—what indicators are you using and what are the trends showing?

Mr Cahill: Currently, through the annual report we are monitoring actual performance via our performance standards in terms of timeliness of statutory decision-making, and we also monitor a range of other indicators through the annual report. I will be honest with you—most of them are more process per se but, as with any regulator or any department, we endeavour to find better performance indicators. As part of the exercise the secretary commissioned a review of regulatory maturity and one of our recommendations was that, to try and strengthen the key performance indicators, we have got to see what impacts we are having.

Senator URQUHART: How many KPIs have you got?

Mr Cahill: I would have to take that on notice. I have only got a couple in front of me at the moment.

Senator URQUHART: What are the trends that they are showing?

Mr Cahill: I can give you an example of a trend in our performance against statutory decision-making, in terms of our time frames. Over the last four years, that was at 79 per cent within the statutory period in 2013-14 and for most of the other years they have been between 65 and 75 per cent. It is currently tracking at 66 per cent for the last financial year. There are a range of factors that influence that beyond staffing letters. It turns about complexity and a range of other issues as well.

Senator URQUHART: When you provide the indicators on notice, can you give us the trends for those indicators as well?

Mr Cahill: Sure.

**Answer:**

The Department's key performance indicators, performance criteria, and targets for environmental health are contained in the Portfolio Business Statements and Corporate Plan and are reported against in its Annual reports. Performance criteria and targets replaced key performance indicators from 2016-17, consistent with the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*. The Department has four performance criteria for 2016-17 under Program 1.5 – Environmental regulation, which will be reported in the Department's upcoming 2016-17 Annual report.

Performance against key performance indicators from previous years is reported in the corresponding Departmental annual report. For 2015-16, some of the key performance indicators for Program 1.5 included:

- The number of hectares of habitat protected by offsets compared with the area impacted for approved projects

- The number and area of strategic assessments completed has increased:
  - the number of strategic assessments completed in 2015-16
  - km<sup>2</sup>/ha already approved under strategic assessments
- Estimated number of projects that did not require referral to the Department as these projects are able to be assessed under an approved Strategic Assessment

While a trend analysis is not possible as indicators have changed, the Department has in general met its key performance indicators for 2015-16, acknowledging that it is seeking to improve its collection of data for some of the indicators.