

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

**Question No:** 9  
**Hearing:** Additional Estimates  
**Outcome:** Outcome 1  
**Program:** Biodiversity Conservation Division (BCD)  
**Topic:** Great Barrier Reef – Marine Plastics Program  
**Hansard Page:** 114  
**Question Date:** 06 March 2017  
**Question Type:** Spoken

**Senator Whish-Wilson asked:**

**Senator WHISH-WILSON:** I would urge you to watch Four Corners when you get a chance. I certainly will be. It is one of the biggest pollution issues on the planet. I have been asking this question for the five years that I have been in the Senate and no-one seems to know what is going on with the threat abatement plan. I would be interested if there have been any developments there at all and whether you are providing any guidelines to the states in relation to policy outcomes as well. In relation to the Great Barrier Reef, is there still federal funding being contributed towards the Great Barrier Reef marine plastics program?

**Ms Parry:** As you would be aware there was the Marine Debris Program phase II of Reef Trust Investments. There has not been another marine debris investment through the reef trust. I do know, but I do not have the information to hand so I can take it on notice, that there was an election commitment to fund some further marine debris in the Great Barrier Reef catchments directly to Tangaroa Blue. The funding went to them directly as part of election commitments, but I can get the details of that program back for you on notice.

**Senator WHISH-WILSON:** Thank you.

**Answer:**

1. The Department of the Environment and Energy is preparing a new *Threat abatement plan for the impacts of marine debris on vertebrate marine life* in consultation with experts. A draft has been released for public comment until 13 April 2017. As of 6 March 2017, four submissions have been received.
2. Through the Reef Trust, the Australian Government provided \$700,000 over 2014-15 and 2015-16 for the Great Barrier Reef marine debris initiative. This was delivered by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, in partnership with Tangaroa Blue, Eco Barge Clean Seas, the Reef Guardian Councils, Reef Guardian schools and Local Marine Advisory Committees. More than 1500 volunteers participated in clean-up events that removed more than ten tonnes of litter over the life of the project.
3. Under the Improving Your Local Parks and Environment program, Tangaroa Blue has been invited to apply for \$120,000 to reduce marine debris. The program is being administered by the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science, on behalf of the Department of the Environment and Energy. The Department of Industry, Innovation and Science will receive and assess the application. The application period closes on 21 March 2017.
  - a. The program guidelines (available at [www.business.gov.au](http://www.business.gov.au)) set out the funding rules for the Improving Your Local Parks and Environment program to deliver on specific election commitments made throughout the 2016 federal election campaign.