

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

Question No: 277
Hearing: Budget Estimates
Outcome: Agency
Programme: Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
Topic: ABBOT POINT APPROVAL
Hansard Page: N/A
Question Date: 17 June 2014
Question Type: Written

Senator Waters asked:

What changed between June 2013 and the final decision brief? Mr Elliot indicated during estimates hearings that the timing of the delivery in the offsets proposal was revised from occurring immediately to occurring over a number of years. Was that the only relevant change in the proposal?

Answer:

1. Mr Elliot indicated that one of the early documents he saw which commented on the achievability of offsets assumed that offsets would need to occur immediately. This document also assumed that all sediments would be required to be offset. The offset condition only requires the fine sediment component of the dredged materials as the coarser sediments, which make up the bulk of the material will not remobilise great distances once they reach the seabed. Reducing the volume of fine sediments from the Burdekin and Don catchments entering the marine environment by an amount equivalent to 150 per cent of the fine sediments made available for re-suspension is achievable over time. Sediment disturbed by a dredging and disposal action is a one-off event. By contrast, offset actions that prevent new sediment loads entering the marine environment by retaining sediments on the land are likely to be enduring and therefore the offset will accumulate over time.
2. The offset condition relates to an approval provided under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. Questions relating to how this condition may have been revised should be directed to the Department of the Environment.