

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

Question No: 25
Hearing: Budget Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 1.1
Programme: Biodiversity Conservation Division (BCD)
Topic: Reef Trust Offsets
Hansard Page: 108
Question Date: 26 May 2015
Question Type: Spoken

Senator Singh asked:

Senator SINGH: Isn't the Reef Trust design compromised by its planned utilisation of offset money in contravention of the EPBC offsets policy?

Senator Birmingham: I do not believe we would be doing anything that is in contravention of another area of government, but if there are any issues in that regard we will take that on notice.

Senator SINGH: Is that it? Is that the answer?

Senator Birmingham: I have taken it on notice.

Answer:

A key focus for the Reef Trust is ensuring the offset arrangements being developed adhere to the requirements of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* (EPBC Act) and the principles of the *EPBC Act Environmental Offset Policy* (the Policy).

For example, it is intended that projects funded using Reef Trust offset financial contributions to deliver an overall conservation outcome that results in a 'net gain' to the protected matter, as well as being proportionate to the impact and focussed on the particular attributes of the protected matter being impacted.

Consistent with the Policy, a financial offset contribution to the Reef Trust will only be accepted if the appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures have been considered and where there is a significant residual impact. Reef Trust would not allow proposals with an unacceptable impact to be approved.