

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee**

Answers to questions on notice
Environment and Energy portfolio

Question No: 105
Hearing: Budget Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 1
Program: Environment Standards Division (ESD)
Topic: INPEX Ichthys project
Hansard Page: 100 and 101
Question Date: 22 May 2017
Question Type: Spoken

Senator Waters asked:

Senator WATERS: Okay. Thank you. Can I move very quickly to a different project, the INPEX Ichthys project—the North West Shelf offshore gas. In a few sentences, because I am conscious that I have had a lot of time, can you give me an update on their work to deliver the western Top End marine megafauna program. I understand they are many years overdue and very late with payment.

Ms Collins: I would have to take that on notice.

Senator WATERS: Is there anyone that is here who has that detail?

Mr Cahill: We will have to take that one on notice. We do not have the detail with us.

Senator WATERS: I will run through these just in case you can shed some light on them. I am interested in what the cause of the delay is and who the company have been consulting with in order to develop that megafauna program. What evidence is there that they are actually doing anything to create this program? Can any of those be answered yet?

Mr Knudson: No, but it is helpful to have the list of what you want us to answer so we can make sure we give you a comprehensive response to the questions on notice.

Senator WATERS: I understand that the funds under that program were meant to flow in the third quarter of 2016 and that has not occurred yet. I am interested in why and what the hold-up is. Is it coming or are they trying to amend their conditions in the manner, perhaps, that Adani has benefited from, a deferral of payment falling due. On a related issue, I am interested in whether they have identified a final site for the marine reserve. Again, still can't help?

Mr Cahill: We will get the full list from you, Senator.

Senator WATERS: Under their Coastal Offset Strategy they were meant to have announced those final sites in January 2014, and that was obviously three years ago. So why has the department let the company default on their obligations for more than three years? I am keen to get a response on that when you can.

Answer:

Condition 11 of the approval for the INPEX Ichthys project requires the person taking the action to submit a Coastal Offset Strategy for the protection of listed threatened and migratory species impacted by the Ichthys project in Darwin Harbour. That Strategy was approved by the Minister's delegate in April 2012.

The approved Coastal Offset Strategy outlines programs to be funded by INPEX as offsets for impacts to matters of national environmental significance associated with the Ichthys project. One of those programs, the Western Top End Marine Megafauna Program is to be designed and implemented by the Northern Territory Government, with funding to be provided by INPEX.

The approved Coastal Offset Strategy requires INPEX to provide \$24 million over 22 years to the Northern Territory Government to implement the Western Top End Marine Megafauna Program. The Department has been advised by INPEX that the Northern Territory Government intends to commence the Western Top End Marine Megafauna Program in 2018/19, following completion of the Conservation Status of Coastal Dolphins Program (a program part of the approved Coastal Offset Strategy). The outcomes of the Conservation Status of Coastal Dolphins Program will inform the design of the Western Top End Marine Megafauna Program.

One other program of the approved Coastal Offsets Strategy, Protection of Marine and Terrestrial Habitat, includes extensive stakeholder engagement, including with the Northern Territory Government and traditional owners. As a consequence of those consultations, INPEX is yet to identify a final site for the marine reserve. INPEX is continuing these consultations in order to inform its identification of a final site for the marine reserve.

The Department will continue to ensure that the conditions of approval are managed appropriately, including INPEX obligations under the Coastal Offset Strategy.