

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

Answers to questions on notice
Environment and Energy portfolio

Question No: 33
Hearing: Budget Estimates
Outcome: Corporate
Program: Science
Topic: State of the Environment Reporting – Findings
Hansard Page:
Question Date: 07 June 2017
Question Type: Written

Senator Urquhart asked:

Will the Department be preparing a formal response to all of the SOE Report's findings? If not, why not?

Answer:

The Department of the Environment and Energy is not preparing a single comprehensive response to all of the findings in the State of the Environment Report 2016. This approach is consistent with previous State of the Environment reports, in which neither the Government nor the Department provided formal responses to the findings of those reports. Further, the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* does not require a formal response to be prepared.

The State of the Environment Report 2016 is a large and comprehensive national assessment covering many domains of the Australian environment across nine broad themes. Preparing a single point in time response to the report would divert the Department's people and resources from their ongoing work. Instead, the report is used to inform and guide the Department's work, and it also provides a rich information and data source for decision-making by other government agencies, jurisdictions, businesses, communities and individuals.

State of the Environment reporting is used by the Department to help inform and develop advice to government on policy issues, spending priorities and emerging risks including in relation to matters protected under the EPBC Act, and it contributes to international reporting (for example the Sustainable Development Goals). The report findings are used to devise new policy or review existing policies, such as the Reef 2050 Plan or Australian Government's Threatened Species Strategy. It would be difficult to represent the granular issues or management actions required for all environmental matters in one overarching strategy. Additionally, the report informs on ground management conducted by the Department, for example in Antarctica, in the parks estate under the Director of National Parks, and the work of the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder.