

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

Question No: 12
Hearing: Supplementary Budget Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 1
Programme: Biodiversity Conservation Division
Topic: DRAFT REEF 2050 PLAN - WATER QUALITY
Hansard Page: N/A
Question Date: 29 October 2014
Question Type: Written

Senator Waters asked:

The current targets in the draft Reef 2050 Plan (WQT1 and 2) are defined as applying to “priority areas” – for instance a 20% reduction in sediment loads and particulate nutrients in priority areas on 2009 levels by 2018. Does that mean that loads are allowed to go up outside priority areas?

a. Does it mean that the Reef wide the reduction might actually be lower than 20%?

Answer:

The ‘priority areas’ referred to in the Reef Plan targets are defined in Appendix 1 of Reef Plan 2013. Progress is reported for all regions where relevant, with increased focus on the priority areas.

Priority areas are those that were identified as posing the highest threat to the coral and seagrass ecosystems of the Great Barrier Reef in the 2013 Scientific Consensus Statement – Land Use Impacts on Great Barrier Reef Water Quality and Ecosystem Condition. Reef Plan activities currently cover all regions in the Great Barrier Reef catchments, but are preferentially targeted towards priority areas. It is intended that efforts to achieve load reductions will continue to reduce pollutants over the long-term in lower priority areas. There is no intention under Reef Plan to target areas where sediment and nutrient loads have not increased since European settlement (i.e. natural loads in undeveloped areas).

a. Yes, in some areas, the reduction in sediment loads and particulate nutrients may be less than 20 per cent.