

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

Question No: 77
Hearing: Supplementary Budget Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 1
Programme: Environment Assessment and Compliance Division
Topic: ANAO AUDIT OF COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT OF THE EPBC ACT
Hansard Page: N/A
Question Date: 29 October 2014
Question Type: Written

Senator Waters asked:

Can the Department outline what other actions it has put in place in response to the audit's recommendations?

Answer:

In response to the ANAO recommendations the department's Compliance and Enforcement Branch has implemented a comprehensive ongoing business improvement programme. Key elements of this programme are:

In 2014 - completed

- Implemented a strategic risk-based prioritisation model (NESTRA), developed in collaboration with CSIRO and based on the Australian Tax Office practice, to focus the Department's monitoring activities on those approved projects posing the highest risk.
- Updated 63 standard operating procedures to ensure a systematic approach to the Department's compliance and enforcement activities.
- Restructured the Department's Compliance and Enforcement Branch to ensure a more targeted focus of compliance monitoring with approval requirements to those projects which provide the greatest risk to matters of national environmental significance.
- Published the Department's first annual compliance monitoring plan for approved projects under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* and the *Environment Protection (Sea Dumping) Act 1981*.
- Released guidelines to assist stakeholders with the preparation of environmental management plans and annual compliance reports.

In 2014 – projects currently underway

- Enhancing the Department's assessments and approvals database (Chapter 4 & EASy) to enable more accurate monitoring and reporting of approval decisions.
- Updating the standard administrative conditions included in approval decision notices. Implementation of these updates will include training of staff to assist with the drafting of approval conditions.

- Reviewing and updating the policy and procedures for approval of authorised officers appointed under the EPBC Act. Authorised officers play a key part in compliance monitoring activities.
- Improving the Department's data holdings for approval conditions, environmental offsets, associated species and other matters protected under the EPBC Act.