

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

**Question No:** 1  
**Hearing:** Supplementary Budget Estimates  
**Outcome:** Outcome 1.1  
**Programme:** Biodiversity Conservation Division (BCD)  
**Topic:** Reef Trust – EPBC Offsets  
**Hansard Page:** N/A  
**Question Date:** 21 October 2015  
**Question Type:** Written

**Senator Urquhart asked:**

1. Page 17 of the Government's EPBC Offsets policy says that: "When the protected matter is the whole of the environment (like the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park), offsets must be targeted to the aspect of the environment that is being impacted so as to directly compensate for the impact." How do you intend to provide certainty that activities undertaken through the Reef Trust will meet approval requirements? What safeguards are in place to ensure that a given amount of money paid into the pool will be withdrawn to offset the specific damage it was paid to offset?

**Answer:**

The Reef Trust will continue to work with the environmental assessment and compliance areas of the Department, as well as approval holders, to ensure the on-ground projects and activities delivered using offset funding are able to demonstrate a benefit to the impacted matter and address the relevant approval condition requirements.

Where conditions of EPBC Act approvals require, the Reef Trust will enter into funding arrangements with approval holders and delivery agencies which will set out the agreed use of offset funding to meet the requirements of the relevant condition. The Department has an active compliance monitoring program to ensure approval holders meet their conditional requirements. In the event that it is demonstrated that approval holders are not meeting their conditional requirements, the EPBC Act provides for a range of remedies which is reflected in the Departments Compliance and Enforcement policies.

Reporting by the Reef Trust on projects delivered using environmental offset funding will be focussed on ensuring an approval holder is able to demonstrate the offset funded project is delivering the environmental outcomes outlined in the Reef Trust specific condition as set out in the relevant environmental approval, as well as ensuring the project management requirements for delivery agencies undertaking the on-ground works are met.

The expenditure of offset funding through the Reef Trust Special Account will be managed in accordance with the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*, the *Commonwealth Grant Rules and Guidelines*, and the *Guidelines for the Management of Special Accounts*. It will also be managed in line with funding arrangements as agreed by the Department with approval holders and delivery agencies, to meet the relevant condition of approval.