

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

Question No: 35
Hearing: Supplementary Budget Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 1
Programme: Biodiversity Conservation Division (BCD)
Topic: Offsets in the Marine Environment
Hansard Page: N/A
Question Date: 21 October 2015
Question Type: Written

Senator Urquhart, asked:

1. Are offsets in the marine environment assessed differently to terrestrial offsets? Will they?

Answer:

1. The Department of the Environment assesses offset requirements in the marine and terrestrial environments against the same standards. The *EPBC Act environmental offsets policy* specifies offsetting principles and requirements and is used by the Department to assess both offsets in both the marine and terrestrial environments.

The *EPBC Act offset assessment guide* gives effect to the requirements of the EPBC Act *environmental offsets policy*, utilising a balance sheet approach to quantify impacts and offsets. However, the Guide only applies where the impacted protected matter is a threatened species or ecological community. It is not applicable to World Heritage Values.

In the context of the Reef Trust, a tool and methodology to assist with the calculation of financial offset requirements for impacts on the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area is being developed through the National Environmental Science Programme. The calculator will focus specifically on the Outstanding Universal Value of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. It is intended to calculate the financial payment required to enable the Reef Trust to offset any significant residual impacts on behalf of an approval holder.