

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

Question No: 51
Hearing: Supplementary Budget Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 1.5
Programme: Environment Standards Division (ESD)
Topic: Threatened Species - sources of data and advice
Hansard Page: N/A
Question Date: 21 October 2015
Question Type: Written

Senator Urquhart asked:

1. When providing threatened species advice to the Minister for assessment and approvals purposes, what sources of advice and data do departmental staff draw on?
2. In what circumstances do Department of Environment staff commission or seek external advice to provide conservation advice to the Minister?
3. In what instances has external advice been sought to provide conservation advice to the Minister on development assessment and approvals in the 2014-15 financial year, and current financial year to date?

Answer:

1. Assessment documentation prepared and provided to the Department by the proponent (for example, referral documentation, survey information and environment impact statements), statutory documents (for example, recovery plans, conservation advices, threat abatement plans), departmental databases that contain species profiles and distributions, any other information that is available for a particular species (for example, information provided through public comments on a referred action or assessment documents, scientific papers/literature, and/or State/Territory held information) and, when necessary, external expert advice is sought.
2. The Department has interpreted this question as referring to Conservation Advices that are approved under section 266B of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

When a species or ecological community is listed as threatened under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, an approved conservation advice is developed to support its recovery. As part of preparing the conservation advice, public and expert comment is sought on the proposed listing. This advice may include clarification of the taxonomy of the species or definition of the ecological community, along with information on the biology, ecology, populations, distribution, threats and conservation actions relevant to the species or ecological community.

3. For information regarding external advice that is considered in the assessment and approval of a project refer to response to Question 1.