

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee**

Answers to questions on notice
Environment and Energy portfolio

Question No: 108
Hearing: Supplementary Budget Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 1
Program: Environment Standards Division (ESD)
Topic: EPBC Act Assessment Resources
Hansard Page: 126
Question Date: 24 October 2016
Question Type: Spoken

Senator Urquhart, Anne asked:

Senator URQUHART: Do the states have more resources than the Commonwealth and are they able to do assessment more quickly than the Commonwealth?

Mr Knudson: I do not think that we will be able to comment on what sort of resourcing individual states have, but what I can say is that, for better or for worse, the one-stop shop did bring about a much closer engagement between the states and the Commonwealth. We believe that that has led to efficiencies, strictly from us communicating more regularly on key projects, understanding where their concerns are and them understanding where our concerns are, which leads to much better decision-making. That is fundamentally the push behind the conditions policy which says that, if the states adequately address federal matters, then our conditions will be limited, as a default, to one condition saying, 'Apply the state conditions.' That is a direct result of those types of reforms.

Senator URQUHART: I read, in an article in WA Today, about where the state and local governments assessed the wrong parcel of land. Do you have any confidence in the state processes, and how are they audited?

Mr Cahill: I did not quite catch that—the role of classing?

Senator Birmingham: Senator Urquhart is quoting or referencing an article, apparently. I do not know if you are able to table the article?

Senator URQUHART: It is from 22 September, WA Today.

Senator Birmingham: Are you able to table the article?

Senator URQUHART: It talks about the clearing—oh, yes, I can give you a copy if you want. It says, 'Government approves wetland bulldozing based on environmental study of wrong lot'. Are you aware of that?

Mr Cahill: No. I will have to take that on notice and look at the article.

Answer:

The issue raised the WA today article of 22 September 2016 in relation to land clearing is a matter for the West Australian Government.

The Department made enquiries into the clearance of Lot 14, Carters Land, referenced in the article, and has determined that it did not significantly impact nationally protected matters. Therefore, the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* does not apply.