

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

**Question No:** 244  
**Hearing:** Supplementary Budget Estimates  
**Outcome:** Outcome 4  
**Program:** Commonwealth Environmental Water Office (CEWO)  
**Topic:** Moreton Bay Ramsar Site Inspection  
**Hansard Page:** 36-37  
**Question Date:** 21 October 2016  
**Question Type:** Spoken

**Senator Waters, Larissa asked:**

Senator WATERS: So it might involve a site inspection. Is there anything you are able to give me at this quite early stage in the process about the input you have had on this substance, on the potential impact on Ramsar of the massive expansion at Toondah Harbour?

Mr Papps: It has been very general advice because, as my colleague indicated, it is very early in the process. No decisions have been made, and there are discussions about the very nature of the proposal. It has been broad generic advice around the convention and adjustments to boundaries and the nature of development within Ramsar sites.

Senator WATERS: Is that something that you would be able to provide to us?

Mr Knudson: If we get to the point where we have made either a controlled action decision or not attempt a decision there will be an explanation of the basis for that decision at that time.

Senator WATERS: I understand. Does that mean you are able to provide the structural advice about boundary redefinitions to us? Or was that a no?

Mr Papps: We would be following the process that Mr Knudsen has outlined. There is generic information available through the convention around this that is in the public domain. We would be able to provide that.

**Answer:**

Australia has obligations under the Ramsar Convention to promote the conservation of Australian Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites) and wise use of all wetlands. Parties to the Convention have committed to maintain or restore the ecological character of their Ramsar sites. The ecological character of a wetland is the "combination of ecosystem components, processes, benefits and services that characterise the wetland".

The overarching principle of the Convention is that the whole of the original extent of a Ramsar wetland should remain a designated site wherever possible and appropriate. Under the Convention, boundary deletion or restriction is only justified if it is in the national interest (Article 2.5 and Resolution IX.6). In addition, it is a resolution of the Convention that boundary changes must not be made to permit or facilitate future developments (Resolution IX.6).

Ramsar Convention guidance for assessing sites or parts of sites which no longer meet the criteria for designation can be found at the following public website:

[http://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/res/key\\_res\\_ix\\_06\\_e.pdf](http://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/res/key_res_ix_06_e.pdf)