

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

Question No: 57
Hearing: Additional Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 5
Programme: Environment Assessment and Compliance Division
Topic: Seagrass offsets
Hansard Page: N/A
Question Date: 7 March 2014
Question Type: Written

Senator Waters asked:

1. How many environmental approvals issued by the Department have included conditions requiring offsets for damage to seagrasses in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and/ or the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area?
2. For each permit, please describe:
 - a) The project name and reference number
 - b) The year(s) the offset was implemented (or is due to be implemented)
 - c) The year the damaging activity commenced (or is due to commence)
 - d) The nature of the offset (ie what is being offset and how it is being offset)
 - e) The monitoring or auditing of the offset/s that has taken place to date.
 - f) The extent to which any of these offsets has resulted in rehabilitation of seagrasses or protection of seagrasses

Answer:

1. 13 approvals have been issued that may potentially require offsets for impacts on seagrasses.
2. See Table 1 below.

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Table 1

a) The project name and reference number	b) The year(s) the offset was implemented (or is due to be implemented)	c) The year the damaging activity commenced (or is due to commence)	d) The nature of the offset (i.e. what is being offset and how is it being offset)	e) The monitoring or auditing of the offset/s that has taken place to date	f) The extent to which any of these offsets has resulted in rehabilitation of seagrasses or protection of seagrasses
Shute Harbour Marina (EPBC 2006/2939)	The required Offset Plan has not been submitted for approval. The action cannot commence until the Minister has approved the offset plan.	The project has not commenced.	The Offset Plan must offset the loss of 17.1 hectares of seagrass and potential seagrass habitat, or an area otherwise agreed to in writing by the Minister following reporting on seagrass surveys and monitoring as required in the conditions of approval. The Offset Plan must include information such as how offsets will be secured, delivered managed and monitored.	See response to 2b).	See response to 2b).
Development of Marine Facilities to Service Natural Gas Liquefaction Park (EPBC 2008/4058)	The approved Shipping Activity Management Plan did not identify any directly attributable impact for which an offset is required.	The project commenced in 2012.	The Shipping Activity Management Plan must include provisions for the protection of the seagrass species <i>Halodule uninervis</i> , <i>Halophila ovalis</i> , <i>Halophila decipens</i> , <i>Halophila minor</i> , <i>Halophila spinulosa</i> , and <i>Zostera capricorni</i> and propose remedial action in the event of any impacts directly attributable to the proponent's shipping activities, including a feasible and beneficial offsets strategy.	See response to 2b).	See response to 2b).

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Gas Pipeline and Alternative Pipeline to Supply Natural Gas Liquefaction Plant (EPBC 2008/4096)	The approved Environmental Management Plan did not identify the need for offsets for impacts on seagrasses at this stage.	The project commenced in 2012.	The Environmental Management Plan for the pipeline crossing of the Narrows (Gladstone Harbour to Curtis Island) must include proposed offset measures to compensate for unavoidable impacts on listed threatened species and ecological communities, listed migratory species and values of the World and National Heritage-listed Great Barrier Reef.	See response to 2b).	See response to 2b).
Queensland Curtis LNG Project – Pipeline Network (EPBC 2008/4399)	The approved Environmental Management Plan did not identify the need for offsets for impacts on seagrasses at this stage.	The project commenced in 2011.	The Environmental Management Plan for the pipeline crossing of the Narrows (Gladstone Harbour to Curtis Island) must include proposed offset measures to compensate for unavoidable impacts on listed threatened species and ecological communities, listed migratory species and values of the World and National Heritage listed Great Barrier Reef.	See response to 2b).	See response to 2b).

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Shipping Activity Associated with the Queensland Curtis LNG Project (EPBC 2008/4405)	The approved Shipping Activity Management Plan did not identify the need for offsets for impacts on seagrass at this stage.	The project commenced in 2010.	The Shipping Activity Management Plan must include provisions for the protection of the seagrass species <i>Halodule uninervis</i> , <i>Halophila ovalis</i> , <i>Halophila decipens</i> , <i>Halophila minor</i> , <i>Halophila spinulosa</i> , and <i>Zostera capricorni</i> and propose remedial action in the event of any impacts directly attributable to the proponent's shipping activities, including a feasible and beneficial offsets strategy.	See response to 2b).	See response to 2b).

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Abbot Point Terminal 3 (EPBC 2008/4468)	The Biodiversity Offset Strategy (inclusive of the Seagrass Offset Plan) has not been submitted for approval. No project activity can occur until the Minister has approved the Biodiversity Offset Strategy.	The project has not commenced.	The Biodiversity Offset Strategy must propose offsets for disturbance impacts to areas of seagrass. The Biodiversity Offset Strategy must also include a Seagrass Offset Plan which must identify mechanisms/opportunities for the ongoing protection and conservation of seagrass habitat that supports listed threatened species and migratory species within the Coral Sea Region and the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area (including the Port of Abbot Point).	See response to 2b).	See response to 2b).
Port of Gladstone Western Basin Strategic Dredging and Disposal Project (EPBC 2009/4904)	The Biodiversity Offset strategy was approved on 18 July 2012.	The project commenced in 2011.	The Biodiversity Offset Strategy must include measures funded to not less than \$5 million including for habitat enhancement and restoration actions in the region or wider bioregion such as 'seagrass friendly' mooring systems. The strategy must include development of a seagrass conservation plan that must include measures to ensure that the seagrass beds within the Port are protected	Monthly monitoring reports during dredging activities. Annual monitoring and compliance	Projects within the approved BOS are currently being implemented; this includes analysis of environmentally friendly mooring

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			<p>from ongoing and future Port activity. It also requires commitments to ensure no further direct seagrass removal within the areas to be protected, including the Wiggins/Mud Island seagrass beds, seagrass beds east of Quion Island and seagrass beds in Pelican Banks.</p> <p>The Ecosystem Research and Monitoring Program must include annual long term seagrass monitoring surveys of seagrass distribution and abundance in the Western Basin and Port Alma and monitor survival and recovery of seagrass and other marine communities in the project area during the construction period and for a minimum of five years following completion of dredging.</p>	reporting.	<p>systems, and identifying properties for inclusion into Fish Habitat Areas.</p> <p>Sea grass monitoring surveys to identify extent of impact, recovery and to inform future port management decisions are ongoing. These surveys are available from the approval holders' website.</p>

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APLNG Pipeline Project (EPBC 2009/4976)	The approved Environmental Management Plan did not identify the need for offsets for impacts on seagrasses at this stage.	The project commenced in 2011.	The Environmental Management Plan for the pipeline crossing of the Narrows (Gladstone Harbour to Curtis Island) must include proposed offset measures to compensate for unavoidable impacts on listed threatened species and ecological communities, listed migratory species and values of the World and National Heritage-listed Great Barrier Reef.	See response to 2b).	See response to 2b).
Australia Pacific LNG Project – Development of a LNG Plant and Ancillary Onshore and Marine Facilities on Curtis Island (EPBC 2009/4977)	The approved Shipping Activity Management Plan did not identify the need for offsets for impacts on seagrass at this stage.	The project commenced in 2011.	The Shipping Activity Management Plan must include provisions for the protection of the seagrass species <i>Halodule uninervis</i> , <i>Halophila ovalis</i> , <i>Halophila decipens</i> , <i>Halophila minor</i> , <i>Halophila spinulosa</i> , and <i>Zostera capricorni</i> and propose remedial action in the event of any impacts directly attributable to the proponent's shipping activities, including a feasible and beneficial offsets strategy.	See response to 2b).	See response to 2b).

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Great Keppel Island Tourism and Marina Development (EPBC 2010/5521)	The Marine Environment Offset Strategy has not been submitted for approval. The Offset Strategy is due within 18 months of approval (August 2014) and prior to commencement of the action.	The project has not commenced.	The Marine Environment Offset Strategy must identify research and management mechanisms/opportunities for the ongoing protection and conservation of marine habitat including seagrass. The person taking the action must provide funding of \$300,000 per annum (indexed at CPI and exclusive of GST) to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority for the implementation of the strategy from commencement of the action until the expiry of the approval or cessation of operations, whichever comes sooner.	See response to 2b).	See response to 2b).

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Abbot Point Coal Terminal 0 (EPBC 2011/6194)	The Marine Offset Strategy has not been submitted for approval. Construction cannot commence until the Minister approves the Offset Strategy.	The project has not commenced.	The Marine Offset Strategy must enhance the marine habitat (including seagrass) for the Green Turtle and Flatback Turtle. The Marine Offset Strategy must include information such as outcomes, benchmarks, performance indicators, contingency measures and corrective actions. The approval holder must provide a contribution of \$450,000 per annum (GST exclusive and CPI adjusted annually) to fund the implementation of the Marine Offset Strategy. The first payment is due within one month of the Minister's approval of the strategy and payments must continue annually for the remaining life of the approval.	See response to 2b).	See response to 2b).

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Abbot Point Terminal 0, Terminal 2 and Terminal 3 Capital Dredging (EPBC 2011/6213)	The Offsets Plan has not been submitted for approval. The Offset Plan must be submitted to the Minister for approval prior to commencement of dredging and disposal activities.	The project has not commenced.	The Offsets Plan must address the loss of seagrass from the dredge area and areas of potential seagrass loss resulting from the dredge plume extent. The Offsets Plan includes a requirement to offset the portion of fine sediments released from the dredging and disposal operations by 150 per cent by reducing the load of fine sediments entering the marine environment from the Burdekin and Don Catchments.	See response to 2b).	See response to 2b).