

ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE – BUDGET ESTIMATES 2022-23 – 31 MARCH AND 4 APRIL 2022

AGRICULTURE, WATER AND THE ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO

QoN No.	Portfolio QoN No.	Department /Agency	Senator	Title	Question	Transcript Page
1	SQ22-000215	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Sarah Hanson-Young	Number of departmental staff who worked on State of the Environment report	<p>Senator HANSON-YOUNG: How many of your departmental staff, Mr Metcalfe, have been working on this?</p> <p>Mr Metcalfe: Again, I will ask my colleagues. The work primarily happens within Ms Stuart-Fox's division.</p> <p>Ms Stuart-Fox: I'd have to take on notice the number of staff we have in the team. As I said, the chapters are written by independent authors. The work is commissioned by us and coordinated by us, and the development of the digital platform is something that we have, again, commissioned within the department.</p>	44
2	SQ22-000309	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Sarah Hanson-Young	Application timeline for proposals	<p>Senator HANSON-YOUNG: When will we expect some type of application for this project [the Hells Gate dam]?</p> <p>Senator Hume: I can't answer that question. I will have to take it on notice.</p>	48
3	SQ22-000217	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Sarah Hanson-Young	Hells Gates Dam project	<p>Senator HANSON-YOUNG: Let's talk about Hells Gates for a moment. That was originally referred mid last year or thereabout. You can clarify any of this if you need to be more specific. It was withdrawn. When was it withdrawn?</p> <p>Mr Say: I'd have to come back to you on that. It would have been maybe four to six months ago, I would estimate. I can take that on notice.</p> <p>Senator HANSON-YOUNG: So at this point the current status is that it's withdrawn? There isn't any referral.</p> <p>Mr Say: Yes. There's not a referral at the moment. Actually, I have in my notes that it was withdrawn April 2021, about 10 months ago.</p> <p>Senator HANSON-YOUNG: So a year ago. Why was it withdrawn? What happened there?</p> <p>Mr Say: They didn't go into much detail with us. They indicated that they needed to do some further planning, business cases and that type of thing before they re-referred.</p> <p>Senator HANSON-YOUNG: Okay. It hasn't been re-referred, but your understanding is that it will be.</p>	47

					<p>Mr Say: Yes. That's what they indicated to us several months ago.</p> <p>Senator HANSON-YOUNG: Since the withdrawal they said that. Do you know when they gave you that indication?</p> <p>Mr Say: No. I'd have to take that on notice.</p> <p>Senator HANSON-YOUNG: Thank you.</p>	
4	SQ22-000305	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Sarah Hanson-Young	Influences from stakeholders or Ministers on dam proposal	<p>Senator HANSON-YOUNG: ...Have you had any representations from anyone within government-ministers or members of parliament-in relation to this specific proposal?</p> <p>Mr Say: We have not off the top of my head. I can't think of any examples, but, again, we can check and get back to you with whether there are any that perhaps are not occurring to me at the moment.</p> <p>Senator HANSON-YOUNG: Thank you. It would be helpful if you could-and, of course, anybody else in your department, Mr Metcalfe, if they have had any representations from members of parliament or ministers themselves in relation to this project.</p> <p>Mr Metcalfe: Shall do.</p>	47-48
5	SQ22-000218	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Sarah Hanson-Young	Hells Gates dam funding	<p>Senator HANSON-YOUNG: Minister Hume, is it normal for the government to fund something such as this type of large project before there's even an application for approval before the department?</p> <p>Senator Hume: I don't know the answer to that question. I'll have to take it on notice.</p>	48
6	SQ22-000216	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Jenny McAllister	Copy of all commitments made under the Environment Restoration Fund	<p>Senator McALLISTER: \$300,000. Okay. Can I please have a copy of all of the commitments made under this fund, including the electorate that they were made in?</p> <p>Mr Costello: All of the projects are listed on our departmental website.</p> <p>Senator McALLISTER: Yes, but that website doesn't indicate the electorate in which they're located.</p> <p>Mr Costello: Projects aren't allocated according to electorates.</p> <p>Senator McALLISTER: Yes, I know that that's the government's assertion. But, in the past, tables which do have the electorates have been provided to estimates, so I would like those to be updated.</p> <p>Mr Costello: We don't have that analysis. We'll have to take that on notice.</p>	45
7	SQ22-000213	Department of Agriculture, Water and	Jenny McAllister	State of the Environment report - contact with environmental stakeholders	<p>Senator McALLISTER: Australia has a very active citizenry that's very interested in outcomes for the environment. Have environmental stakeholders contacted the department seeking advice about the release of the report?</p> <p>Ms O'Connell: I'd have to check on that and ask my colleague.</p> <p>Senator McALLISTER: You've had no contact with them yourself, Ms O'Connell?</p>	41

		the Environment			Ms O'Connell: I haven't had any requests to see the State of the environment report. Senator McALLISTER: Mr Metcalfe? Mr Metcalfe: Nor me. But we can check whether anyone else in the department has.	
8	SQ22-000313	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Jenny McAllister	State of Environment report release date to stakeholders	Senator McALLISTER: What have stakeholders been told about the report's release? Ms O'Connell: In accordance with the legislative provisions, there's a period for the government to release the report. It's a decision of government to release the report. Senator McALLISTER: I'd ask you to think about this question carefully, Ms O'Connell: have stakeholders been told that the report will be released prior to the election? Ms O'Connell: I'd have to check on that. Senator McALLISTER: Could you, please?	41
9	SQ22-000211	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Jenny McAllister	State of the Environment report - date received by Minister	Senator McALLISTER: On a separate matter: can you confirm that the minister has been provided with a copy of the State of the environment report? Mr Metcalfe: Yes. Senator McALLISTER: When was that received? When was it provided? Mr Metcalfe: I'll ask the relevant officer to come forward. Ms O'Connell: I'll get the precise date for you, but it was before the end of last calendar year that the minister received the State of the environment report. Senator McALLISTER: December? Ms O'Connell: I wouldn't say December, but I think it was December. It was before the end of the 2021 calendar year.	40
10	SQ22-000225	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Jenny McAllister	ReMade in Australia campaign - encouraging recycling behaviours	Senator McALLISTER: Is that right-there's data somewhere, indicating that this campaign has produced an uptick in recycling? Ms Lynch: There is ongoing tracking of the reception of the campaign that is being undertaken by the government's campaign entity, Hall & Partners, in this instance, and they are providing updates on a regular basis to determine the degree to which that messaging-as to which I might just reiterate: the purpose of this campaign is about encouraging Australians about the importance of recycling. It's thereby trying to improve the quality of materials that are added to recycling bins in kerbside recycling. So you can see there's a little bit of a distinction there between the purposes around encouraging people to recycle-to take seriously what they are recycling and to look for opportunities to recycle the goods that they have. The campaign website was released in December. At that stage it linked people through to and promoted information about existing tools that consumers in Australia could use, such as the Recycle Mate app, which was	62

					<p>developed by the Australian Council of Recycling, or the RecyclingNearYou website, which lists information for all Australians about where they can recycle different products. It is about encouraging recycling behaviours, and the campaign feedback and the results of the evaluation that are incrementally coming in are certainly indicating that people are growing in awareness of recycling and that they are, in a number of cases, taking positive recycling actions as a result of the campaign.</p> <p>Senator McALLISTER: In a number of cases?</p> <p>Ms Lynch: Yes. I don't have specific figures for you, but that's something that I could take on notice and provide.</p>	
11	SQ22-000219	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Anne Urquhart	Implementation of priority actions in conservation advice and recovery plans	<p>Senator URQUHART: If I go to page 57 of the ANAO report in February 2022. The department committed 'to track and publish the implementation of priority actions in conservation advice and recovery plans for all 100 priority species under the Threatened Species Strategy 2021-30 by 2026'. Can you tell me what's been done so far to implement the tracking and publishing of those actions?</p> <p>Ms Kennedy: Certainly the work is under way, Senator. I will be able to take on notice some more detail about exactly what actions have been taken to date, but it's obviously still fairly early days. The first step is to make sure that we have solid baselines for those species, and we're going through that process at the moment. But we're on track to meet the requirements as they are in the Threatened Species Strategy.</p>	52
12	SQ22-000222	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Peter Whish-Wilson	Involvement with the Oceans Leadership package and the Fisheries habitat restoration	<p>Senator WHISH-WILSON: Do you have direct input into some of the policies that we found in the budget the other night in terms of fisheries habitat restoration? Does your department provide any liaison with-I don't even know who would manage it, actually. AFMF is probably separate to that, and FRDC does some research funding.</p> <p>Ms Kennedy: Certainly, those sorts of marine habitats are very important to us. We work closely with colleagues in AFMA and in the fisheries area of the department, and with others who are involved in this space. In terms of the specific measure that you're talking about, I would need to take on notice the degree to which my team was involved in that.</p>	55
13	SQ22-000302	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Peter Whish-Wilson	Threatened species Giant Kelp project funding	<p>Senator WHISH-WILSON: On page 37 of the Regional ministerial budget statement 2022-23: a secure future for regional Australia, there's a section under 'Fisheries habitat restoration' that says:</p> <p>The Australian Government's \$8 million commitment over three years from 2020-21 is investing in projects that restore marine and estuarine fish habitats around Australia.</p> <p>It talks about some projects that are underway. Given the loss of significant</p>	55

					<p>habitat on the Great Southern Reef- like 95 per cent of Tasmania's giant kelp forests-once again, is any money going towards that project through other means?</p> <p>Ms Kennedy: As I said, I would need to take on notice the details of that particular measure. It isn't one that was led by us. As I said, there is also a lot of other work going on and of course we're aware of the situation that you're talking about. I think it builds on the question that I've already taken on notice for you, but I'm happy to provide more details.</p>	
14	SQ22-000303	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Peter Whish-Wilson	Great Southern Reef species projects	<p>Senator WHISH-WILSON: If you could, because also, on page 51, there's a package called 'Oceans Leadership Package-Ocean Accounting and On-the-Ground Restoration Activities to Restore Blue Carbon Ecosystems' The statement says:</p> <p>Over \$15 million is going to at least four major projects restoring coastal ecosystems across the country and measuring biodiversity, climate and livelihood benefits.</p> <p>It's talking in this case about existing projects on mangroves, seagrass and tidal marshes. I presume it would mostly be in northern Australia. Once again, are there any projects around Centrostephanus sea urchins, the loss of habitat on the Great Southern Reef and the loss of giant kelp forests?</p> <p>Ms Kennedy: Can I please take that on notice, Senator? Absolutely, we are involved in the Oceans Leadership Package, and there has been funding that has flowed to a variety of different sources from that, as well as from those more recent announcements that you're talking about. I certainly assure you that we work together on this and would be involved in implementation. But I'll need to take on notice the details.</p>	55-56
15	SQ22-000220	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Peter Whish-Wilson	Giant kelp forests	<p>Senator WHISH-WILSON: I'm particularly interested in one threatened ecological habitat-the nation's first listed threatened ecological habitat: Tasmania's giants kelp forests. Is anything happening with that at all?</p> <p>Ms Kennedy: I would be able to take that on notice and give you-</p> <p>Senator WHISH-WILSON: I ask this every estimates, and it always gets taken on notice.</p> <p>Ms Kennedy: Can I suggest that we might be able to come back with more detail? I think we're back again on Monday, so we'll make sure we have that then.</p> <p>Additional question page 55</p> <p>Senator WHISH-WILSON: I know there's a lot of work in that, but, specifically, could you take on notice in relation to south-eastern Australia's giant kelp forest, how many submissions you received in regard to the cancellation of that</p>	54-55

					recovery plan? Ms Kennedy: Yes.	
16	SQ22-000221	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Peter Whish-Wilson	Recovery plans for Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle and the freshwater burrowing crayfish	Senator WHISH-WILSON: What about for the Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle and the freshwater burrowing crayfish? Dr Stobutzki: My apologies. I don't have with me at the moment the full list of species that went out to consultation, so I'd have to check and take that on notice.	55
17	SQ22-000223	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Peter Whish-Wilson	Recommendation to list golden kelp as a critically endangered habitat	Senator WHISH-WILSON: Can I ask one quick question? You'll probably take it on notice. In terms of the process where things are recommended to the Threatened Species Scientific Committee, such as a threatened habitat, have any recommendations been made to the committee to list golden kelp as a critically endangered habitat in Australia? You may know that off the top of your head. Dr Stobutzki: Off the top of my head, I don't think so, but I would like to take it on notice so I can verify it.	56
18	SQ22-000226	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Carol Brown	Release of the KPMG options report	Senator CAROL BROWN: Have you conducted work yourself in terms of relocation costs? Mr Ellis: Part of the development of the business case has been providing information for relocation costing. We're actually not doing that costing; it's being done by KPMG and by the department of infrastructure, as the broader business case material. ... Senator CAROL BROWN: Do you have any expectation as to when the KPMG report is to be finalised? Mr Ellis: That's a matter for the department of infrastructure and for a decision by government. Senator CAROL BROWN: But essentially you're looking years down the track in terms of the AAD being required to move, if that is the decision that's made? Mr Ellis: We have to consider the current state of Macquarie Point, the requirement to develop facilities there and construct them, the requirement to relocate, and then, to fit all that in with our seasonal Antarctic program, my expectation is that it would be a minimum of five years before we are able to relocate. ... Senator CAROL BROWN: Will the government pledge to release the KPMG options report when it's finalised? Senator Hume: I will take that on notice.	67-68

19	SQ22-000224	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Anthony Chisholm	Public comments on GBRMPA's weekly reef health reports	<p>Senator CHISHOLM: Minister Hume, are you aware of Minister Ley providing any public comment or putting out a statement [on GBRMPA's weekly reef health reports]?</p> <p>Senator Hume: No, but I will take that on notice for you.</p> <p>Senator WHISH-WILSON: I asked you in the Senate about this last week. Surely you know.</p> <p>Senator Hume: The public comments?</p> <p>Senator WHISH-WILSON: Whether she's made a public comment or a statement about this.</p> <p>Senator Hume: I think I responded to your question.</p> <p>Senator WHISH-WILSON: You didn't say whether she had made a statement or not.</p> <p>Senator Hume: I think you asked me what it was that the minister said and if I could comment on what the minister said. But I didn't know what it was that the minister said. Perhaps you can tell me what the minister said, then I'll respond to it.</p> <p>Senator WHISH-WILSON: The minister hasn't made a statement-can you confirm that?</p> <p>Senator Hume: No, I can't. But I'll take it on notice.</p> <p>Senator CHISHOLM: Looking online, I haven't been able to find a comment. Is there any reason why the minister wouldn't make a statement? It's obviously pretty significant and has received a lot of attention.</p> <p>Senator Hume: I can't tell you what her state of mind might be, Senator Chisholm, but I can take it on notice as to what her comment might be.</p>	56-57
20	SQ22-000214	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Sarah Hanson-Young	State of the Environment report - informing Cabinet	<p>Senator HANSON-YOUNG: Has cabinet been informed of the major findings of the State of the environment report?</p> <p>Senator Hume: I don't know, but I will take it on notice and get back to you as soon as I can.</p>	43
21	SQ22-000212	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Jenny McAllister	Release of the State of the Environment report	<p>Senator McALLISTER: When will the minister release the report?</p> <p>Ms O'Connell: That's a question for the minister.</p> <p>Senator McALLISTER: Senator Hume, when will the minister release the report?</p> <p>Senator Hume: I'll take that on notice. I don't know .</p> <p>Senator McALLISTER: Minister, you'll be aware that, certainly on the Senate side, it seems unlikely we'll return to sit again. If an election were called this weekend, what would happen to the report?</p> <p>Senator Hume: I don't know. I can find out for you when it will be tabled, but I</p>	41-42

					<p>don't know.</p> <p>Senator McALLISTER: Can you assure the Australian people that the report will be released before the election is called?</p> <p>Senator Hume: My understanding is that the EPBC Act requires the Australian government to prepare the review of the state of the environment every five years, and the last day the environment report was published was in 2016. It has been provided to the minister and will be tabled in parliament according to the statutory requirements set out in the EPBC Act.</p> <p>Senator HANSON-YOUNG: Even though it was released three months ago?</p> <p>Senator Hume: It will be tabled according to the act. There is still another sitting week in the House. Senator McALLISTER: My question to you was: if an election is called on the weekend- Senator Hume: I think that's speculation.</p> <p>CHAIR: It's a difficult question.</p> <p>Senator McALLISTER: It's a procedural question. If an election is called prior to the release of the report, will the community get to see the report before the election?</p> <p>Senator Hume: I can't answer that question, but I will take it on notice for you.</p> <p>Senator McALLISTER: You don't know?</p> <p>Senator Hume: I don't know, and I will take it on notice.</p> <p>Senator McALLISTER: So, procedurally, you think that it might be possible-</p> <p>Senator Hume: I don't know the answer to a procedural question. I will have to take it on notice.</p> <p>Further question page 42</p> <p>Senator McALLISTER: Minister, is there anything stopping the Minister for the Environment from releasing the report today?</p> <p>Senator Hume: Not that I'm aware of, but I'm happy to take that question on notice.</p>	
22	SQ22-000308	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Anne Urquhart	Number of high-priority threatened species	<p>Senator URQUHART: According to the strategy, only high-priority species would receive a recovery plan. Can you tell me how many species were considered high-priority?</p> <p>Mr Metcalfe: Again, we'd need to check the document to see if we could assist you. We'll take that on notice, Senator.</p> <p>Senator URQUHART: According to the ANAO, there were less than five. Are you able to provide the exact number?</p> <p>Ms Kennedy: I'm sorry, Senator; I don't have that information with me. But I would note that there has been quite a lot of water under the bridge since that time. And, as we've just discussed earlier today and on Thursday, there has been</p>	37

					a significant increase in the workload, including through a major injection of funds after the horrible Black Summer bushfires, and so it is a historical relic. But we'll have to go back to find the details that surround that document.	
23	SQ22-000310	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Anne Urquhart	Determination of high-priority threatened species	Senator URQUHART: Okay. And can you tell me how those high-priority species were determined? Mr Metcalfe: Again, we'll need to take that on notice. Senator, this seems to be a document that actually belonged to the previous department. Obviously, the ANAO had access to the records so we'll find it	37
24	SQ22-000307	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Anne Urquhart	ANAO report - Workforce and budget reduction strategy initialisation	Senator URQUHART: Can you tell me how the strategy came about? Was it after cuts to the department? Mr Metcalfe: Again, we'd have to try and see if there's some documentation that provides that sort of context that you're after. So, again, we'll take that on notice. ... Senator URQUHART: Where did the strategy originate from? Mr Metcalfe: We'll need to take that on notice.	37
25	SQ22-000304	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Anne Urquhart	ANAO report – Who signed off on Workforce and budget reduction strategy	Senator URQUHART: Who signed off on that strategy? Ms Kennedy: I'm very sorry, Senator; I don't have the document here and, as I said, it's before our time, so I would need to take that on notice. Mr Metcalfe: Senator, I don't think anyone here was around at that time. I was appointed at the beginning of 2020 and others moved into jobs after that time, so we'll have to go back and check.	37
26	SQ22-000311	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Anne Urquhart	Koala's listing on priority list	Senator URQUHART: Was the koala considered a high priority? Ms Kennedy: Senator, as I've said, I'm sorry; I don't have access to the document. We will need to find that for you. But, as we've said, the koala has just recently received a very large amount of funding from the Commonwealth government and other state governments as well and just recently had its listing status upgraded, and it is very close to having a recovery plan in place as well as the comprehensive conservation advice. Senator URQUHART: Yes. If you could take the question on notice.	37
27	SQ22-000312	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Anne Urquhart	Completed recovery plans	Senator URQUHART: ... Of the high-priority species, can you tell me how many actually had a completed recovery plan? Ms Kennedy: We can take that on notice.	37

28	SQ22-000245	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Anne Urquhart	ANAO report on management of threatened species and ecological communities under EPBC Act	<p>Senator URQUHART: Yes, I have some on 1.4. I want to ask about a workforce and budget reduction strategy that's mentioned on page 62 of the ANAO report. The report stated: ... In 2018, the department's executive board agreed to a workforce and budget reduction strategy that stated that the department would be preparing recovery plans for 'the highest priority (<5) threatened species only' to facilitate a reduction in staffing levels. The strategy noted that this risked an 'increase in [the] number of statutorily overdue recovery plans', which was realised. Can you table the workforce and budget reduction strategy that is referenced on page 62 of the ANAO report?</p> <p>Ms Kennedy: I will need to take that on notice. I would just highlight the fact that that was, I think, well and truly prior to the time of any of the current officials here. But certainly what was in the documents that the ANAO had reference to during their process-we can take that on notice.</p> <p>Senator URQUHART: Can I just be very clear on what you're taking on notice: you're taking on notice whether or not you can table the report-</p> <p>Ms Kennedy: Yes.</p> <p>Senator URQUHART: or you're taking on notice to get the report?</p> <p>Ms Kennedy: Both, essentially. We will need to check. I have a recollection that it is a cabinet-in-confidence document, so there may be a possibility that the minister may want to make a public interest immunity claim. But I don't think there would be any reason, other than that, why it couldn't be provided.</p>	36
29	SQ22-000306	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Anne Urquhart	ANAO report - Workforce and budget reduction strategy minutes	<p>Senator URQUHART: Can you provide the minutes from the meeting?</p> <p>Mr Metcalfe: We'll take that on notice, Senator.</p>	37
30	SQ22-000258	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Janet Rice	Victorian code of forest practice	<p>Senator RICE: Sorry. I had one further follow-up question in 1.1 which I was about to ask. What's the assessment of how the proposed revisions of the Victorian code of forest practice will impact upon conservation measures for Leadbeater's possum, greater gliders and other forest-dependent threatened species?</p> <p>Ms Campbell: Victoria have updated their code. One of the things that they've done, which we talked about, I think, at the last estimates-they were going to update their code-was to clarify the intention of the word 'precaution', which is really to back in the court's interpretation of precaution. We really welcome that as giving certainty to industry while delivering clarity on what precaution means.</p>	35

					<p>Senator RICE: How about certainty to species that are going extinct?</p> <p>Ms Campbell: What Victoria's envisaging is developing best-practice guidelines, recognising that industry are calling for some guidance on how they can interpret precaution while meeting those definitions that are in line with UN definitions of precaution. The amendment to the code has also increased the conservation regulator's powers, with greater powers, for example, for compliance checks earlier as well. So we think those are positive for the protection of species.</p> <p>Senator RICE: Do you think any of the changes to the code in terms of the redefinition of precaution will increase the likelihood of protections that will result in the protection of threatened species, or will they decrease them?</p> <p>Ms Campbell: My interpretation of the revised definition is that it doesn't-I think you suggested last time that there were some rumours that it might water down precaution. We don't interpret it in that way. We interpret it as clarifying the court's ruling. So we think that's positive. I don't know if you've got the text in front of you, but we can certainly table the text of the revised precaution.</p> <p>Senator RICE: If you could. I haven't got it in front of me. Thank you.</p>	
31	SQ22-000257	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Janet Rice	Leadbeater's possum recovery plan	<p>Ms Kennedy: I could ask the Threatened Species Commissioner to come up and go through the results of the year 5 report for the Threatened Species Strategy if that's something you would like. There were actually some really good results out of the first Threatened Species Strategy. Part of the point of the Threatened Species Strategy is to include some real stretch goals to try and be mobilising not just-we're not the only ones who are in partnership here. I accept that bushfires alone have had a huge impact on species around Australia. Obviously, as Australians, we have our work cut out to try to protect these species. We are working very hard.</p> <p>Senator RICE: That's what I want to go to. Yes, we are working very hard. For some species, there aren't big political barriers in knocking them back: basically it's resources, doing good science and implementing them. For example, for species that are being threatened by feral animals, let's deal with the feral animals and we can make a big impact on the protection of those species. Why Leadbetter's possum and the other forest dependent animals are of particular interest to me is that there are things that we could be doing that we are choosing not to do-and it's a political choice. The conservation advice says that about 4.9 per cent of the habitat of the Leadbeater's possum is expected to be removed due to logging. So we are not doing everything we can do to protect the Leadbeater's possum while we continue logging within their known habitat. The politics of it are why we haven't got a recovery plan. If everyone was in agreement, if everyone was saying Leadbeater's possum is really important, it's</p>	33

					<p>critically endangered and we're going to maximise its success, which is what the conservation action plan says we're going to do-maximising the chances of the long-term survival of the Leadbeater's possum-there would be a recommendation in that recovery plan to basically say 'Do not log'. But we're not doing that. Hence the frustration of not having a recovery plan-because it puts the science on the table and makes it very clear that here is an enforcement action that you're going to need to do if you're going to be maximising the success of the Leadbeater's possum. I know I'm having a bit of a rant and rave, but it's the frustration of having, in theory, a framework that says it's protecting threatened species when it patently is not.</p> <p>Can I take you through some of the conservation and management priorities that are in the conservation plan. What are you, the Commonwealth, doing to review and, where required, revise existing relevant planning and policy settings to ensure they provide for maximising the chances of the long-term survival of the Leadbeater's possum?</p> <p>Ms Kennedy: I think it's something we're going to need to take on notice. Would it help if we took it on notice to cover off on those actions and the progress that has been made since 2019?</p>	
32	SQ22-000246	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Anne Urquhart	Species recommended to have recovery plans since last estimates	<p>Senator URQUHART: Can you tell me how many species have been recommended to have a recovery plan since the last estimates?</p> <p>Dr Stobutzki: I would have to take that question on notice, Senator. I'm assuming you're meaning newly- listed species where the Threatened Species Scientific Committee has recommended a recovery plan is required, so I would need to take that on notice.</p>	38
33	SQ22-000247	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Anne Urquhart	Species with overdue recovery plans	<p>Senator URQUHART: Can you provide a list-I'm just asking whether or not you can do this today-of all the species that have an overdue recovery plan?</p> <p>Dr Stobutzki: We've provided a list previously. We can provide an updated list.</p> <p>Senator URQUHART: That would be good. Are you able to do that today?</p> <p>Dr Stobutzki: Yes.</p> <p>Ms Kennedy: Yes.</p>	38
34	SQ22-000248	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Anne Urquhart	Reversal of requirement for recovery plans	<p>Senator URQUHART: Can you tell me how many species will have their recovery plan requirement reversed?</p> <p>Ms Kennedy: I don't have that with me at the moment. Probably the best place for us to be able to provide that to you is to point to the publicly available information that will be there very shortly.</p> <p>Senator URQUHART: Are you able to provide that, given you don't have it on you at the moment?</p> <p>Ms Kennedy: We can take it on notice, certainly.</p>	38

					Senator URQUHART: Are you able to come back today with that information? Ms Kennedy: Possibly.	
35	SQ22-000249	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Anne Urquhart	Number of recovery plans that require a review	<p>Senator URQUHART: The EPBC Act requires recovery plans to be reviewed within five years. Of the 77 recovery plans due for their first five-year review between 2016 and 2021, as I understand it none were reviewed within the statutory time frame. Can you tell me how many recovery plans require review and, of those, how many have been reviewed?</p> <p>Dr Stobutzki: The department is up to date on the five-year reviews for all recovery plans, except for four that are currently in progress.</p> <p>Senator URQUHART: Can you tell me what those four are?</p> <p>Dr Stobutzki: I'm sorry, I don't have those on me, so I'd have to take that on notice.</p> <p>Senator URQUHART: Are you able to get that today?</p> <p>Dr Stobutzki: Yes.</p>	38
36	SQ22-000250	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Anne Urquhart	Emergency wildlife and habitat recovery first payments	<p>Senator URQUHART: I do. Thank you very much. The government announced \$50 million for emergency wildlife and habitat recovery after the 2019 bushfires. Can you tell me when the first payment was actually made and when it was delivered to the organisation?</p> <p>Mr Metcalfe: Yes, Senator. I'll just ask the relevant officers to join me.</p> <p>Ms Kennedy: What I can say is that, of that \$200 million wildlife recovery package, which comprised the \$50 million initial response that you mentioned and the \$150 million for longer-term responses, that money has all been committed now. Apologies, what was your question?</p> <p>Senator URQUHART: This is in relation to the \$50 million for the emergency wildlife and habitat recovery after the 2019 bushfires. Can you tell me when the first payment was delivered to the organisation?</p> <p>Ms Kennedy: I'll need to take on notice when the first payment was made, but what I do have here in my notes that could be helpful is that, as well as being fully contracted, \$48.3 million has been paid to funding recipients.</p> <p>Senator URQUHART: \$48.3 million has been paid?</p> <p>Ms Kennedy: \$48.3 million has been paid, yes.</p> <p>Senator URQUHART: Right. Thank you. Are you able to tell me when the last payment was made?</p> <p>Ms Kennedy: Again, that's a level of detail that I'm not going to have in my briefing, but we've been working with funding recipients. For some, obviously, it has been a difficult two years, following on from the fires and then through COVID and that sort of thing, so we have been working closely with funding recipients to make sure that that important work is done and the funding would</p>	26

					<p>flow. I'd need to take on notice the exact most recent payment.</p> <p>Senator URQUHART: Obviously there's, what-2.7 outstanding payments to be made?</p> <p>Ms Kennedy: That's right. The notes I have here are that 60 of the 99 contracted projects are completed, so they would have their full funding amount paid. We're working with the recipients on those final few payments.</p>	
37	SQ22-000252	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Anne Urquhart	Number of priority species that require a recovery plan	<p>Senator URQUHART: The expert panel identified 810 priority species and ecological communities for urgent priority intervention. Can you tell me how many of these 810 species require a recovery plan?</p> <p>Dr Stobutzki: Not all of those species are actually listed under the EPBC Act at the moment. Based on that advice, there's been a prioritisation process to see which species need to be reassessed if they are listed or which need to be assessed for listing. Out of those, I can't tell you which ones require a recovery plan.</p> <p>Senator URQUHART: Are you able to tell me how many out of the 810?</p> <p>Dr Stobutzki: No, I'm sorry, I don't have that with me. But, as Ms Kennedy mentioned earlier, the \$200 million bushfire response plan was put in place with actions to assist the species, and that was on the basis of the conservation planning documents that were there.</p> <p>Senator URQUHART: Right, but you can't tell me how many of the 810-</p> <p>Mr Metcalfe: We'll need to take that on notice.</p> <p>Ms Stobutzki: Yes.</p> <p>Senator URQUHART: Thank you.</p>	27
38	SQ22-000256	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Anne Urquhart	Environment Restoration Fund align with Threatened Species Strategies	<p>Senator URQUHART: Can you tell me how many of the projects that had been funded under the restoration fund align with the threatening species strategies.</p> <p>Ms Kennedy: We did discuss this last Thursday as well. The Threatened Species Strategy and the new Threatened Species Strategy Action Plan are certainly very important guiding documents for Commonwealth and other funding partner options or possibilities I don't think we're in a position to be able to say exactly how many contributed to the Threatened Species Strategy under the existing phase 1. That will be a matter for the government to decide going forward as well. But essentially there are a lot of different Commonwealth government funding programs which are looking to the Threatened Species Strategy and the action plan as a guide for funding.</p> <p>Mr Costello: Certainly the majority of projects under the Environment Restoration Fund do contribute to the Threatened Species Strategy action plan. There were 60 grants announced on Sunday-new grants from the Environment Restoration Fund for threatened species through an open and competitive grant round worth \$12 million.</p>	28-27

					<p>Senator URQUHART: But you can't tell me how many have been funded under that that align with the Threatened Species Strategy?</p> <p>Mr Costello: I don't have that precise amount, but it's certainly the majority of the overall grants.</p> <p>Senator URQUHART: What's a majority?</p> <p>Dr Fraser: Under the first phase of the Environment Restoration Fund, over \$46 million of projects contributed to threatened species recovery. In addition to that, \$12 million of projects have just been approved over the weekend. That would take that up to \$58 million once they're contracted. We would count them in that overall figure.</p> <p>Senator URQUHART: How many projects does that equate to that align with the Threatened Species Strategy?</p> <p>Dr Fraser: Around 65. I'll come back and correct that if I'm out by one or two.</p> <p>Senator URQUHART: How many of the projects funded under the fund have assisted with the implementation of recovery plans?</p> <p>Dr Fraser: I would have to take that on notice. But all of those species have either a recovery plan or a conservation advice in place. All of those projects that I just mentioned need to address the conservation planning documents, so they would be informing those recovery actions</p> <p>...</p> <p>Dr Fraser: I just might take the opportunity to make a correction to an earlier statement to Senator Urquhart. I said there was 65 ERF projects contributing to threatened species. My mental arithmetic is appalling; it's actually 113 projects, which is 83 per cent of the full project number under the Environment Restoration Fund. Apologies for that.</p>	
39	SQ22-000253	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Anne Urquhart	Recycling modernisation fund - new funding stream - consultation with states and territories	<p>Senator URQUHART: In relation to the Recycling Modernisation Fund, specifically the new funding stream announced by the Prime Minister a couple of weeks ago, is it the premise of this stream to have co-investment from state and territory governments?</p> <p>Ms Lynch: In relation to the recycling modernisation plastics technology stream, which I believe is what you're referring to, that was an announcement made on 21 March that an additional \$60 million would be provided towards a new plastics technology stream of that program. Details in relation to the implementation and co-funding arrangements will be finalised by the government in due course in the implementation of that initiative. However, we would expect certainly to be delivering those projects in consultation and collaboration with state and territory governments.</p> <p>Senator URQUHART: Were states and territories consulted in relation to that</p>	42

					<p>prior to the announcement?</p> <p>Ms Lynch: I may need to take that question on notice. Certainly there is a very significant body of work and very regular consultation between the federal government and states and territories on a whole range of waste and recycling initiatives. There has been a range of consultation around the need for additional plastics, specifically advanced plastics, recycling technologies over a number of months.</p>	
40	SQ22-000251	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Anne Urquhart	List of locations canvassed for regional plans	<p>Senator URQUHART: Can you tell me what locations are being canvassed? Is there a shortlist?</p> <p>Mr Tregurtha: I wouldn't characterise it as a shortlist. Dr McEwen may want to add more, but what the department has done is look at a range of potential locations considering both-and I think I mentioned this last week-the prospectivity of a range of development but also matters of national environmental significance that would be impacted by such developments. The initial idea of a pilot, and now of moving towards 10 regional plans, is to undertake them in a manner that determines how they might best help to improve environmental protection while increasing the efficiency of environmental regulation. We are continuing that process of determining what those regions might be.</p> <p>I mentioned last week that they may be regions where there is prospectivity for residential development, like in South-East Queensland, for example. They could also be areas where there's agricultural development-Cape York Peninsula might be an example of that-or they might be areas where there's mining prospectivity, like in the Beetaloo basin, for example. There have certainly been no firm decisions on finalising any of those areas yet, in part because they also require consultations with state and territory governments, which we continue to undertake.</p> <p>Senator URQUHART: Are you able to provide me with a list of locations that are being canvassed?</p> <p>Mr Tregurtha: I don't have that list with me today, so we'd have to take that on notice.</p> <p>Senator URQUHART: If you could take that on notice, that would be great.</p>	41
41	SQ22-000255	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Peter Whish-Wilson	Recycling modernisation fund - number of applications made relating to compostable or commercial compostable packaging	<p>Senator WHISH-WILSON: ... My last question is in relation to the compostables component of the packaging targets. It's more a general question about compostables. They have been a significant growth item in the packaging industry, especially during COVID. A lot of small businesses feel like they're doing the right thing, having compostable packaging-especially for takeaway-yet the evidence seems to be that most of that is making its way to landfill because</p>	44

					<p>there's not necessarily the right compostable facilities and commercial composting facilities in place in many local government areas around the country. Are you able to tell me how many applications there have been under the Recycling Modernisation Fund, specifically in relation to compostable or commercial compostable packaging investments or co-investments?</p> <p>Ms Lynch: We'll take that on notice to provide you a more fulsome response. We may also need to touch here on the Food Waste for Healthy Soils Fund initiative that was announced by the government last year. That addresses, essentially, compostable products with a view to providing additional nutritive benefit for application in agricultural soils. That's quite separate to the Recycling Modernisation Fund. There has been quite a lot of work done across most jurisdictions to increase the level of recycling of food waste.</p> <p>Specifically on those oxo-degradable plastics, we do know that while there has been an overall decrease in the volume of some of the priority problematic and unnecessary single-use packaging materials in Australia, we know that there have been some increases in other materials on the market since 2018-19. For example, there has been an increase in oxo-degradable plastics of roughly 88 per cent over that period, as people are looking for alternatives to plastic and phasing out plastic products; however, that remains a relatively low proportion overall of packaging data. But we'd be very happy to take that question on notice.</p> <p>Senator WHISH-WILSON: Yes, if you could. I'd be keen to know what you do know about the latest stats, because the only data I could find on compostables is from 2018-19. Certainly the anecdotal evidence is most takeaway shops are now using them around the country, so it must be a significant increase. But I've also been talking to a lot of commercial composting facilities, and most of them don't accept that packaging. A few do but most don't because they find it problematic, with contamination being the major issue. It's obviously an important part of the national target as well, so anything you could provide to me on that would be very useful. Thank you.</p>	
42	SQ22-000254	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Peter Whish-Wilson	Correspondence between department and APCO	<p>Senator WHISH-WILSON: Just to be clear, you said 'we would be loathe to change those targets' as in, presumably, the department or the government. But you didn't set those targets, correct? They were set by the industry themselves-these are voluntary targets set by the industry?</p> <p>Mr Ryan: I may need to correct this down the track but, from recollection, the initial target of 100 per cent of packaging being placed on market being recyclable, compostable, was the original packaging target which I think came-</p> <p>Senator WHISH-WILSON: From COAG?</p>	44

					<p>Mr Ryan: Yes, from an environment ministers' meeting or a form of that. For the subsequent three, I think, the environment ministers wrote to APCO and asked them to look at some more specific targets than the ones we've got around recycled content and single-use plastics developed subsequent to that by industry.</p> <p>Senator WHISH-WILSON: On notice, could you provide me with details of that correspondence between the government and-</p> <p>Mr Ryan: Certainly.</p>	
43	SQ22-000281	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Anthony Chisholm	Review of the coregulatory arrangement under the National Environment Protection (Used Packaging Materials) Measure 2011	<p>1. Prior to the Departmental review conducted by MP Consulting titled, "Review of the coregulatory arrangement under the National Environment Protection (Used Packaging Materials) Measure 2011," is it correct that a Behavioural analysis was conducted by the Department to examine the effectiveness of the co-regulatory arrangement under the National Environment Protection (Used Packaging Materials) Measure 2011?</p> <p>2. Please provide the list of questions asked as part of that survey as well as the number and list of businesses that completed the survey.</p> <p>3. Please provide a copy of the results or analysis.</p> <p>4. What is the way forward for the Department given this review, "Review of the coregulatory arrangement under the National Environment Protection (Used Packaging Materials) Measure 2011," has identified serious areas of under-utilisation, free-riders and a reduced confidence in combatting packaging waste? "The Review has identified that key elements of the UPM NEPM have not been implemented or have not been operationalised effectively. This has created a lack of clarity for brand owners, enabled free-riders, reduced confidence in the scheme and meant that there is limited data available about the success of the co-regulatory arrangement,"</p>	Written