

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE – SENATOR ABETZ

Senator ABETZ: Professor Bekessy, I understand you were a witness for the Bob Brown case on the Wielangta forest and would have discussed your evidence with then Barrister Mortimer. Your evidence related to the modelling on the population viability of the wedge-tailed eagle in Tasmania. Since that case was overturned by the full Federal Court, are you aware of the number of eagle deaths in Tasmania by forestry operations, firstly; wind farms, secondly; and power transmission cables, thirdly?

Prof. Bekessy: I'm not aware of the exact numbers, sorry.

Senator ABETZ: If you do have access to that, it would be exceptionally helpful if you could provide that on notice.

RESPONSE: I'm not aware of any systematic monitoring data that I can access to provide an answer to this question. It would be excellent to better understand impacts on this critically endangered species, so I would highly recommend investment in a systematic monitoring program.

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Senator ABETZ: The question was: can you confirm that no species has gone extinct since the EPBC Act came into force by the forest industry?

Senator McKENZIE: It's a simple question.

CHAIR: I will ask both witnesses to take that precise question on notice. Senator Rice you have the call.

RESPONSE: Species extinction is almost always a complex process involving many interacting factors. Habitat loss and degradation including land clearance is typically a significant contributor. Invasive species and inappropriate fire regimes are also often involved. Forest harvesting contributes to threats and has been clearly implicated in significant species decline, including the greater glider and Leadbeater's possum. We strongly recommend that a detailed study be funded to investigate the relative contribution of the forestry sector, the agriculture sector and other sectors that place pressure on populations of threatened species.

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