



Auditor-General for Australia



18 September 2019

Mr Ted O'Brien
Chair
Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy

By email: Environment.Reps@aph.gov.au

Dear Mr O'Brien

Australian National Audit Office response to Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy Report *Cane toads on the march - Inquiry into controlling the spread of cane toads*

I am writing in relation to the recommendation directed to the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) contained in the Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy Report *Cane toads on the march - Inquiry into controlling the spread of cane toads*.

The report highlighted the role of the Department of the Environment and Energy in providing national coordination of efforts to control cane toads through overarching strategies, such as the threat abatement plan, and through individual threatened species or site-specific plans. These plans are intended to assist the Commonwealth to prioritise investment from broader biodiversity programs, and identify actions for implementation by state and territory governments, industry and other primary stakeholders. To have any impact, plans should be aligned with broader strategies, set out clear lines of responsibility, identify funding streams, include structured reporting on appropriate performance measures, and be supported by fit for purpose oversight and coordination arrangements.

In considering this recommendation, the ANAO met with the Department of the Environment and Energy and examined information provided by the department. The ANAO has used this information and the contents of the committee's report to consider potential audit approaches and scopes.

As noted by the Committee, the department's activities in relation to controlling the spread of cane toads are framed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). The department's administration of regulation under the EPBC Act was identified by the ANAO as a key area of risk in the Environment and Energy Portfolio. In July this year I commenced an audit into the department's administration of [Referrals, assessments and approvals of controlled actions under the EPBC Act](#), which is due to table in May 2020.

I note that the Committee has made a number of recommendations to the Department of Environment and Energy. The ANAO will monitor the department's responses to these recommendations, and broader issues relating to threat abatement plans. This will inform my consideration of future audit topics in the Environment and Energy Portfolio as part of the ANAO Annual Audit Work Program planning process.

Recommendation 9: The Committee recommends that prior to the expiry of the next review period of the cane toad threat abatement plan in around 2024, the Australian National Audit Office conduct a performance audit to ascertain whether the Department of the Environment and Energy has fulfilled the plan's requirements and any related statutory obligations.

ANAO Response:

This topic, and the broader administration of threat abatement plans and related sections of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, will be considered for potential future audit coverage as part of the ANAO Annual Audit Work Program planning.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Grant Hehir". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Grant Hehir