

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY: SENSITIVE

**Environment Standards Division
and
Office of Compliance**

Contacts:

ESD – James Tregurtha s22
OoC – Monica Collins s22

Week ending 17 November 2017

s22 - irrelevant to scope

s22 - irrelevant to scope

Queensland land clearing, Qld *GBR 13

s22 - irrelevant to scope

s22 - irrelevant to scope

Queensland land clearing, Qld *GBR

- The Department has received a number of projects involving land clearing for agriculture

s22 - irrelevant to scope

- Wombinoo Station (EPBC 2017/7903). The project involves clearing 2,742 ha to produce forage and grain crops for livestock feeding. The project site is located approximately 70 km inland of Tully in Northern Queensland, in the Herbert River catchment, approximately 200 km upstream of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. Vulnerable Greater Gliders have been observed on site and consideration will be given to impacts on the Great Barrier Reef. On 18 April 2017 the project was determined to be a controlled action and would be assessed using preliminary documentation for potential impacts on listed threatened species and the Great Barrier Reef. On 19 April 2017, the proponent was sent a request for further surveys for threatened species and an offset proposal.

s37(2)(b)

s22 - irrelevant to scope

s22 - irrelevant to scope

Far North Queensland clearing for high value agriculture, Qld

- In Queensland, between 2014 and 2015, the state government granted 59 permits to property owners to clear about 112,000 ha for agricultural development. Potential impacts to matters of national environmental significance were not part of the assessment undertaken by the Queensland Government before these permits were issued.
- The Department investigated the 59 permits for potential impacts on matters of national environmental significance. To date, three Queensland land holders have referred their agricultural developments for assessment (s22 - irrelevant to scope Wombinoos) and one additional agricultural development proposal (s22 - irrelevant to scope) has been deemed referred by the Minister.
- Two investigations are still ongoing.
- The Department has closed 57 of the investigations and no further action was taken for 49 of the permits.

s22 - irrelevant to scope

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Environment Standards Division and Office of Compliance

Contacts:

ESD – James Tregurtha s22

OoC – Monica Collins s22

Week ending 24 November 2017

s22

s22

Queensland land clearing, Qld *GBR 13

s22

s22

Queensland land clearing, Qld *GBR

- The Department has received a number of projects involving land clearing for agriculture.

s22

- Wombinoo Station (EPBC 2017/7903). The project involves clearing 2,742 ha to produce forage and grain crops for livestock feeding. The project site is located approximately 70 km inland of Tully in Northern Queensland, in the Herbert River catchment, approximately 200 km upstream of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. Vulnerable Greater Gliders have been observed on site and consideration will be given to impacts on the Great Barrier Reef. On 18 April 2017 the project was determined to be a controlled action and would be assessed using preliminary documentation for potential impacts on listed threatened species and the Great Barrier Reef. On 19 April 2017, the proponent was sent a request for further surveys for threatened species and an offset proposal.

s37(2)(b)

On 15 November 2017, the Department received the draft preliminary documentation. This documentation will be reviewed for adequacy before being published for public comment.

s22

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Environment Standards Division and Office of Compliance

Contacts:

ESD – James Tregurtha
OoC – Monica Collins

s22

Week ending 1 December 2017

s22

s22

Queensland land clearing, Qld *GBR 13

s22

s22

Queensland land clearing, Qld *GBR

- The Department has received a number of projects involving land clearing for agriculture.

s22

- Wombinoo Station (EPBC 2017/7903). The project involves clearing 2,742 ha to produce forage and grain crops for livestock feeding. The project site is located approximately 70 km inland of Tully in Northern Queensland, in the Herbert River catchment, approximately 200 km upstream of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. Vulnerable Greater Gliders have been observed on site and consideration will be given to impacts on the Great Barrier Reef. On 18 April 2017 the project was determined to be a controlled action and would be assessed using preliminary documentation for potential impacts on listed

threatened species and the Great Barrier Reef. On 19 April 2017, the proponent was sent a request for further surveys for threatened species and an offset proposal.

s37(2)(b)

On 15 November 2017, the Department received the draft preliminary documentation. The Department is preparing comments on the draft preliminary documentation

s22

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Environment Standards Division and Office of Compliance

Contacts:

ESD – James Tregurtha s22

OoC – Monica Collins s22

Week ending 8 December 2017

s22

s22

Queensland land clearing, Qld *GBR 15

s22

Queensland land clearing, Qld *GBR

- The Department has received a number of projects involving land clearing for agriculture.

s22

- Wombinoos Station (EPBC 2017/7903). The project involves clearing 2,742 ha to produce forage and grain crops for livestock feeding. The project site is located approximately 70 km inland of Tully in Northern Queensland, in the Herbert River catchment, approximately 200 km upstream of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. Vulnerable Greater Gliders have been observed on site and consideration will be given to impacts on the Great Barrier Reef. On 18 April 2017 the project was determined to be a controlled action and would be assessed using preliminary documentation for potential impacts on listed threatened species and the Great Barrier Reef. On 19 April 2017, the proponent was sent a request for further surveys for threatened species and an offset proposal.

s37(2)(b)

On 15 November 2017, the Department received the draft preliminary documentation. The Department is preparing comments on the draft preliminary documentation.

s22

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY: SENSITIVE

Environment Standards Division and Office of Compliance

Contacts:

ESD – James Tregurtha S22

OoC – Monica Collins S22

Week ending 15 December 2017

S22

s22

Queensland land clearing, Qld *GBR 14

s22

s22

Queensland land clearing, Qld ^{*GBR}

- The Department has received a number of projects involving land clearing for agriculture.

s22

- Wombinoo Station (EPBC 2017/7903). The project involves clearing 2,742 ha to produce forage and grain crops for livestock feeding. The project site is located approximately 70 km inland of Tully in Northern Queensland, in the Herbert River catchment, approximately 200 km upstream of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. Vulnerable Greater Gliders have been observed on site and consideration will be given to impacts on the Great Barrier Reef. On 18 April 2017 the project was determined to be a controlled action and would be assessed using preliminary documentation for potential impacts on listed threatened species and the Great Barrier Reef. On 19 April 2017, the proponent was sent a request for further surveys for threatened species and an offset proposal.

s37(2)(b)

s37(2)(b)

The Department provided comments on the draft preliminary documentation on 7 December 2017. The Department has received three freedom of information requests and several media enquiries relating to this project.

s22

From: s22
To:
Cc: [Media](#)
Subject: Illegal land clearing fact check [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]
Date: Wednesday, 22 November 2017 8:01:41 PM

Sorry for the delay s22 No concerns from the line area.

Cheers
s22

From: s22
Sent: Wednesday, 22 November 2017 2:55 PM
To: Media <Media@environment.gov.au>
Subject: FW: illegal land clearing - federal approval breach [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Can u get the below from s22 please checked?

From: s22
Sent: Wednesday, 22 November 2017 2:51 PM
To: s22 @environment.gov.au>
Cc: s22 @environment.gov.au>
Subject: RE: illegal land clearing - federal approval breach [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Perhaps have this fact checked. Monica Collins and James Barker are the appropriate ASs:

The Department of the Environment and Energy is actively examining certain allegations regarding land clearing in north Queensland. As such, it would not would not be appropriate for the Minister to comment.

We would be happy to receive further questions in writing.

From: s22
Sent: Wednesday, 22 November 2017 1:07 PM
To: s22 @environment.gov.au>
Subject: FW: illegal land clearing - federal approval breach [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Hi s22

Are any of these land clearing activities under investigation or in the courts? s47C
s47C

s22

From: George Roberts [mailto:Roberts.George@abc.net.au]
Sent: Wednesday, 22 November 2017 10:47 AM
To: s22 @environment.gov.au>; s22 @environment.gov.au>
Subject: illegal land clearing - federal approval breach

Hello s22,

Please could I make a request to interview the Environment Minister about some alleged illegal land clearing in North Queensland, in breach of federal approval requirements.

I understand lawyers on behalf of the Wilderness Society have written to the Minister about the alleged illegal clearing on Wombinoo Station. We also have footage and pictures of the areas cleared last month.

The Federal Government is yet to make a decision about whether Wombinoo Station is approved to clear some of this area, despite an environmental assessment conducted in 2016.

Can we please arrange an interview with the minister?

Regards,

George Roberts

ABC
George Roberts
Journalist, ABC News Queensland
P



<http://abc.net.au/corp/enter/img/brandsignature.jpg>

-

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Sent with Good (www.good.com)

From: [Media](#)
To: s22
Cc: [Media](#)
Subject: RE: illegal land clearing - federal approval breach [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]
Date: Thursday, 23 November 2017 3:16:45 PM

Hi s22

Draft responses for the ABC.

- The Queensland Government is the primary regulator for land clearing in Queensland.
- The Australian Government's role in regulating land clearing in Queensland is limited to regulating instances where land clearing is likely to significantly impact defined matters of national environmental significance such as listed threatened species or the Great Barrier Reef.
- Actions which are likely to have a significant impact on matters of national environmental significance, which may include land clearing proposals, must be referred to the Department of the Environment and Energy for approval under the EPBC Act.
- The Department monitors compliance with, and detects potential contraventions of, the EPBC Act by analysing information from sources such as the general public, industry, non-government organisations, other government agencies, and our compliance monitoring activity.
- The Department of the Environment and Energy is actively examining certain allegations regarding land clearing in north Queensland. As such, it would not be appropriate for the Minister to comment.

Cheers

s22

From: s22
Sent: Thursday, 23 November 2017 12:04 PM
To: Media <Media@environment.gov.au>
Cc: s22 @environment.gov.au; s22 @environment.gov.au
Subject: FW: illegal land clearing - federal approval breach [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Team

Can I please get some draft responses to these questions ASAP. This is quite urgent from my point of view.

Cheers

s22

From: George Roberts [<mailto:Roberts.George@abc.net.au>]
Sent: Thursday, 23 November 2017 11:33 AM
To: s22 @environment.gov.au>
Cc: s22 @environment.gov.au>
Subject: RE: illegal land clearing - federal approval breach

Hi s22

Here are the questions:

What is the government doing to stop illegal land clearing?

Satellite images and drone footage show clearing has gone ahead on Wombinoo Station, even though the Federal Government has not given the required approval. What is the department doing about this?

Given this is the third station in two years suspected of illegal land clearing, are tougher laws, sanctions or action needed?

Experts say this kind of clearing must stop because koalas get killed and maimed in the process, which has no regard for animal welfare. What does the Minister think of this?

Thanks s22

Regards,

George

From: s22 [redacted] <[\[redacted\]@environment.gov.au](mailto:[redacted]@environment.gov.au)>
Sent: Wednesday, 22 November 2017 6:12 PM
To: George Roberts <Roberts.George@abc.net.au>
Cc: s22 [redacted] <[\[redacted\]@environment.gov.au](mailto:[redacted]@environment.gov.au)>
Subject: Re: illegal land clearing - federal approval breach

Hi George

Sorry for the delay in coming back to you. Been one of those days.

We can't really do an interview as the Department is looking into some allegations and it wouldn't be appropriate for us to do an interview. But to help you out happy to take some questions in writing and look at see how we can respond.

Cheers

s22

s22

Office of The Hon. Josh Frydenberg MP
Minister for the Environment and Energy | Federal Member for Kooyong

E: s22 [redacted] <[\[redacted\]@environment.gov.au](mailto:[redacted]@environment.gov.au)>

T: [+612 6277 7920](tel:+61262777920)

M: [+612 6277 7920](tel:+61262777920)

On 22 Nov 2017, at 10:47 am, George Roberts <Roberts.George@abc.net.au> wrote:

Hello **s22**

Please could I make a request to interview the Environment Minister about some alleged illegal land clearing in North Queensland, in breach of federal approval requirements.

I understand lawyers on behalf of the Wilderness Society have written to the Minister about the alleged illegal clearing on Wombinoo Station. We also have footage and pictures of the areas cleared last month.

The Federal Government is yet to make a decision about whether Wombinoo Station is approved to clear some of this area, despite an environmental assessment conducted in 2016.

Can we please arrange an interview with the minister?

Regards,

George Roberts

[<image001.gif>](#) George Roberts
Journalist, ABC News Queensland

P **s47F** E
M

[<image002.jpg>](#)

-

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From: [Collins, Monica](#)
To: s22; [Barker, James](#)
Cc: s22; [Media](#)
Subject: RE: MEDIA RESPONSE: Claims of illegal clearing at Wombinoo [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]
Date: Thursday, 23 November 2017 4:32:06 PM
Attachments: [image001.jpg](#)
[image002.jpg](#)
[image003.jpg](#)
[image004.jpg](#)

s22

From: s22
Sent: Thursday, 23 November 2017 4:05 PM
To: Media <Media@environment.gov.au>
Cc: s22; s22@environment.gov.au; s22
s22@environment.gov.au
Subject: RE: MEDIA RESPONSE: Claims of illegal clearing at Wombinoo [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Hi team,

s47C

- Proposed land clearing at Wombinoo has been determined to be a 'controlled action' and will therefore undergo a comprehensive environmental assessment under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. This decision was made because of potential impacts the action could have on listed threatened species and the Great Barrier Reef. The environmental assessment will allow for potential environmental impacts to be considered and addressed before any action commences. There will be further opportunities for public consultation during the assessment process.
- The Department of the Environment and Energy is actively examining certain allegations regarding land clearing in north Queensland. As such, it would not be appropriate to comment any further.

Thanks,

s22

From: Media

Sent: Thursday, 23 November 2017 3:22 PM

To: s22 <[redacted]@environment.gov.au>; s22 <[redacted]@environment.gov.au>

Cc: s22 <[redacted]@environment.gov.au>; Media <Media@environment.gov.au>

Subject: MEDIA RESPONSE: Claims of illegal clearing at Wombinoo [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Hi team,

Proposed response for Michael Slezak's first three questions.

1. Is the department aware of the new clearing?
2. Has the department approved the application for clearing at Wombinoo?
3. What action is the department taking in relation to the allegations that this clearing has been taken unlawfully, without EPBC approval?

s47C

- The Department of the Environment and Energy is actively examining certain allegations regarding land clearing in north Queensland. As such, it would not be appropriate to comment any further.

The other responses will be sent through to you tomorrow in line with his deadline request. Let me know if you have any concerns with this lot.

Cheers

s22

From: Michael Slezak [<mailto:michael.slezak@guardian.co.uk>]
Sent: Thursday, 23 November 2017 1:12 PM
To: Media <Media@environment.gov.au>
Subject: Claims of illegal clearing at Wombinoo

Hi there,

I'm writing a story today about footage of clearing that has occurred at Wombinoo in Queensland. I have two sets of questions, one with a deadline of **today at 4pm** and one tomorrow at 3pm.

The property was referred to under the EPBC in 2016 after some initial clearing. The result of that was the finding that further clearing required EPBC approval.

The reference for the decisions is [2017/7903](#)

It appears the federal government is still considering an application for further clearing, but no decision has been made public. Despite that, more clearing and burning of felled trees has occurred. It appears 60 ha has been cleared, half of that in a creek bed.

Photographs are attached.

Here are my questions with a firm **4pm deadline today (Thursday)**:

1. Is the department aware of the new clearing?
2. Has the department approved the application for clearing at Wombinoo?
3. What action is the department taking in relation to the allegations that this clearing has been taken unlawfully, without EPBC approval?

Further questions with a deadline of **3pm tomorrow (Friday)**:

4. Why did the ecological assessment of clearing on the property not consider impacts on the Great Barrier Reef? Here is the assessment: http://epbcnotices.environment.gov.au/_entity/annotation/56fa064f-4a09-e711-a71a-005056ba00a8/a71d58ad-4cba-48b6-8dab-f3091fc31cd5?t=1511399992376
5. Why did the Protected Matters Report say there were no potential impacts of the clearing on the Great Barrier Reef? http://epbcnotices.environment.gov.au/_entity/annotation/76ed3738-4a09-e711-a71a-005056ba00a8/a71d58ad-4cba-48b6-8dab-f3091fc31cd5?t=1511399992376

Regards,
Michael

--

Michael Slezak
Environment Reporter

The Guardian | Australia

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m: +61 s47F

michael.slezak@theguardian.com



theguardian.com/au

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From: [Collins, Monica](#)
To: s22
Cc: [Pratt, Finn](#); [Knudson, Dean](#); s22; [Office of Compliance](#); s22
Subject: Background points for Wombinoo [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]
Date: Thursday, 30 November 2017 5:29:15 PM
Importance: High

Hi s22

Background points below as requested.

Regards

Monica

On 17 November 2017, the Department received a letter from the Environment Defenders Office on behalf of The Wilderness Society alleging that additional clearing had occurred on Wombinoo Station.

On 23 November 2017 the ABC reported: "ABC News understands Wombinoo Station, south west of Cairns, is under federal investigation for clearing land without approval".

The Department has made enquiries into the allegation and has determined that no further action is necessary.

On 28 November 2017 it was reported by various outlets that property at Wombinoo Station had been defaced as a result of the ABC's reports.

<http://www.queenslandcountrylife.com.au/story/5087232/no-comment-from-abc-over-illegal-clearing-claims/?cs=4698>

In December 2015, Wombinoo Station, s22 was the subject of enquiries to determine whether the EPBC Act would apply to land clearing associated with a high value agriculture permits issued by the Queensland government. s37(2)(b)

s37(2)(b)

s37(2)(b) The Department has encouraged the land owner to discuss any further proposed land clearing with the Department.

On 15 March 2017, Wombinoo Station submitted a referral under the EPBC Act. On 18 April 2017, the proposal was determined to be a controlled due to the likely impacts to nationally protected threatened species and the Great Barrier Reef. The proposal is now undergoing assessment.

Monica Collins

Chief Compliance Officer

Office of Compliance

Department of the Environment and Energy

P: 02 6274 2760

M: s22

From: [Media](#)
To: s22 [redacted]; [Media](#)
Cc: s22 [redacted]
Subject: RE: Land clearing - FYI [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]
Date: Wednesday, 6 December 2017 7:31:09 AM

Thanks for letting us know.

s22 [redacted]

From: s22 [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, 5 December 2017 2:57 PM
To: Media <Media@environment.gov.au>
Cc: s22 [redacted]@environment.gov.au>
Subject: Land clearing - FYI [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

FYI – the Minister had provided the following to the Cairns Post

“I am advised the Jonsson Family are highly respected in the local community for their agricultural enterprise, ‘Wombinoo Station’.”

“Allegations of illegal land clearing, made against them by the Wilderness Society and reported by the ABC on 23 November 2017, were looked at by my department and dismissed as unfounded.”

“The Jonsson family are complying with their obligations under federal environmental law and a proposal for future clearing is being assessed by the department.”

s22 [redacted]

Office of The Hon. Josh Frydenberg MP
Minister for the Environment and Energy | Federal Member for Kooyong
E s22 [redacted]@environment.gov.au
T: +612 6277 7920
M: +61 s22 [redacted]

s22

From: s22
Sent: Wednesday, 6 December 2017 5:50 PM
To: Media
Cc: s22
Subject: RE: Wombinoo [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Yes please, thanks.

From: Media
Sent: Wednesday, 6 December 2017 5:49 PM
To: s22 @environment.gov.au
Cc: s22 @environment.gov.au; Media <Media@environment.gov.au>
Subject: Wombinoo [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Hi s22

The line area/Monica Collins have said the response is fine. Would you like me to provide this to George Roberts, ABC?

Regards,

s22 | Media
Media and Strategic Communications
Communications, Innovation and Partnership Branch
Department of the Environment and Energy
P: 02 6274 s22
s22@environment.gov.au

Note to media: Unless otherwise agreed, the information contained in this email is for background and is not for attribution.



The Department of the Environment acknowledges the traditional owners of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures and to their elders both past and present.

From: s22
Sent: Wednesday, 6 December 2017 12:26 PM
To: Media <Media@environment.gov.au>
Subject: [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1WfXVH_oUP3CE506Vu3YnGfv12KS36C0C3bFAs_aXJeY/edit?usp=sharing

s22
Office of The Hon. Josh Frydenberg MP
Minister for the Environment and Energy | Federal Member for Kooyong
E s22 [environment.gov.au](mailto:s22@environment.gov.au)
T: +612 6277 7920
M: +s22

Draft as: 12:24pm Last edited by s22

The following can be attributed to a spokesperson for the Department of Environment and Energy:

- The Department has never taken compliance action against Wombinoo Station.
- In 2016 the Department assessed Wombinoo Station along with 53 other properties that held high value agricultural permits issued by the Queensland Government to determine if the EPBC Act would apply to land clearing associated with these permits. The Department assessment at that time found that no investigation or compliance action was needed.
- Allegations of illegal land clearing, made against Wombinoo Station by the Wilderness Society and reported by the ABC on 23 November 2017, were looked at by the Department and dismissed as unfounded. Consequently no investigation or compliance action was needed.
- The Department believes that no land clearing has commenced in relation to EPBC referral 2017/7903

From: s22
To: [Media](#)
Cc: s22
Subject: RE: URGENT: Questions re Wombinoo Station [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]
Date: Thursday, 7 December 2017 8:31:26 AM
Attachments: [image001.jpg](#)
[image002.jpg](#)
[image003.jpg](#)
[image004.jpg](#)

- [Point him back to:](#) Allegations of illegal land clearing, made against Wombinoo Station by the Wilderness Society and reported by the ABC on 23 November 2017, were looked at by the Department and dismissed as unfounded. Consequently no investigation or compliance action was needed.

From: Media
Sent: Thursday, 7 December 2017 8:21 AM
To: s22 <[redacted]@environment.gov.au>
Cc: Media <Media@environment.gov.au>; s22 <[redacted]@environment.gov.au>
Subject: FW: URGENT: Questions re Wombinoo Station [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Hi s22

George Roberts has come back. How would you like to proceed?

Regards,

s22 | **Media**
Media and Strategic Communications
Communications, Innovation and Partnership Branch
Department of the Environment and Energy
P: 02 6274 s22 <[redacted]@environment.gov.au>

Note to media: Unless otherwise agreed, the information contained in this email is for background and is not for attribution.



The Department of the Environment acknowledges the traditional owners of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures and to their elders both past and present.

From: George Roberts [<mailto:Roberts.George@abc.net.au>]
Sent: Wednesday, 6 December 2017 6:59 PM
To: Media <Media@environment.gov.au>
Cc: Media <Media@environment.gov.au>
Subject: Re: URGENT: Questions re Wombinoo Station [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Thanks for your reply.

Given the department was already investigating Wombinoo prior to the ABC report on 23/11/2017, please can you provide answers to these three questions provided earlier today:

1. WHEN DID THIS INVESTIGATION CONCLUDE?
2. GIVEN THE MINISTER'S OFFICE INFORMED THE ABC ON THE 22ND AND 23RD OF NOVEMBER, THAT WOMBINOO STATION WAS BEING INVESTIGATED BY THE DEPARTMENT, WHEN WAS THE MINISTER INFORMED THAT INVESTIGATION HAD BEEN COMPLETED?
3. WHEN WAS THE MINISTER INFORMED OF THE RESULT OF THE INVESTIGATION?

Regards,

George

George Roberts
ABC News Journalist
m: s47F

From: Media <Media@environment.gov.au>
Sent: Wednesday, December 6, 2017 4:54:23 PM
To: George Roberts
Cc: Media
Subject: RE: URGENT: Questions re Wombinoo Station [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Hello George,

Thank you for your enquiry. If required, the following can be attributed to a spokesperson for the Department of the Environment and Energy.

- The Department has never taken compliance action against Wombinoo Station.
- In 2016 the Department assessed Wombinoo Station along with 53 other properties that held high value agricultural permits issued by the Queensland Government to determine if the EPBC Act would apply to land clearing associated with these permits. The Department assessment at that time found that no investigation or compliance action was needed.
- Allegations of illegal land clearing, made against Wombinoo Station by the Wilderness Society and reported by the ABC on 23 November 2017, were looked at by the Department and dismissed as unfounded. Consequently no investigation or compliance action was needed.
- The Department believes that no land clearing has commenced in relation to EPBC referral 2017/7903

Regards,

Media Team

Policy and Communications Branch
Department of the Environment and Energy
GPO Box 787, CANBERRA ACT 2601



From: George Roberts [<mailto:Roberts.George@abc.net.au>]

Sent: Wednesday, 6 December 2017 10:10 AM

To: Media <Media@environment.gov.au>

Subject: URGENT: Questions re Wombinoo Station

Hello,

Please can we get an urgent response to these questions? There's a discrepancy between the Minister's statement and that of the Department.

WE REFER TO THE STATEMENTS PROVIDED BY THE DEPARTMENT TO CHARLIE MCKILLOP OF THE ABC ON 27 NOVEMBER 2017 AND TO THE STATEMENT PROVIDED BY THE MINISTER'S OFFICE ON 4 DECEMBER 2017 CONCERNING WOMBINOO STATION, COPIES OF WHICH ARE ATTACHED.

1. CAN YOU PLEASE CLARIFY WHETHER YOUR INVESTIGATION OF WOMBINOO STATION RELATED TO CLEARING CONDUCTED IN 2015/2016 OR CLEARING ALLEGEDLY UNDERTAKEN IN 2017?
2. WHEN DID THIS INVESTIGATION CONCLUDE?
3. GIVEN THE MINISTER'S OFFICE INFORMED THE ABC ON THE 22ND AND 23RD OF NOVEMBER, THAT WOMBINOO STATION WAS BEING INVESTIGATED BY THE DEPARTMENT, WHEN WAS THE MINISTER INFORMED THAT INVESTIGATION HAD BEEN COMPLETED?
4. WHEN WAS THE MINISTER INFORMED OF THE RESULT OF THE INVESTIGATION?
5. WHAT WERE THE FINDINGS OF THE INVESTIGATION IN REGARD TO CLEARING OF VEGETATION?

6. THE STATEMENT FROM THE DEPARTMENT'S MEDIA TEAM ON MONDAY 27 NOVEMBER STATES THAT "IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE DEPARTMENT'S COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT POLICY, AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THE ALLEGED OFFENCE, NO FURTHER COMPLIANCE ACTION IS WARRANTED."

7. IN THE MINISTER'S STATEMENT DATED DEC 4, MR FRYDENBERG SAID "ALLEGATIONS BY THE ABC WERE LOOKED AT BY MY DEPARTMENT AND DISMISSED AS UNFOUNDED."

8. DID THE DEPARTMENT'S INVESTIGATION CONCLUDE THAT CLAIMS OF UNAUTHORISED CLEARING AT WOMBINOO WERE WITHOUT FOUNDATION OR SIMPLY THAT NO COMPLIANCE ACTION WAS WARRANTED?

9. THE DEPARTMENT'S STATEMENT REFERS TO "FURTHER" COMPLIANCE ACTION. HAS THERE BEEN PRIOR COMPLIANCE ACTION? IF SO WHEN?

10. HAS AN INVESTIGATION BEEN CONDUCTED INTO MATTERS RAISED BY THE ABC IN NEWS REPORTS ABOUT WOMBINOO STATION BROADCAST IN LATE NOVEMBER 2017? IF SO, WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME OF THAT INVESTIGATION?

11. DOES THE ASSERTION IN DEPARTMENT'S STATEMENT OF 27 NOVEMBER 2017 THAT "NO WORK HAS COMMENCED ON THE ACTION REFERRED FOR ASSESSMENT UNDER THE EPBC ACT" MEAN THAT THE DEPARTMENT HAS NOT COMMENCED WORK ON THE APPLICATION OR THAT THE LANDHOLDER HAS NOT COMMENCED WORK ON THE RELEVANT PROJECT?

Regards,

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