

MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, HERITAGE AND THE ARTS

(Senate Question No. 396)

Senator Siewert asked the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, upon notice, on 7 April 2008: With reference to the strategic assessment for a gas processing hub in the Kimberley region in Western Australia which is being jointly conducted by the Federal Government and the Western Australian Government:

- (1) Can the Minister assess the proposed gas processing facility on the Maret Islands, by the Japanese company INPEX, under section 146 of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, as amended in 2006, while the strategic assessment is being undertaken;
- (2) If the assessment can be made, is it the Minister's intention to do so; if so, why; if not, why not.
- (3) Will the Government conduct an environmental impact statement assessment, under the Act, of the proposals by INPEX and Woodside.
- (4) Are INPEX and/or Woodside, or their joint venture partners, funding the strategic assessment, in part, fully or indirectly through mining offsets between the proponents and the Western Australian Government or the Federal Government.
- (5) What mining or petroleum offset packages are currently being negotiated in relation to the offshore oil and gas industry in Western Australia.

Senator Wong – The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts has provided the following answer to the honourable senator's question:

- (1&2) Inpex's proposal for the Maret Islands is currently being assessed under Part 9 of the EPBC Act.

The strategic assessment of the Kimberley region currently being undertaken with the Western Australian Government does not affect the ability of the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts to consider individual projects under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). Inpex's proposal will be assessed on its own merits in accordance with the legislation.

- (3) The Inpex and Woodside Energy Ltd proposals are being assessed under Part 9 of the EPBC Act at the level of Environmental Impact Statement.
- (4) The Kimberley Strategic Assessment is a government initiative being solely funded by the Australian and Western Australian Governments.
- (5) The Commonwealth is not currently involved in any negotiations in relation to environmental offsets for proposals in the Kimberley region.