

Senator Thorpe Questions

**1. How does the MDBA interpret its obligations under the new Water Act 2007 s50(4A) requirements?**

Response:

The Authority's task is to consider and report on those matters which are set out in s50(4), that is:

- a. matters relevant to Indigenous people in relation to the management of Basin water resources including, but not limited to, the extent to which Basin water resources could be managed so as to improve the spiritual, environmental, cultural, social and economic conditions of Indigenous people;
- b. the extent to which the Basin Plan, including requirements relating to water resource plans:

(i) recognises and protects the interests of Indigenous people; and

(ii) supports opportunities for Indigenous people to participate in determining and developing priorities and strategies for the development or use of Basin water resources, including opportunities for participation that incorporates free, prior and informed consent;

This is what we'll do.

**2. What do these s50(4A) obligations require in terms of supporting and resourcing relevant First Nations organisations to participate in a way that supports self-determination and free, prior and informed consent (in accordance with Articles 3, 18 and 19 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples)?**

Response:

Section 50(4A) does not require the provision of funding.

That said, the MDBA is committed to deeply engaging with First Nations peoples as we prepare for and conduct the Basin Plan Review in 2026. We are aiming for inclusion and equity, adopting an engagement approach that provides the opportunity for all Nations of the Basin to directly participate and express their views.

**3. How much funding has the MDBA been provided to conduct the Basin Plan Review, and how much of that funding has been, or will be, provided directly to First Nations self-determined representative organisations to work in partnership and shared decision making with the MDBA throughout the Review?**

Response:

The Budget for the Basin Plan Review is \$103 million over four years.

Of that, \$8.6 million is allocated to enable engagement with First Nations groups and people, to understand their knowledge, and to develop and test policy responses in accordance with the Authority's commitment.

**4. Question on 15 WRPs.**

Response:

I am both keen to assist the Committee, and mindful of my responsibilities in relation to litigation that remains on foot, so while I can point you to the MDBA website which contains all materials provided to the Minister for each water resource plan, I am unwilling to go into further detail where there is a clear link to matters before the court.

Link: [List of state water resource plans | Murray-Darling Basin Authority](#)