



Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee
Additional Estimates 2024-25
Friday, 28 February 2025
Daily summary

The committee met from 9.00am until 3.28pm.

The committee called the Cross Portfolio Murray Darling Basin Plan matters, discussing the following topics:

Inspector-General of Water Compliance

- Inquiry into the Northern Basin Toolkit;
- Accreditation of New South Wales water resource plans, including the Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN) Federal Court challenge to the Minister's decision to accredit the NSW Fractured Rock Water Resource Plan;
- Audit into the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water's (DCCEEW) controls supporting compliance with the Basin Plan;
- The effectiveness of new rules on illegal water trading;
- New regulatory regime for the water market, including new powers granted by the Water Amendment (Restoring Our Rivers) Act;
- Inspector-General's role in the upcoming review of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan;
- Revision of the Australian Standard for non-urban water meters (AS4747-2025); and
- Different regulators for the enforcement of water laws across Australian state jurisdictions.

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water – Program 4.1: water policy, Murray Darling Basin Authority, Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder

- Community concerns about algae and avian flu risk at the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth;
- First Nations engagement by the Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) in preparation for the 2026 review of the Basin Plan;
- Update on the Resilient Rivers Water Infrastructure Program;
- Update on Expression of interest (EOI) process for water purchasing entitlements in the Southern Connected Basin;
- Assessment of potential socio-economic impacts of water purchasing, including impacts on agriculture;
- Funding stream for First Nations water supplies;
- Basin Plan evaluation including introduction of socio-economic assessment;
- Sustainable Rivers Audit, its incorporation into the Basin Plan evaluation and modelling;
- Usage of Australian Bureau of Statistics and Australian Taxation Office data sets to get a broader understanding of social and economic condition of the Basin;
- Sustainable Communities Program and funding allocation to jurisdictions;
- Update on Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism projects;
- Status of water contract tenders during the caretaker period;
- Constraints roadmap – negotiation for easements between government and landowners;

- Environmental conditions at Coorong lagoon;
- Possible extraction of river water for hydrogen and pumped hydro projects;
- National Water Agreement: Aspects carried over from the 2004 National Water Initiative and other National Water Grid projects; and
- Aboriginal Water Entitlement Program.

This concludes Additional Estimates 2024-25 for the Environment and Communications Legislation Committee.

Please contact the secretariat on (02) 6277 3526 or ec.sen@aph.gov.au if you have any questions.