

## **Question on notice no. 411**

**Portfolio question number: SQ23-001131**

### **2023-24 Budget estimates**

#### **Environment and Communications Committee, Cross Portfolio Murray-Darling Basin Plan matters**

**Senator Ross Cadell:** asked the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water on 26 May 2023—

Senator CADELL: .... How many and which reviews, audits or inquiries are currently underway or are scheduled to get underway over the next two years for each water agency? There seem to be a lot.

Mr McConville: In the context of the MDBA, the principal piece of review is the review of the Basin Plan. That is required to be completed in 2026, but work on that review is already underway. In 2025, the MDBA will conduct an evaluation, which is in effect a five-yearly requirement. That is a rear-looking assessment of the performance and execution of the Basin Plan. Mention has been made of the Productivity Commission's review of the MDBA's Basin Plan, which is underway at present. The authority is also undertaking a non-statutory requirement process of what we call the 'basin outlook', which will also be in 2025.

Mr Fredericks: In the same spirit, I'll ask Ms O'Connell to give a couple of the key reviews, and we will take the remainder on notice.

Senator CADELL: Thank you.

Ms O'Connell: It is an area where there are extensive reviews. There are two Productivity Commission reviews. One just kicked off, I think earlier this month, which is a Productivity Commission review. That is a statutory review; it has kicked off and is underway. Its terms of reference are public, on their website, and it's seeking submissions. There's also a review of the inspector-general's role, functions and powers. There's a review of the Water Act. That, too, is a statutory review. They're the major reviews, along with the one that Mr McConville has spoken about: the whole review of the plan. Within that, there are quite a number of extensive minor or next-level types of reviews that are underway or planned or have been conducted. So I'd just ask: are you talking about those high-level ones? Are you comfortable with that?

Mr Fredericks: We can take that on notice.

Senator CADELL: My feeling is that we are always so looking in the mirror at what we're doing and how we're doing it; are we ever doing anything else? There seem to be a lot of reviews.

Ms O'Connell: There are.

**Answer —**

Please see answer attached.

**Environment and Communications**  
Answers to questions on notice  
**Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water Portfolio**

**Question No:** SQ23-001131  
**Hearing:** Budget Estimates  
**Outcome:** Outcome 4  
**Division/Agency:** Water Policy Division  
**Topic:** Reviews, audits, or inquiries of water agencies  
**Hansard Page:** 16  
**Question Date:** 26 May 2023  
**Question Type:** Spoken

**Senator Cadell asked:**

Senator CADELL: .... How many and which reviews, audits or inquiries are currently underway or are scheduled to get underway over the next two years for each water agency? There seem to be a lot.

Mr McConville: In the context of the MDBA, the principal piece of review is the review of the Basin Plan. That is required to be completed in 2026, but work on that review is already underway. In 2025, the MDBA will conduct an evaluation, which is in effect a five-yearly requirement. That is a rear-looking assessment of the performance and execution of the Basin Plan. Mention has been made of the Productivity Commission's review of the MDBA's Basin Plan, which is underway at present. The authority is also undertaking a non-statutory requirement process of what we call the 'basin outlook', which will also be in 2025.

Mr Fredericks: In the same spirit, I'll ask Ms O'Connell to give a couple of the key reviews, and we will take the remainder on notice.

Senator CADELL: Thank you.

Ms O'Connell: It is an area where there are extensive reviews. There are two Productivity Commission reviews. One just kicked off, I think earlier this month, which is a Productivity Commission review. That is a statutory review; it has kicked off and is underway. Its terms of reference are public, on their website, and it's seeking submissions. There's also a review of the inspector-general's role, functions and powers. There's a review of the Water Act. That, too, is a statutory review. They're the major reviews, along with the one that Mr McConville has spoken about: the whole review of the plan. Within that, there are quite a number of extensive minor or next-level types of reviews that are underway or planned or have been conducted. So I'd just ask: are you talking about those high-level ones? Are you comfortable with that?

Mr Fredericks: We can take that on notice.

Senator CADELL: My feeling is that we are always so looking in the mirror at what we're doing and how we're doing it; are we ever doing anything else? There seem to be a lot of reviews.

Ms O'Connell: There are.

Senator CADELL: I'm sure that you will be required to take this on notice. With the panel members or commissioners going through and doing these reviews, audits or anything like that, can I get a list of any who have previously worked for any of the Commonwealth water agencies?

Mr Fredericks: We can take that on notice for all agencies.

Ms O'Connell: We can take that on notice.

**Answer:**

The below are significant Commonwealth water reviews, audits and inquiries currently underway or scheduled to commence in the next 2 years.

*Table 1. Current and planned Commonwealth water reviews, audits, and inquiries*

<b>Title of review/audit/inquiry</b>	<b>Status</b>
2025 Basin Plan Evaluation/Outlook	Underway
2026 Basin Plan Review	Preparation for review
Productivity Commission- Murray-Darling Basin Plan: Implementation Review 2023	Underway
Independent Review of the Event Based Mechanism in the Lower Balonne	Underway
Audit into the management of groundwater in the Goulburn-Murray Water Resource Plan Area	Underway
Audit into DCCEEW Controls for Managing Water Announcements	Underway
Sustainable Rivers Audit	Underway
Independent review of Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder Trading Framework	Not yet commenced
Review of Murray-Darling Basin Compliance Compact 2018	Not yet commenced
River Murray Water Quality 2022-2023 Blackwater Event Review	Not yet commenced
Recent Flood Review and River Murray System Resilience Review	Not yet commenced
Independent review of the Inspector-General of Water Compliance's first year of operation.	Not yet commenced
Statutory review of the role of the Inspector General Water Compliance	Not yet commenced
Review of the <i>Water Act 2007</i>	Not yet commenced
Independent review of Water Science and Research	Ongoing
5 year review of the Great Artesian Basin Strategic Management Plan, Heads of Agreement and Programs	Not yet commenced
Five year review of Lake Eyre Basin Intergovernmental Agreement Act 2001, including Policies and Strategies	Not yet commenced
Review of the Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards (WELS) cost recovery arrangement	Not yet commenced
Fourth Independent Review of the Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards (WELS) scheme and Intergovernmental Agreement	Not yet commenced
Productivity Commission; Triennial National Water Initiative	Not yet commenced