

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications  
Legislation Committee**  
Answers to questions on notice  
**Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities portfolio**  
Additional Budget Estimates, February 2012

**Program: Division or Agency:** 4: MDBA **Question No:** 136  
**Topic:** Ms Gibbs – new report  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question:** Written

**Senator Joyce asked:**

In the ABC report of 25 January, 2011, Ms Gibbs was quoted as saying:

‘I think I was given a new report that addressed some of my own concerns when we were in Mildura last week, so it’s a moving process.’

1. What is this new report and in what way does it address Ms Gibbs concerns?

**Answer:**

1. Ms Gibbs was referring to a draft report ‘Hydrologic modelling to inform the proposed Basin Plan: Methods and results’.

The final report has been available from the Authority’s website (<http://www.mdba.gov.au/draft-basin-plan/science-draft-basin-plan>) since Friday, 17 February 2012.

This report provides detail on the modelling that underpins the draft Basin Plan.

## Transcript

Station: ABC GOULBURN MURRAY      Date: 25/01/2012  
 Program: RURAL REPORT              Time: 06:49 AM  
 Compere: LAURISSA SMITH            Summary ID: W00047205113  
 Item: INTERVIEW WITH MURRAY DARLING BASIN AUTHORITY  
 BOARD MEMBER DIANA GIBBS.  
 INTERVIEWEE: DIANA GIBBS, MURRAY DARLING BASIN  
 AUTHORITY

Audience:	Male 16+ N/A	Female 16+ N/A	All people N/A
LAURISSA SMITH:			Well, switching to water now, and from next week the Murray Darling Basin Authority will hit the road again to hear from communities about its draft plan. It's part of a 20 week consultation period, when people are also encouraged to offer a written submission on how the plan will affect them.  Moyra Shields spoke to economist and authority board member Diana Gibbs.
DIANA GIBBS:			Speaking personally, I think the small meetings - what we call the round tables - are very, very effective. It's a very effective dialogue of the board having the opportunity to listen to people's issues first hand and respond to them.  The public meetings are also an essential part, but there really isn't an effective dialogue there. People are venting their spleen. We hear their concerns, but the smaller round table meetings are, I think, a

much more effective way of resolving some of these issues.

MOYRA SHIELDS: Do you see the final plan changing much from the draft as a result of the sort of consultations you've been involved in so far?

DIANA GIBBS: It will certainly change; whether that's a lot or a little, I wouldn't know at this stage. But I think that one of the benefits of this process is that we've put out a draft plan, and I think it is a very good start point, but as more information becomes available, as we have an opportunity to sit down and talk with the stakeholders, there's always room and scope to change that plan.

MOYRA SHIELDS: How do you respond to the Wentworth Group saying that there isn't enough information in the draft plan to allow for an informed decision on future management of the basin? And I think there's particular criticism about the lack of an environmental watering plan.

DIANA GIBBS: Yes. Well, of course everybody's entitled to their view. The Wentworth Group is another lobby group, as are National Farmers or the Irrigators Council, and we welcome their submission.

However, having looked at what they've had to say - and I have indeed read their 20 page submission - I guess two things. Firstly, the Wentworth Group actually withdrew from our process in April last

year. Although invited to attend the science and knowledge needs workshop in December, they declined to attend, so they really haven't given themselves an opportunity to find out what science has been done. They really seem to have ignored the triple bottom line objectives that it's our responsibility to meet under the Water Act.

MOYRA SHIELDS: That triple line responsibility - is that behind the need for more economic studies that, you know, you've mentioned, you suggested it, that is your background and - your background in regional development - you're looking at socio-economic impact. The criticism has been that the plan draft doesn't address those things properly. You see that there is room to better address them, perhaps?

DIANA GIBBS: Well, there's a lot of work that has been done that hasn't yet been publicly released. I think there's a lot coming on-stream in February. I think I was given a new report that addressed some of my own concerns just when we were in Mildura last week.

So it's a moving process, and I'll come back to that word 'balance'. While communities around here in the Murrumbidgee would be very focused on social and economic outcomes, last week down at Mildura - and I went on down to the Murray mouth - they are far more concerned with different objectives, and that's the hard task that we face as directors of the authority is to find that balance.

LAURISSA SMITH: Murray Darling Basin Authority board member  
Diana Gibbs.

\* \* END \* \*

TRANSCRIPT PRODUCED BY MEDIA MONITORS  
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ABs = Managers, administrators, professions. GBs = Grocery buyers.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4: MDBA **Question No:** 137

**Topic:** Basin Plan - extension of the consultation period

**Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question:** Written

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. If the MDBA is still undertaking and releasing work in the middle of its consultation period, will it give stakeholders an extension of time to respond to this work?
2. Is the MDBA at all considering an extension of time for the consultation period?

**Answer:**

1. The nature of the work the Authority has released in February is a highly technical description of the modelling undertaken for the Environmentally Sustainable Level of Take report that was released by the Authority with the draft Basin Plan.
2. No. However, the Authority is working with stakeholders in flood affected areas to ensure they will be able to submit any supplementary information in time for the Authority to take it into account in preparing the proposed final Basin Plan for Ministerial Council consideration.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4: MDBA **Question 138**  
**No:**

**Topic:** CSIRO report on the economic benefits of the draft basin plan

**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written

**or Written Question:**

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. Has the CSIRO conducted any work for the MDBA on valuing the economic benefits of the draft basin plan?
2. If so, has the MDBA seen that report and when did it see it?
3. When is this report likely to be released?

**Answer:**

1. The Murray-Darling Basin Authority (the Authority) has commissioned the CSIRO, through the "Multiple Benefits of the Basin Plan" project, to assess and value the potential multiple benefits of enhanced environmental flows prescribed in the proposed Basin Plan. The study includes assessments of the potential hydrological, ecological, social and economic benefits.
2. CSIRO has not yet submitted to the Authority the final report for the study. The Authority has seen drafts of the report.

In November 2011, the CSIRO submitted an interim report to the Authority. This interim report is available online at: <http://www.mdba.gov.au/files/bp-kid/1714-StatusOfTheAquaticEcosystemsOfTheMDBCSIRO.pdf>.

3. CSIRO is expected to submit the final report to the Authority before the proposed final Basin Plan is provided to Ministerial Council for consideration.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4: MDBA **Question 139**  
**Topic:** Basin Plan - release of reports  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written  
**or Written Question:**

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. How many reports does the MDBA have to release before it finalises the Basin plan?
2. What are these reports and when will these reports be released?

**Answer:**

1. Under the *Water Act 2007*, there is one report that the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (the Authority) must release prior to the Basin Plan being finalised.
2. This report is a summary of submissions received during the public consultation period, any issues raised and how they have been addressed, and any alterations made to the Basin Plan in light of those submissions. This report will be available when this work has been completed.



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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4: MDBA **Question No:** 140  
**Topic:** Basin Plan – socio-economic analysis  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written  
**or Written Question:**

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. If you get feedback in your consultations that the economic and social impact is too great in particular areas, will you be able to increase the SDL based on this information alone? That is, if the environmental science stays the same can you recommend a lower amount of water recovered because of the economic and social analysis?
2. Can you give me a specific example where any of your economic and social research on the impact of the plan has reduced the amount of water you have recommended for recovery in the draft basin plan?
3. Have you reduced the amount recommended to be recovered in any specific catchment because you thought the economic and social impact would otherwise be too high? If so, what specific work influenced this decision?
4. How much have you spent on economic and social research to date?

**Answer:**

1. The Sustainable Diversion Limits (SDLs) have been determined on the basis of an assessment of the Environmentally Sustainable Level of Take (ESLT). In setting an ESLT, the Authority has taken into account a wide range of environmental, social and economic information.

When the Authority finalises the draft Basin Plan at the end of the consultation process, it will assess all the evidence available, including any new environmental, social and economic evidence gathered through the consultation period, to determine whether the on-balance decisions made about the SDLs and other aspects of the draft Basin Plan should be adjusted.

2. The SDLs recommended in the draft Basin Plan were determined by taking into account a wide range of environmental, social and economic information. The Authority has recommended in the draft Plan that the SDLs do not formally commence until 2019; this was done with the intention of ameliorating social and economic impacts.
3. There are no specific examples of social and economic information alone determining the SDL of a particular catchment. Also refer to answer to (2) above.
4. Total expenditure on economic and social research to date is \$7.0 million.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4: MDBA **Question 141**  
**Topic:** Legal advice on the Water Act 2007 **No:**  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written  
**or Written Question:**

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. Has the MDBA sought any additional legal advice on the Water Act 2007 since Mr Knowles has taken over as Chairman of the MDBA?
2. If so, what was the nature of this advice? When was it received and how many pages did it amount to?
3. Has Mr Knowles read the legal advice on the Water Act that the MDBA has previously sought or sought since his arrival?
4. Has the MDBA sought legal advice on whether they have met the requirements of the Water Act to include an environmental watering plan?

**Answer:**

1. Yes.
2. The Authority considers that its legal advice is confidential and the disclosure of the nature of the advice may prejudice the Commonwealth's legal position.
3. The legal advice was received between February 2011-November 2011 and amounted to 137 pages of formal advice.

Mr Knowles has been provided with copies of formal legal advice held by the Authority previously sought and sought since his arrival.

4. The Authority received all appropriate external legal advice prior to the release of the draft Basin Plan.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4: MDBA **Question 142**  
**Topic:** Basin Plan – economic costs **No:**  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written  
**or Written Question:**

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. I refer to p. 120 of the plain English summary which says:

“Overall, economic modelling of the impacts of the proposed Basin Plan revealed that at an aggregate level, the Basin-wide economic costs will be small”

Is “small” a technical, economic term? How big would the effect need to be for it not to be “small”? Why don’t you just describe the impact in dollars or even percentage terms than rely on undefined words like “small”?

**Answer:**

1. Economic modelling was undertaken by three independent modellers and peer reviewed to ensure that the Authority had access to the best available economic modelling. The results indicate consistently the effect on Basin gross regional impact to be a change by 2019 of less than 1 per cent over the period 2007 to 2019.

The extensive economic modelling results are summarised in chapter 4 of the Authority's report “Socioeconomic analysis and the draft Basin Plan” at [http://download.mdba.gov.au/proposed/social\\_economic\\_analysis\\_part\\_a.pdf](http://download.mdba.gov.au/proposed/social_economic_analysis_part_a.pdf).

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4: MDBA **Question 143**  
**Topic:** Basin Plan – opening of the Murray Mouth **No:**  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written  
**or Written Question:**

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. Under the draft basin plan, the MDBA claims that the Murray Mouth will be open 9 years in 10. How much water needs to be recovered to meet this target?
2. That is, if we only recovered water to meet this target, without worrying about any other environmental assets, how much water is required?

**Answer:**

1. The Murray- Darling Basin Authority (the Authority) report 'The proposed "environmentally sustainable level of take" for surface water of the Murray-Darling Basin: Method and Outcomes' released in November 2011, provides an analysis of Murray Mouth Openness (page 100). This report is available on the Authority's website (<http://www.mdba.gov.au/draft-basin-plan/science-draft-basin-plan>).

Murray Mouth openness increases from 64 per cent of years under baseline to ~ 86 per cent, 89 per cent and 90 per cent for the 2,400GL, 2,800GL, and 3,200GL scenarios respectively using a coarse indicator of barrage flows of 2,000 GL/yr.

Further, more detailed analysis of Murray Mouth Openness using hydrodynamic modelling is contained in pages 237 to 239 of the Authority's report: 'Hydrologic modelling to inform the Basin Plan: Methods and results' which is available on the Authority's website (<http://www.mdba.gov.au/draft-basin-plan/science-draft-basin-plan>). This analysis provides further demonstration of the significant benefits in terms of Murray Mouth opening associated with a reduction in diversions of 2,400-3,200 GL/y.

Given the results for the 2,000 GL/yr barrage flows indicator and the evidence provided by the detailed hydrodynamic modelling of the Murray Mouth, the Authority believes that the draft Basin Plan 2,750 GL/y reduction in diversions is sufficient volume to keep the Murray Mouth open for approximately 9 years in 10. Note that in the modelling undertaken for the draft Basin Plan, the lower lakes and Murray Mouth receives water returning to the Murray River from environmental assets being watered upstream.

2. This is a hypothetical scenario that is not consistent with the objects of the *Water Act 2007* or the objective of a healthy working basin.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4: MDBA **Question 144**  
**Topic:** Basin Plan - export of salt **No:**  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written  
**or Written Question:**

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. How much water is required to meet the target of exporting 2 million tonnes of salt from the River Murray if you just acquired water for that purpose and no other?

**Answer:**

1. The Murray-Darling Basin Authority (the Authority) has estimated the salt export for three scenarios in which 2,400, 2,800 and 3,200 GL were recovered. The long-term average salt export from these scenarios was 1.91, 1.96 and 2.00 million tonnes/year respectively. These studies are documented on page 211 of the report, 'Hydrologic modelling to inform the draft Basin Plan: Methods and results', which is available on the Authority's website [http://download.mdba.gov.au/proposed/Hydro\\_Modelling\\_Report.pdf](http://download.mdba.gov.au/proposed/Hydro_Modelling_Report.pdf).

These salt load export estimates do not include the future increase in salt mobilisation estimated by the Salinity Audit (Murray-Darling Basin Commission, 1999) nor the uptake of Basin Salinity Management Strategy salinity credits. When these are included it is expected that the recovery of 2,750 GL proposed in the Basin Plan will be sufficient to meet the salinity export target of 2 million tonnes of salt per year from the basin.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4: MDBA **Question No:** 145

**Topic:** Basin Plan – sustainability of Ramsar listed sites

**Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question:** Written

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. How much water is required to achieve environmental sustainability for the 16 Ramsar listed sites the Basin? That is, if we only acquired water to improve the health of these 16 sites, without regard to any of the other 2,440 key environmental assets, how much water would we need?

**Answer:**

1. This is a hypothetical scenario that is not consistent with the objects of the *Water Act 2007* or the objective of a healthy working basin. Consequently, the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (the Authority) has not made this assessment. It is also not practical to itemise the water needs of the Basin's Ramsar listed sites in this way.

The method used by the Authority to determine the proposed Environmentally Sustainable Level of Take (ESLT) is described in more detail in the ESLT report '*The proposed "environmentally sustainable level of take" for surface water of the Murray-Darling Basin: Method and Outcomes*', which is available on the Authority's website (<http://www.mdba.gov.au/draft-basin-plan/science-draft-basin-plan>).

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4: MDBA **Question No:** 146  
**Topic:** Hydrological indicator sites  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written  
**or Written Question:**

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. Can you provide a table listing the water requirements of each of the 122 hydrologic indicator sites? Please detail how these amounts add up to the required 2750 GL? If the same water can be used to water multiple sites please indicate this.

**Answer:**

1. The environmental water requirements for indicator sites have been expressed by the MDBA as flow regimes. In the case of major wetland and floodplain systems the environmental water requirements are typically expressed as a series of flow indicators which are required to achieve specific outcomes – eg provide flows into wetlands or inundate red gum forest. The flow indicators are typically specified as a flow of a certain magnitude, duration, timing and frequency. For example, one flow indicator for Barmah-Millewa Forest is a flow of 25,000 ML/d for six weeks between June and November in 40 to 50 per cent of years to provide the water needs of certain wetlands and inundate a proportion of the forest. The need for multiple indicators at each site reflects that these sites contain a diverse range of habitats that are inundated by different sized flows which occur at different frequencies.

In the case of baseflows the environmental water requirements to maintain instream habitats (such as drought refuge pools for fish) are expressed as a time series of minimum flows.

It is not possible to convert this information to a table of water volumes for each asset, mostly because there is simply too much overlap in the required flow regimes to do this accurately. For example, flows required at Barmah-Millewa Forest will continue downstream and provide a significant component of flows needed at downstream sites. Or alternatively, flows for downstream sites could be considered to provide a significant component of flows need at Barmah-Millewa Forest. The same situation exists in the northern basin, with required flow regimes in the Darling overlapping significantly with required flow regimes in the tributaries. This situation reflects the connected nature of the Basin's rivers and flows.

Presenting the information in this way would also be inconsistent with the hydrologic indicator site method used by the MDBA. The method aims to return a flow regime that will achieve a Basin-wide objective of a healthy working basin. The method and use of indicator sites recognises the connectivity of the rivers, floodplains and wetlands of the Basin. The hydrologic indicator sites and flows described at those sites are intended to represent the broader environmental flow needs of river valleys or reaches, as required by the many key environmental assets and key ecosystem functions in those valleys or reaches. Apportioning and “adding-up” environmental water requirements at indicators sites would not reflect the objective of a healthy working basin and the importance of the broader suite of key environmental assets and key ecosystem functions.

The method used by the MDBA to determine the proposed ESLT is described in more detail in The proposed 'environmentally sustainable level of take' for surface water of the Murray–Darling Basin: Method and outcomes report, in particular see Section 5 (pages 32 to 54) in [http://download.mdba.gov.au/proposed/ESLT\\_MDBA\\_report.pdf](http://download.mdba.gov.au/proposed/ESLT_MDBA_report.pdf).



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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4: MDBA **Question No:** 147  
**Topic:** Basin Plan – carp numbers  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question:** Written

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. How much would the Basin Plan reduce carp numbers in the Basin by?

**Answer:**

1. This number has not been estimated. The control of alien species such as carp is influenced by a range of factors including the availability of water. The Basin Plan identifies the mitigation of impacts from alien species as one of the objectives to be considered in the development of valley-based environmental watering plans.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4: MDBA **Question No:** 148

**Topic:** Basin Plan – Condamine-Balonne area

**Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question:** Written

**Senator Joyce asked:**

In respect of the 100 GL proposed reduction in water use in the Condamine-Balonne area proposed under the draft basin plan:

1. How has the MDBA assumed that these losses will be spread over the Condamine-Balonne area?
2. Can any sizeable amount of this reduction come from St George to meet the environmental targets located in the Condamine Balonne?
3. In your view is their "connectivity" between flows above St George and the Culgoa floodplain and the Narran lakes?
4. Has the MDBA modelled any impacts of a reduction in water use above St George? If so, what impact did this reduction have on the environmental health of the Culgoa floodplain and the Narran Lakes?
5. To get to the Barwon-Darling where will the Condamine-Balonne's share of the 143 GL of shared reduction have to come from?
6. In a letter written by Mr Knowles on the 29 September 2011 to Minister Rachel Nolan the Queensland Minister for Natural Resources. In that letter, Mr Knowles states that:

"I note your primary concern relates to the proposed sustainable diversion limit (SDL) for the Condamine-Balonne and the potential social and economic impacts this may have. I acknowledge that the proposed reduction in the Condamine-Balonne is significant and that it is important the Authority provides a sound scientific basis for its proposal."

What action has the MDBA taken to respond to Minister Nolan's concerns about the social and economic impact?

**Answer:**

1. The draft Basin Plan does not specify the spread for the recovery of 100 GL/yr across the Condamine-Balonne Sustainable Diversion Limit (SDL) resource unit. The final spread of recovered water will depend on the outcome of the Australian Government's Water for the Future program.
2. The Authority's assessments show that, to satisfy the environmental water requirements within the Condamine-Balonne catchment, water recovery will need to target the lower Balonne region (around and downstream of St George).

3. There is connectivity between flows above St George and the Culgoa floodplain and the Narran Lakes. However significant natural losses can occur in flows originating from the distant upper catchment areas, and below St George flood flows spread through distributary channels across an extensive floodplain including Narran Lakes. These affect the degree of connectivity across the catchment.
4. The Authority has considered a range of different scenarios for the reduction and its distribution in the hydrologic modelling carried out for the draft Basin Plan. Information on these scenarios and the environmental results is available on pages 40 to 53 of the report “Hydrologic modelling to inform the draft Basin Plan” which is available on our website (<http://www.mdba.gov.au/draft-basin-plan/science-draft-basin-plan>).
5. The draft Basin Plan does not specify how the 143 GL/yr Northern Basin shared reduction amount is to be spread across the listed SDL resource units that could contribute, including the Condamine-Balonne. As indicated on page 23 of “Delivering a Healthy Working Basin”, <http://www.mdba.gov.au/draft-basin-plan/delivering-healthy-working-basin>, a contribution from the Condamine-Balonne would only be appropriate in certain circumstances. The degree of connectivity between any potential location for a contribution and the Barwon Darling would be a factor in determining whether it is appropriate.
6. The Authority continued its considerations on what SDL should be included for the Condamine-Balonne SDL resource unit. It carried out further hydrologic modelling on a range of possible reductions from 150 to 60 GL/yr (in addition to the earlier consideration of a reduction of 203 GL/yr). These further assessments, in conjunction with the results of the Authority’s socio-economic studies, were the basis for the Authority’s SDL for the Condamine-Balonne included in the draft Basin Plan.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4: MDBA **Question No:** 149  
**Topic:** Basin Plan – consultation process  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written  
**or Written Question:**

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. How many public meetings did the MDBA hold after the release of the Guide to the Murray-Darling Basin Plan?
2. How many public meetings has the MDBA undertaken or announced that it will undertake since the release of the draft Basin plan?
3. Why are you holding less public meetings in the consultation on the draft than you did for the consultation after the Guide?
4. How have you established which communities want a public meeting and which don't?
5. Do a certain number of people need to request a meeting before one takes place?
6. How many requests have you had for public meetings?
7. Will you consider extending the 20-week consultation period if communities request more time?
8. The MDBA has held a number of private, invitation only meetings. Has the MDBA or the government discussed the details of any infrastructure funding arrangements or any funding programs not yet publicly announced with those invited to these meetings?

**Answer:**

1. The Murray-Darling Basin Authority (the Authority) held 31 meetings in the two months after the Guide to the proposed Basin Plan was released for comment.
2. Based on feedback from stakeholders after the Guide was released the Authority has been holding a range of styles of meetings including round tables, open houses, town hall style and technical meetings with members of the public. From the end of November 2011 to 16 April 2012, the Authority has held 110 meetings with members of the public.
3. The Authority is holding more meetings to discuss the draft Basin Plan than was held to discuss the Guide to the proposed Basin Plan.
4. The Authority has been talking with local councils, industry and conservation representatives and has received email and written requests from members of the public.
5. No.
6. Up to end February 2012, the Authority has received 62 requests for meetings with the public.

7. No. The Authority is accepting supplementary information in the week after the closing date of 16 April 2012 and also consulted with communities (including those affected by the floods) on the timing of their submissions.
8. No.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4: MDBA **Question 150**  
**Topic:** Basin Plan – vulnerable communities **No:**  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written  
**or Written Question:**

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. In a leaked version of the plain English summary of the proposed plan, in a discussion about the economic and social impact of the plan, it listed 14 towns as “vulnerable”. In the final released version of the plan, this section was removed and there were no mention of these towns. Why was mention of these towns removed?
2. Does the MDBA continue to consider these towns as “vulnerable”? If not, what has changed your mind? If so, what specific changes has the MDBA made to account for the vulnerable nature of these communities?

**Answer:**

1. The Murray-Darling Basin Authority (the Authority) shared draft versions of a number of its documents with key stakeholders in the lead up to finalising them last year.

One of these draft versions did list 14 towns as examples of communities that might be relatively more vulnerable to the scale of change being considered, based on assessments of the Authority’s commissioned reports. In the final version, the examples were not included as it was considered that such a simplistic list would not accurately reflect, and could potentially misrepresent, the full findings of the Authority’s analyses of economic and social vulnerability.

Chapter 5 of the Authority’s report “Socioeconomic analysis and the draft Basin Plan” at [http://download.mdba.gov.au/proposed/social\\_economic\\_analysis\\_part\\_a.pdf](http://download.mdba.gov.au/proposed/social_economic_analysis_part_a.pdf) describes in detail the Authority’s assessment of the local community impacts of the Basin Plan. The chapter describes how community vulnerability to the Basin Plan is a complex issue and cannot be presented simply as an indicative list of towns.

2. See answer to (1) above. The Authority took into account the findings of its socioeconomic assessments in setting the Sustainable Diversion Limits for the draft Basin Plan.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4: MDBA **Question 151**  
**Topic:** Environmental watering – **No:**  
Barmah-Millewa forest  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written  
**or Written Question:**

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. Have you reduced flows in the Murray to attempt to reduce the amount of water in the Barmah-Millewa forest?
2. If water in the Barmah-Millewa forest is not reduced is there a risk of damage to red gums occurring? How severe is this risk? How did this risk come about, was environmental watering too high over the past year?
3. How much environmental water has been delivered to the Barmah-Millewa forest over the past few years? Please list amounts for 2009-10, 2010-11 and 2011-12 (year to date).
4. In the MDBA's view does the Living Murray Initiative provide sufficient water to protect the environment of the Barmah-Millewa forest and the Gunbower-Koondrook-Perricotta forest? If not, how much additional water is required for these assets?
5. With the watering of the Barmah-Millewa forest under the Living Murray Initiative. How much did the decision to originally operate under 'dry' conditions at the start of 2010-11 contribute to too much water going into the Barmah-Millewa forest?

**Answer:**

1. Yes, flow in the Murray downstream of Yarrawonga Weir was reduced to <10,500 ML/day in early January 2012 and since that time the forest has been gradually drying out.
2. Red gums can be affected if flooded for too long (more than 3 years) and for 'wetter' environments, such as Reed Beds Swamp, permanent flooding would alter the structure of the wetland. This is not likely to happen in the Barmah-Millewa Forest where management of the forest generally follows a winter-spring wet, then a summer-autumn dry regime (following what would have occurred naturally). In 2010-11, the forest received a long watering due to a very wet summer owing to natural inflows to the River from rain and floods. As such the Authority and State agencies have begun implementing the drying phase this summer/autumn.

The risk of damage to red gums is considered to be very low. Environmental watering of the forest has not been too high over the past year, it has been well below what the river would have experienced naturally as per attached graph (see **Attachment A** - Barmah-Millewa Forest environmental watering timeline for 2010-11.).

3. Environmental water delivered to the Barmah-Millewa Forest over the time specified:
  - 2009-10: 2.37 GL (Living Murray water only);
  - 2010-11: 428 GL (Combination of Living Murray, Barmah-Millewa forest environmental water allocation and NSW environmental water allocation); and
  - 2011-12: 425 GL (The Living Murray (TLM), Barmah-Millewa environmental water allocation and New South Wales and Victoria Environmental Water Allocation).
4. The Barmah-Millewa Forest has its own water allocation provided by New South Wales and Victoria. Along with water available via TLM, it could be assumed that the forest had sufficient access to water to meet generally accepted environmental objectives. However, this would not be the case for high elevation parts of the forest where environmental water cannot be delivered with the current operational constraints. As such it is not possible to confirm that the water available to the Barmah-Millewa forest under TLM is sufficient to meet all its needs. For the Gunbower Forest, the Authority does not believe that the water available under TLM initiative is sufficient to meet its needs.

With regard to additional water use, it is also not practical to itemise the water needs of these two icon sites in this way.

The environmental water requirements for hydrologic indicator sites have been expressed as flow regimes. In the case of major wetland and floodplain systems like the TLM icon sites, the environmental water requirements for the draft Basin Plan are typically expressed as a series of flow indicators which are required to achieve specific outcomes – e.g. provide flows into wetlands or inundate river red gum forest. A flow indicator is typically specified as a flow of a certain magnitude, duration, timing and frequency. The need for multiple indicators at each site reflects that these sites contain a diverse range of habitats and species with different watering requirements.

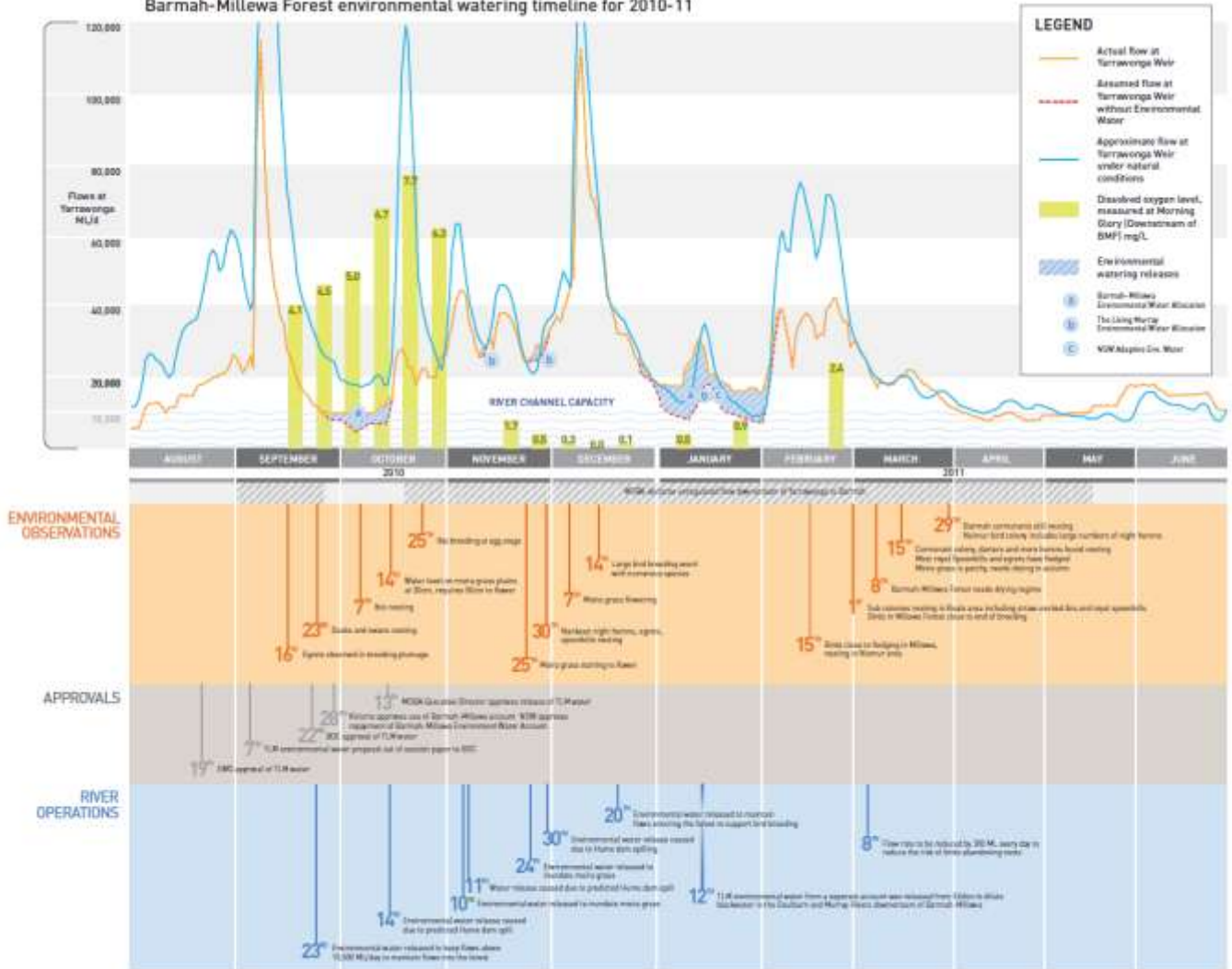
It is not possible to convert this information to a table of water volumes for the icon sites, mostly because there is simply too much overlap in the required flow regimes to do this accurately. For example, flows required at Barmah-Millewa Forest will continue downstream and provide a significant component of flows needed at downstream sites. This situation reflects the connected nature of the Basin's rivers and flows.

5. Analysis of the hydrograph for Yarrawonga Weir in 2010-11 shows that the actual recorded flood peaks were significantly less than what would have occurred under natural conditions and this demonstrates that the Barmah-Millewa Forest did not receive too much water as stated in the question. Please refer to **Attachment A** - Barmah-Millewa Forest environmental watering timeline for 2010-11.

The decision to use environmental water at Barmah-Millewa Forest was made after the first significant flood event in 2010-11 and aimed to provide base flows between flood events and therefore did not contribute to the flood peaks. Base flows were maintained after the first flood event, using environmental water within the natural hydrograph, to ensure that birds which had started breeding wouldn't abandon their nests. This action allowed for the completion of the most successful bird-breeding event at the Barmah-Millewa Forest in 60 years.



Barmah-Millewa Forest environmental watering timeline for 2010-11



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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4: MDBA **Question No:** 152

**Topic:** Environmental watering – NSW  
Murray area assets

**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written

**or Written Question:**

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. What environmental assets in the NSW Murray area are being watered from the 262 GL put aside in the draft plan for the "local reduction amount"? Can you provide a list of assets and how much water they each need to make up this 262 GL.

**Answer:**

1. The local reduction amount can be used to water a range of asset(s). It will be managed together with other environmental water in accordance with the provisions of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. The largest and most well-known key environmental assets in the Murray region are assets like Barmah-Millewa Forest, Gunbower-Koondrook-Perricoota Forests, The Edward-Wakool River system, the Riverland-Chowilla Floodplain, the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth, and the River Murray itself. But there are also many other smaller and less-known key environmental assets. The Authority published a draft list of key environmental assets as part of the technical background to the Guide to the proposed Basin Plan in 2010. This list, structured by region, is available on the Authority's website at: <http://download.mdba.gov.au/Guide-to-proposed-BP-vol2-appa.pdf>. The list includes 477 key environmental assets in the Murray region.

The assets are connected hydrologically in that the same flow event may water many wetlands or flow from one asset can return to the river and assist in watering the next site. It is therefore not possible to apportion the 262 GL amongst the assets.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4: MDBA **Question 153**  
**No:**

**Topic:** Environmental watering – flows past  
Doctors Point

**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written

**or Written Question:**

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. What is the peak amount of water that the MDBA expect to have to flow past Doctors Point in the future in ML / day terms?

**Answer:**

1. To avoid inundation of private land, current operations typically seek to limit regulated flows in the River Murray downstream of Hume Dam (as measured at Doctors Point to 25,000 ML/d). Authority modelling of environmental flow delivery undertaken to inform the Basin Plan retains this arrangement.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4: MDBA **Question No:** 154  
**Topic:** Purchase of easements  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written  
**or Written Question:**

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. Is the MDBA considering the possibility of acquiring easements between Hume Dam and Lake Mulwala? If so, over how much land would easements need to be purchased?
2. What would this cost?
3. Has the MDBA done any other assessment over other easements that would need to be purchased?
4. Does the MDBA have an estimate over how much land would easements need to be purchased under the draft basin plan?
5. Are there any assessments of the approximate cost of purchasing these easements?

**Answer:**

1. Yes. The Authority is currently considering acquiring two easements between Hume Dam and Lake Mulwala. The land area of these two easements is approximately 11.4 ha. The easements are being obtained for the purposes of River Murray System operations.
2. Costs associated with the purchase of these easements is commercial-in-confidence.
3. Section 6.06 and 6.07 of the *Proposed Basin Plan – a draft for consultation* (November 2011) introduces a proposed review of Sustainable Diversion Limits (SDLs) in 2015. Section 6.06 in-particular listing matters the Authority will consider as part of this proposed review including:
  - works and measures;
  - river management and river operational practices;
  - methods of delivering water; and
  - new knowledge.

As a component of the proposed review of SDLs in 2015, the Authority is examining constraints in each valley. Easements, negotiated with individual landholders, are one potential method available to overcome constraints (that limit regulated flows below set thresholds).

4. See answer to question 3. Note the purchases associated with question 1 above are not related to Basin Plan considerations.

5. See answer to question 3.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4: MDBA **Question No:** 155

**Topic:** Basin Plan – environmental watering plan

**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written

**or Written Question:**

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. Under s 22 of the Water Act the mandatory elements of the Basin plan include “an environmental watering plan to ensure the effective management of environmental water”. How will the MDBA meet the requirements of the Water Act if the Basin plan does not include an environmental watering plan?
2. Have you received any legal advice on whether the extent that you have included an environmental watering plan in the proposed Basin plan meets the requirements of the Water Act? If not, why not?

**Answer:**

1. As required by section 22 of the *Water Act 2007*, the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (the Authority) has included an environmental watering plan at Chapter 7 of the proposed Basin Plan.
2. The Authority received appropriate external legal advice prior to the release of the proposed Basin Plan.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4: MDBA **Question No:** 156

**Topic:** Watering local environmental assets – Macquarie catchment

**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written

**or Written Question:**

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. In the guide to the Murray-Darling Basin plan, 20 GL was identified for watering local environmental assets. In the draft basin plan this figure was increased to 65 GL. What is the increase in water going to be used for? Is it just coincidence that the required amount has been increased to exactly match the amount of water that has been bought back from the Macquarie catchment?

**Answer:**

1. In the Guide to the proposed Basin Plan, the determination of the amount of water that needed to be returned to the environment was based on an assessment of flows at the end of each of the major rivers of the Basin. Put simply, the Sustainable Diversion Limits sought to return end of system flows to a defined proportion of without-development flows. This approach therefore, did not give specific consideration to values of local wetlands, environmental objectives for individual sites, and local water management arrangements and opportunities.

In developing the draft Basin Plan, the Authority has used a more robust methodology (the “hydrologic indicator site” method) to look at environmental water needs. This method assesses the environmental water needs of major wetland and riverine ecosystems across the Basin (rather than end of system locations) and assesses the specific flows required to achieve defined ecological objectives and targets. The modelling method takes into account local operational constraints and opportunities, and the water management arrangements that are associated with water recovery through infrastructure improvements and buyback from willing sellers.

The Authority modelled the purchase/investment already made under bridging the gap against indicators devised through the indicator site method. This modelling showed that the existing recovery was likely to meet all ‘in catchment’ indicators. Given that any excess can contribute to the downstream need, the current recovery was adopted as the in catchment number.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4: MDBA **Question No:** 157

**Topic:** MDBA Socioeconomic assessment of Collarenebri

**Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question:** Written

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. At the Narrabri MDBA Guide public meeting, the chairman of the day undertook publicly to visit Collarenebri and take stock of the financial and community implications of the Twynam water purchase from the Collymongle property. Has the MDBA visited Collarenebri and made a socio-economic assessment as promised? If so, what were the findings? If not, why hasn't the undertaking been honoured?

**Answer:**

1. In 2011 the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) commissioned a major study of the community impacts of the Basin Plan. This study assessed socio-economic impacts in 48 social catchments, 80 local government areas and 119 towns and regional centres across the Basin. The study drew on face-to-face interviews with nearly 700 informants.

The study assessed the socio-economic impacts in the Gwydir region of New South Wales, including in Collarenebri and the surrounding region. The implications of the Twynam water purchase were considered in this assessment. Refer to Chapter 5 of Volume 7 of the report at <http://www.mdba.gov.au/files/bp-kid/257-EBC-Vol7-regional-analysis-nsw.pdf>.



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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4: MDBA **Question No:** 158  
**Topic:** Living Murray Initiative  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question:** Written

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. How much of the 402 GL allocated under the Living Murray Initiative was used in 2010-11?

**Answer:**

1. 306.983 GL was used in 2010-11. As the Living Murray icon sites received significant volumes of water during the spring/summer period of 2010-11, the Authority carried over the remaining 90 GL of allocation available into 2011-12 to maximise the environmental outcomes that could be achieved in that year, beginning with a spring watering action.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4: MDBA **Question No:** 159  
**Topic:** Price of temporary water  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question:** Written

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. What was the average price of temporary water in the Murray-Darling during 2010-11?

**Answer:**

1. The National Water Commission published information on the prices of traded water in its report Australian Water Markets Report 2010-11 available at <http://nwc.gov.au/publications/topic/markets/australian-water-markets-report-2010-11>.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4: MDBA **Question 160**  
**Topic:** State environmental watering plans **No:**  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written  
**or Written Question:**

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. What happens if the states come up with environmental watering plans that need less water than what has been decided in the basin plan?
2. Is the Commonwealth going to give the states any financial assistance to help develop these plans? Is it considering giving them any money? Have any states asked for money to help develop these plans?
3. How will the States coordinate the development of plans that involve environmental watering in areas which straddle state borders?
4. I refer you to s 7.19 of the proposed Basin plan which states that the Authority or a Basin state may publish a long-term environmental watering plan. Why isn't there an obligation to publish these plans?

**Answer:**

1. States must, when developing long term watering plans (LTPs), use the methods set out in Part 5 of Chapter 7 of the draft Basin Plan. This method is consistent with that used by the Authority in determining the environmentally sustainable level of take (ESLT). It is possible that new information or efficiencies not currently identified could result in state LTPs identifying that less environmental water is required in their region. If so, the Authority would take this into consideration in the Sustainable Diversion Limit review (2015) and environmental watering plan review (2017).
2. Under the 2008 Agreement on Murray-Darling Basin Reform the Commonwealth undertook to provide funding for additional net costs incurred as a consequence of the reforms agreed to within the agreement and the implementation of the *Water Act 2007*. Yes.
3. Sections 7.12 and 7.14 of the draft Basin Plan address the need for consultation and coordination. How states undertake this, including in areas that straddle state borders, will ultimately be a matter for them to determine. However, the Authority has commenced discussions with states to facilitate effective coordination.
4. The drafting is consistent with legal advice, nevertheless it is expected that states will publish these plans, consistent with their current practices. Please refer also to the note below section 7.19 in the draft Basin Plan at <http://www.mdba.gov.au/draft-basin-plan/draft-basin-plan-for-consultation>.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4: MDBA **Question  
No: 161**

**Topic:** Basin Plan – environmental assets

**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written

**or Written Question:**

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. I refer you to s 7.27 of the proposed Basin Plan. How many priority environmental assets will there be?

**Answer:**

1. The priority assets are required to be identified as part of long-term watering plans prepared by Basin States for each water resource plan area. The priority environmental assets will be identified using the method set out in Part 5 of Chapter 7, and Schedule 5, of the draft Basin Plan (<http://www.mdba.gov.au/draft-basin-plan/draft-basin-plan-for-consultation>).

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4: MDBA **Question 162**  
**No:**

**Topic:** Basin Plan – priority ecosystem  
functions

**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written

**or Written Question:**

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. I refer you to s 7.28 of the proposed Basin Plan. How many priority ecosystem functions will there be?

**Answer:**

1. States are determining this when applying the method set out in Chapter 7 to develop their long-term environmental watering plans.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4: MDBA **Question No:** 163  
**Topic:** Basin Plan – tabling process  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written  
**or Written Question:**

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. How long after the conclusion of the 20 week consultation period does the MDBA expect to take before it hands the final version of the plan to the Minister?
2. Does the MDBA have an estimate of how long the process will then take before the plan is tabled in Parliament?

**Answer:**

1. After considering the submissions received during the formal consultation period, the Murray-Darling Basin Authority must provide the draft Basin Plan and the summary of submissions received and a report on the likely socioeconomic implications of any reductions in water availability as a result of the proposed long-term average sustainable diversion limits, to members of the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council.
2. The documents have not yet been provided to the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council for consideration so a date cannot be established. The summary and report are expected to be completed by mid 2012.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4: MDBA **Question 164**  
**Topic:** Basin Plan – expenditure **No:**  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written  
**or Written Question:**

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. How much has the MDBA spent on the Basin plan to date?
2. How much does the Authority expect to spend on the Basin plan over the next financial year?

**Answer:**

1. Since commencement of operations in September 2008, through to 31 January 2012, the Authority has spent \$73.379 million on Basin Planning activities.
2. Figures will be reported when spending has occurred.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4: MDBA **Question No:** 165

**Topic:** Basin Plan – legality of Sustainable Diversion Limits

**Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question:** Written

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. I refer to s 6.06 of the proposed Basin Plan, where the Authority says that it way express view on whether an SDL should be adjusted based on works or measures, river management and river operational practices, and other things. Without new SDLs being tabled in parliament will this “view” actually change the amount that the government legally needs to recover under the Basin plan? That is, if an environmental work and measure increases the efficiency of environmental watering by 10GL then does that automatically reduce the amount of water legally needed to be recovered by 10GL or will the SDL require specific change through parliament?

**Answer:**

1. The legal standing of the Authority’s views in relation to amending Sustainable Diversion Limits (SDLs) in the Basin Plan is established through the Authority’s roles and responsibilities set out in the *Water Act 2007*. The purpose of section 6.06 is to ensure that proposals to adjust SDLs are dealt with in an open and transparent way. It is intended that the Authority’s view in relation to possible adjustments will be published as per section 6.06. Incorporation of any substantive changes to the Basin Plan will require formal amendment, involving public consultation, approval of the Minister and tabling in Parliament.



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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4: MDBA **Question No:** 166

**Topic:** Basin Plan – process for introducing amendments

**Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question:** Written

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. Could you explain the following comment on p. 23 of the plain English summary with respect to any changes in the SDLs:

“Any amendments that MDBA considers necessary, must go through a formal process set out in the Water Act, which includes consultation and tabling in Parliament by the Commonwealth Water Minister.”

Does that mean that no changes can be made without them being tabled in Parliament?  
Will all of these changes be a disallowable instrument?

**Answer:**

1. The procedures for adopting an amendment to the Basin Plan are set out in sections 45-49 of the *Water Act 2007* (the Act).

Any substantive amendment to the Basin Plan would be in the form of a legislative instrument which could be disallowed by the Parliament. Such a proposed amendment would also be subject to public consultation, as for the Basin Plan.

The Act also provides for minor or non-substantive amendments to the Basin Plan to be made by the Authority without recourse to the Parliament.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4: MDBA **Question No:** 167

**Topic:** Basin Plan – attribution of downstream reduction amounts

**Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question:** Written

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. Have you attributed the downstream reduction amounts for the purposes of modelling? If so, can you provide the committee with these attributions? If not, why not? Have you attributed for the economic modelling?

**Answer:**

1. Yes, we have attributed the downstream reductions across contributory catchments for the purposes of the hydrologic modelling.

The downstream reductions were apportioned across the regions on an equal percentage total reduction of current consumptive use, for those regions considered to be part of the shared zone. This equal apportionment approach was adopted on the basis that it represents an unbiased and relatively equitable apportionment, noting that actual implementation may differ if recovery initiatives are found to be more efficient in some regions, and to take into account the location of willing sellers.

This apportionment is described in the Environmentally Sustainable Level of Take (ESLT) report ([http://download.mdba.gov.au/proposed/ESLT\\_MDBA\\_report.pdf](http://download.mdba.gov.au/proposed/ESLT_MDBA_report.pdf)), together with the contributions modelled for each region (see Table 6.6 on page 70).

The economic modelling included numerous scenarios to understand the range of possible outcomes. The scenarios included equal apportionment, as for the hydrologic modelling (for example the 'no trade' scenario), and two methods of apportioning based on possible trade outcomes under 2005-06 commodity prices and average commodity prices since 2005-06. Further details are provided in Chapter 4 of the Authority's report "Socioeconomic analysis and the draft Basin Plan" at [http://download.mdba.gov.au/proposed/social\\_economic\\_analysis\\_part\\_a.pdf](http://download.mdba.gov.au/proposed/social_economic_analysis_part_a.pdf)

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4: MDBA **Question No:** 168  
**Topic:** Basin Plan – additional water recovery  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written  
**or Written Question:**

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. In s 7.53(2) of the proposed basin plan it states that the Authority may publish on its website recommendations about where additional water should be recovered. How are you going to do that when two thirds of the water yet to be recovered has not been allocated to specific catchments?

**Answer:**

1. At this stage, the Authority does not envisage making any recommendations pursuant to s7.53(2) of the draft Basin Plan.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4: MDBA **Question 169**  
**Topic:** Basin Plan – target values for different zones  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written  
**or Written Question:**

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. I refer to schedule 9 of the proposed basin plan which lists target values for different zones. Can you provide data on what levels these targets have been for as long back as possible by year?
2. How have you come up with these target values? Have you modelled how much water is needed to reach the targets for the Ramsar sites independent of the other sites? If so, could you provide these calculations?

**Answer:**

1. The water quality data, from 1991, for different zones, is provided in the document “Basin wide water quality data summaries” available from the Authority’s website at [http://www.mdba.gov.au/files/bp-kid/33\\_Karoo\\_data.xls](http://www.mdba.gov.au/files/bp-kid/33_Karoo_data.xls). Statistical information for salinity at end-of-valley locations is published in appendix C of the report “Salinity Targets Review: environmental values and data analysis” available from the Authority’s website at <http://www.mdba.gov.au/services/publications/more-information?publicationid=76>. The time series data from which this statistical analysis was derived is held by the states, with the exception of River Murray data which is held by the Authority.
2. The methodology for determining the water quality targets for aquatic ecosystems, published in schedule 9 to the Basin Plan <http://www.mdba.gov.au/draft-basin-plan/draft-basin-plan-for-consultation>, is in accordance with the National Water Quality Management Strategy procedures, and is published in the document “Water quality summaries and proposed water quality targets for the protection of aquatic ecosystems for the Murray-Darling Basin” available on the Authority’s web site <http://www.mdba.gov.au/files/bp-kid/916-Karoo-final.pdf>.

No separate assessment for Ramsar sites, independent of other sites, has been undertaken because for salinity, the targets in Schedule 9 are modelled values developed under the Murray-Darling Basin Salinity Management Strategy, and agreed by all jurisdictions. The report “Salinity targets review: Water quality and salinity management plan objectives and targets” explains the salinity objectives and targets and is available on the Authority’s web site <http://www.mdba.gov.au/services/publications/more-information?publicationid=78>. A flow modelling approach is not generally relevant to assessment if the targets in schedule 9 (apart from salinity) will be achieved.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4: MDBA **Question No:** 170  
**Topic:** MDBA staffing and administration  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written  
**or Written Question:**

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. How many people does the MDBA employ in the Murray-Darling basin outside of Canberra?
2. How many indigenous people does the MDBA employ?
3. What impact has the Indigenous employment strategy have on these outcomes?
4. What accounted for the 8% increase in employee benefits expenses in 2010-11?
5. How much of this were due to pay rises? How much were due to increase in the classifications of staff and how much was due to an increase in the number of staff?
6. What was average pay rise given to MDBA staff during 2010-11?
7. What are the pay rises set in the current enterprise agreement for future years?
8. How much is the average remuneration for MDBA staff?
9. What is the average income in the Basin?
10. Have you renewed the lease at the Albury office due to end on 1 September 2011? If so, why? If not, why not?
11. How many staff does the Authority have working on the Basin plan?

**Answer:**

1. The Authority employed four staff outside Canberra as at 16 February 2012.
2. No Authority employees identify themselves as indigenous as at 16 February 2012.
3. The Australian Government's Indigenous Employment Strategy has enabled the Authority to heighten the profile of the agency as an employer within Indigenous communities through the agencies participation in the Cadet, Trainee and Graduate Indigenous Pathways programs. To date this participation has unfortunately not resulted in any engagements of Indigenous people.
- 4&5. The major reason for the 8 per cent increase from 2010 to 2011 was an increase in salaries/wages payments resulting from: (a) a 3.25 per cent salary increase under the Enterprise Agreement and SES determinations; (b) an increase in average staffing levels from 2009/10 to 2010/11; and (c) changes in the classification profile between 2009/10 and 2010/11.
6. The salary increase during 2010-11 was 3.25 per cent.

7. The salary increases under the Authority's Enterprise Agreement 2011-2014 are:
  - with effect from the commencement of the Agreement (24 August 2011), 4 per cent; and
  - with effect from 1 July 2012 and 1 July 2013, 3 per cent and 2 per cent respectively.
8. The average gross salary for the Authority, as at 16 February 2012, is \$94,104. This figure excludes the Chief Executive.
9. Household income data is collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.
10. The office space agreement with the Charles Sturt University is currently being finalised.
11. As at 16 February 2012, 139 employees in the Authority work on Basin Planning activities.