

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: 4.1: OWS **Question No:** 052

Topic: Independent Expert Scientific Committee

Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question: Written

Senator Joyce asked:

1. How long will the Committee's work on coal seam gas take to complete?
2. How will the application process for an exploration or a production coal seam gas licence change as a result of the Independent Expert Scientific Committee?
3. Will all licences need to be assessed by the Committee before being granted? Will the Committee have to give its approval before a licence is granted?
4. How did you come up with the figure of \$150 million of funding for the Committee?
5. Have all states agreed to implement the legislation that is associated with the establishment of the Committee?
6. Will state governments have to act on the advice of the Committee or do all they need to do is consider the advice of the Committee?
7. When does the government intend to introduce the legislation to establish the Independent Expert Scientific Committee as a statutory body under the EPBC Act?

Answer:

1. The Australian Government has allocated \$150 million over five years (2011-16) to support the work of the Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and Coal Mining Development (the Committee).

The government's intention to establish the Independent Expert Scientific Committee as a statutory committee under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (the EPBC Act) will ensure there is an ongoing requirement for the Environment Minister to seek the Committee's advice on relevant actions that require a decision under that Act.

A similar provision would be established in those states and territories that are signatories to the National Partnership Agreement on Coal Seam Gas and Large Coal Mining Development.

2. It is proposed that the Commonwealth Minister for Environment must obtain advice from the Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and Large Coal Mining Development if any proposed actions that require Commonwealth approval under the EPBC Act involve a coal seam gas or large coal mining development and the Minister believes that the taking of the action is likely to have a significant impact on water resources and may have an adverse impact on a matter protected by the EPBC Act.

The application process for these projects will not change, however it is anticipated that the Independent Expert Scientific Committee may provide some guidance on ways in which potential impacts on water resources from proposed coal seam gas or coal mine developments can best be covered in documents such as environmental impact assessments.

States and territories that are parties to the National Partnership Agreement on Coal Seam Gas and Large Coal Mining Development will also be required to seek the Committee's advice before taking a decision on coal seam gas and large coal mining projects that are likely to have a significant impact on water resources.

3. No. The Committee's role is advisory only and it has no responsibility for issuing approvals for projects or recommending whether a project should or should not be approved. It is intended that the Committee's advice is sought by relevant government decision makers and taken into account as part of their decision making process. The Committee's advice only needs to be sought on coal seam gas and large coal mining projects that are considered likely to have a significant impact on water resources.
4. The \$150 million is based on costings of the amount required to commission bioregional assessments in areas of high potential impact from coal seam gas and/or large coal mining developments; support regional natural resource management authorities or bodies to provide input to the bioregional assessment process; commission research to address critical gaps in scientific understanding; improve the consistency and comparability of research, for example data collection models and standards; and meet other costs for the Committee (such as sitting fees, travel, meeting costs) and secretariat support by the Office of Water Science within the department.
5. As at 5 March 2012, the Queensland Government was the only signatory to the National Partnership Agreement. Negotiations with New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and the Northern Territory are progressing.
6. The National Partnership Agreement on Coal Seam Gas and Large Coal Mining Development requires that signatory states and territories *inter alia*:
 - a. amend relevant laws, regulations and guidelines as necessary so that their laws provide the following outcomes:
 - i. coal seam gas or coal mining developments that are likely to have a significant impact on water resources are referred to the Independent Expert Scientific Committee for advice; and
 - ii. decision makers on applications which have been referred to the Committee take account of the Committee's advice in a transparent manner.
 - b. seek advice from the Independent Expert Scientific Committee at appropriate stages of the approvals process for a coal seam gas or large coal mining development proposal that is likely to have a significant impact on water resources, and on which the Party is intending to make a decision.

7. The National Partnership Agreement on Coal Seam Gas and Large Coal Mining Development requires the Commonwealth to establish the permanent Independent Expert Scientific Committee under the EPBC Act by 1 July 2012. On 22 March 2012, the Australian Government introduced legislation to the House of Representatives to amend the Act to allow for the establishment of the Committee as a statutory body.

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Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: OWS **Question No:** 053

Topic: Independent Expert Scientific Committee – approval of major Coal Seam Gas developments

Proof Hansard Page and Date Written

or Written Question:

Senator Waters asked:

1. Please confirm that, currently under the EPBC Act, when approving a major new CSG development, in for example the Hunter, the Pilliga forest, or south east Queensland, the Minister is unable to consider and act on any advice of the Independent Expert Scientific Committee regarding the risks CSG wells and fracking to agricultural bores, or surface and groundwater flows, except in limited circumstances, where the impact on surface or ground what is likely to have a significant impact on MNES, such as a federally threatened species?
2. Please confirm that the legislative changes currently being proposed for the EPBC Act will not change the situation outlined in (1) above.

Answer:

1. Under Chapter 4 of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (the EPBC Act) as it currently stands, the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (the Minister) is able to consider the advice of the Interim Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and Coal Mining (the Interim Committee) as it relates to water-related matters of national environmental significance. The Interim Committee can provide advice outside the prescribed scope but the Minister is unable to take that advice into account in his decision making.
2. The legislative changes currently being proposed for the EPBC Act will not change the situation outlined in (1) above. The legislative changes will, however, make it a requirement that the Minister must obtain advice from the Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and Large Coal Mining Development if the proposed action involves a coal seam gas or large coal mining development and the Minister believes that the taking of the action is likely to have a significant impact on water resources and may have an adverse impact on a matter protected by the EPBC Act.

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Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: OWS **Question No:** 054

Topic: Independent Expert Scientific Committee - approval of mines or gas fields in the Brigalow Belt South region

Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question: Written

Senator Waters asked:

1. Can the Department confirm that the substantial additional research under the auspices of the Independent Expert Scientific Committee will occur before any new mines or gas fields are approved in the Brigalow Belt South region? Will research include an assessment of the cumulative impacts of all proposed mining on biodiversity?

Answer:

1. The Independent Expert Scientific Committee (the Committee) will provide advice on new coal seam gas and coal mining proposals based on the best information available at the time they are requested to provide their advice. It is not intended that approvals of new mines or gas fields is delayed pending the completion of the full five-year research program or relevant bioregional assessments.

The results of any commissioned research will be made publicly available and the outcomes of new research and bioregional assessments commissioned as a result of the Committee's advice will continuously improve the information base that is available to decision makers.

The proposed bioregional assessments will include an assessment of cumulative impacts of proposed mining activities on water resources in the region, including water-related biodiversity.

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Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: OWS **Question No:** 055

Topic: Members of the Independent Scientific Expert Committee

Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question: Written

Senator Waters asked:

1. In relation to each member of the interim Independent Expert Scientific Panel, can the Department please advise:
 - a. How much funding, income, funding or forms of direct or indirect financial benefit each interim member (or the organisations they represent) has received from the mining industry over the past five years?
 - b. In terms of the organisations they represent (for example, their research institutes) what, if any, representation does the mining sector have within their management and/or governance arrangements?
2. Please advise the date for the creation of a permanent Independent Expert Scientific Panel.
3. What statutory (or other) checks and balances will be in place to ensure the independence of the committee?
4. Will there be at least two ecologists included on the permanent Independent Expert Scientific Panel?
5. Will the factors in question 4 above be considered in making appointments to the permanent Independent Expert Scientific Panel?

Answer:

1. In relation to each member of the interim Independent Expert Scientific Panel, the department can advise:
 - a. The members of the Interim Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and Coal Mining (the Interim Committee) have been selected on the basis of their individual scientific expertise, not as representatives of particular organisations or bodies. Their responses to your question are as follows.

Professor Craig Simmons (Chair)	Received no funding, income, or form of direct or indirect financial benefit from the mining industry over the past five years.
Professor John Langford	Nil, however holds shares in self managed super funds for Origin, BHP Billiton, Rio Tinto and OZ Minerals.
Ms Jane Coram	Received no funding, income, or form of direct or indirect financial benefit from the mining industry over the past five years.
Associate Professor David Laurence	As an individual consultant works in sustainability and capacity building. Has not received any direct or indirect benefit from the mining industry over the past five years for these activities. Holds the University of New South Wales' Mitsubishi Chair in Sustainable Mining Practices, part funded by Mitsubishi Development Pty Ltd, a company that invests in mineral resource projects in Australia and internationally.
Professor Chris Moran	Received no funding, income or forms of direct financial benefit from the mining industry over the past five years. Employed by the Sustainable Minerals Institute (SMI) at The University of Queensland and SMI has received funding from the mining industry over the past five years.
Emeritus Professor Peter G Flood	Received no funding, income or forms of direct financial benefit from the coal seam gas, oil/gas or coal industries over the past five years. Received payments of less than \$20,000 over the past five years from minerals exploration and mining, and has deferred payments owing of approximately \$50,000.

- b. Members of the Interim Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and Coal Mining (the Interim Committee) have been selected on the basis of their individual scientific expertise, not their representation of particular organisations or bodies.
2. The National Partnership Agreement on Coal Seam Gas and Large Coal Mining Development requires the Commonwealth to establish the permanent Independent Expert Scientific Committee under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* by 1 July 2012.
3. The Committee is being established as an independent statutory committee under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* and will be operate in a way that is consistent with the procedures in place for other statutory committees under that Act. Among other things, these arrangements constrain the grounds on which committee members may be removed by the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (the Minister), thereby protecting the Committee's independence.

Members of the Committee will be selected on the basis of their scientific or other expertise. They will not be appointed to represent any particular body, group of bodies or community.

Strict operating procedures and governance arrangements will be established, including in relation to handling of issues such as potential conflict of interest, confidentiality and probity.

4. The intention is for the Committee to consist of members that are experts in relevant scientific fields. The Minister will determine whether ecologists should be included.
5. Yes.

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Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: WED **Question No:** 056
Topic: Irrigation Efficiency Partners – referees
Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question: 26 (14/2/12)

Senator Joyce asked:

Senator JOYCE: ...Regarding Irrigation Efficiency Partners, this seems to be the latest stumbling block where we do not seem to be able to get to the bottom of how much money we are getting, what exactly we are doing with it, who is getting it and why they are getting it. Ms Harwood, who were the referees that Irrigation Efficiency Partners provided in their application?

Ms Harwood: I am not sure if I have the names of the referees with me in my documentation. I do not have them.

Senator JOYCE: Were there referees?

Ms Harwood: Yes, there were referees.

Senator JOYCE: Were these referees contacted by the department?

Ms Harwood: Again, I would have to take that on notice.

...

Senator JOYCE: ...I would presume that on behalf of the Australian taxpayer you would have contacted the referees, especially in light of the Toorale Station debacle and the Twynham purchase debacle. We are not going to have another debacle, which it looks awfully like we are about to create. Why can't you tell me who the referees are and whether you have contacted them or not?

Ms Harwood: I just do not have the names with me, Senator. I will take the question on notice.

Answer:

In their application Irrigation Efficiency Partners Pty Ltd (IEP) nominated three referees; Neville Smith - Chief Executive Officer Water for Rivers, Terry McFarlane - Irrigation Way, and Jade Calmo - Calmo Farms Pty Ltd.

At least one referee was contacted for all Stage 1 applicants in Round Two to validate applicant claims against the merit criteria.

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Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: WED **Question No:** 057
Topic: Irrigation Efficiency Partners – project risk assessment
Proof Hansard Page and Date 27
or Written Question: (14/2/12)

Senator Joyce asked:

Senator JOYCE: Did they provide a risk management plan as requested?

Ms Harwood: They provided a project risk assessment.

Senator JOYCE: Okay. What was the detail of that project risk assessment? How in depth was in it?

Ms Harwood: I do not have that with me, Senator. I will take that on notice.

Answer:

In their application Irrigation Efficiency Partners Pty Ltd (IEP) provided a risk assessment detailing 21 risks to their project and treatments to manage these risks. The risk management process undertaken by IEP included:

1. identifying the risks;
2. the consequences if the risks occurred;
3. the likelihood of the risks occurring;
4. the inherent exposure (before treatment) for the risks;
5. the proposed treatments to manage the risks; and
6. who has responsibility for managing the risks.

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Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: WED **Question No:** 058
Topic: Irrigation Efficiency Partners – audited statements
Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question: 27
(14/2/12)

Senator Joyce asked:

Senator JOYCE: The audited statements: tell me about them. Audited by whom?

Ms Harwood: Again I will take that on notice.

Answer:

The audited financial statement provided by Irrigation Efficiency Partners Pty Ltd was audited by R H Salisbury of Rob Salisbury & Associates, Chartered Accountants.

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Program: Division:	4.1: Water Efficiency	Question No: 059
Topic:	Audit of Irrigation Efficiency Partners	
Proof Hansard Page and Date	27-28	
or Written Question:	(14/2/12)	

Senator Joyce asked:

Senator JOYCE: I want to refer you to an answer that you gave to question 76 from the supplementary estimates. In that answer you stated that Irrigation Efficiency Partners was given a high-risk rating for profitability due to the recent formation of IEP. Were any other successful applicants under round 2 of the On-Farm Irrigation Efficiency Program given a high risk rating for the financial indicator by KPMG?

Ms Harwood: For the rating for profitability, I do not believe that is the case. I think they were the only successful delivery partner that was given a high risk rating for profitability. They were given low risk ratings for liquidity, contingent liability and accounting policy, a medium risk rating for financing risk and a high risk rating for profitability. The consultant noted that the latter risk ratings arose because of the factors connected with the recent formation of Irrigation Efficiency Partners.

Senator JOYCE: You have put in place issues to deal with that high risk area?

Ms Harwood: Yes, they are subject to audit, as are other delivery partners at each stage of their process, and they are undergoing a full and rigorous assessment of all the individual on-farm projects that they pull together as a delivery partner. We have close tracking of the delivery of the projects once they are under contract.

Senator JOYCE: Who is doing that audit?

Ms Harwood: I would have to take that on notice in terms of the broader audit who we have commissioned to do the auditing for that.

Answer:

In 2011 an audit was conducted for the On-Farm Irrigation Efficiency (Pilot Projects) Program by Ernst and Young. At this stage an independent audit of the On-Farm Irrigation Efficiency Program has yet to commence as this is appropriately conducted when projects have been delivered.

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Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: WED **Question No:** 060
Topic: Northern Victorian Irrigation Renewal
Project Stage 2
Proof Hansard Page and Date 29
or Written Question: (14/2/12)

Senator Xenophon asked:

Senator XENOPHON: Can you table on notice the due diligence and risk management processes that have been imposed by the Commonwealth on the Victorian government for the delivery of this project?

Ms Harwood: Yes. We can give you a copy of the contractual schedule for the project, which has those matters covered within it.

Answer:

A due diligence assessment of the Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal Project Stage 2 (NVIRP 2) was undertaken by the Commonwealth prior to agreement to the project. This assessed the project against the due diligence criteria for State Priority Projects set out in the Intergovernmental Agreement on Murray-Darling Basin Reform dated 3 July 2008.

A project schedule (funding contract) was subsequently negotiated with the Victorian Government. This sets out the terms and conditions under which the Commonwealth funding for NVIRP 2 will be provided. Payments will be made following the completion, to the Commonwealth's satisfaction, of payment preconditions included in the schedule. A copy of the project schedule is attached. It can also be found on the DSEWPaC website at: <http://www.environment.gov.au/water/publications/action/agreements/vic-bilateral-agreement.html>

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Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: WED **Question No:** 061

Topic: Irrigation efficiency systems

Proof Hansard Page and Date Written

or Written Question:

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. What system assessments have been conducted to assess the efficiency of irrigation delivery systems in different catchments or irrigation districts? What were the findings?
2. Where have Hotspots Assessments been undertaken to date? What were the findings? What actions or projects have been undertaken in response to these assessments? What prompts a Hotspot Assessment to be undertaken?

Answer:

1. Irrigation Modernisation Planning Assistance (IMPA) funds were provided for 16 irrigation water providers under rounds 1 and 2 of the program. Round 3 funding is still open for applications. The 16 plans completed under rounds 1 and 2 are:
 - North Burdekin Water Board (QLD)
 - South Burdekin Water Board (QLD)
 - Sunwater (QLD)
 - Trangie Nevertire Irrigation Scheme (NSW)
 - Tenandra Irrigation Scheme (NSW)
 - Jemalong Irrigation Scheme (NSW)
 - Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area (NSW)
 - Renmark Irrigation Trust (SA)
 - Harvey Water (WA)
 - Murray Irrigation Limited (NSW)
 - Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water (VIC)
 - Southern Rural Water (VIC)
 - Marthaguy Irrigation Scheme (NSW)
 - Western Murray Irrigation Ltd (NSW)
 - Coliban Regional Water Corporation (VIC)

- West Corugan Private Irrigation District (NSW)

An informal internal analysis has been undertaken comparing information from the modernisation plans of the 16 Irrigation Water Providers (IWPs) funded under the first two funding rounds.

Findings:

- The most common source of suspected water loss is evaporation, followed by seepage and leakage. Where IWPs are fully piped, losses are mostly a result of pipe breakage and metering errors.
- There does not seem to be a significant correlation between delivery system efficiencies and crop types.
- There was no apparent relationship between delivery system efficiencies and the size of the organisation's water entitlements or the number of licence holders within a district.
- The average delivery system efficiency for Round 1 and 2 IWPs at the time of modernisation planning was approximately 70 per cent.
- There does not appear to be a significant relationship between system efficiencies and location of the IWP for rounds 1 and 2.

2. *Where have Hotspots Assessments been undertaken to date?*

- Renmark Irrigation Trust (SA)
- Trangie-Nevertire Irrigation Scheme (NSW)
- Tenandra Irrigation Scheme (NSW)
- Murray Irrigation Ltd (NSW)
- Murrumbidgee Irrigation Ltd (NSW)
- Jemalong Irrigation Ltd (NSW)
- West Corugan Private Irrigation District (NSW)
- Marthaguy Irrigation Scheme (NSW)
- Narromine Private Irrigation District (NSW)
- Goodnight Irrigation Trust (NSW)

What were the findings?

The Hotspots Project provided irrigation water providers with information about the nature, location and extent of water losses that arise from their water delivery arrangements, including evaporation, leakage and seepage in their irrigation water delivery system. The assessments also identified potential water savings. The specific findings of the Hotspots Reports and modernisation plans for each irrigation water provider are commercial-in-confidence.

What actions or projects have been undertaken in response to these assessments?

Funding totalling up to \$642,083,527 (GST exclusive) has been either contracted or approved in principle under the Private Irrigation Infrastructure Operators Program (PIIOP) in New South Wales to six of the irrigator water providers who undertook hotspots assessments to modernise and upgrade irrigation infrastructure. These PIIOP projects will improve the efficiency and productivity of water use and management, both off and on farm, by private irrigation infrastructure operators. Similar programs are also underway under the Private Irrigation Infrastructure Program in South Australia.

What prompts a Hotspots Assessment to be undertaken?

It is to the advantage of irrigator water providers to make more efficient use of water. Undertaking a hotspots assessment was required as part of accepting funding under the first two funding rounds of the Irrigation Modernisation Planning Assistance program.

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Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: WED **Question No:** 062
Topic: Water recovery
Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. Has the Government received a proposal from landholders in the Nimmie-Caira for the sale of water entitlements? Has the Government assessed the potential of this proposal? Has any progress been made?
2. Has the Government completed its water recovery strategy?
3. Has the Government developed a purchase plan as outlined in the incoming Minister brief after the 2010 election?
4. Please detail what targeted buybacks have occurred since the announcement of the suspension of general tenders?
5. How much does the Government expect to expend on water buy backs still? Please provide breakdowns of planned expenditure in each year.
6. What is the total spend on water buybacks to date? How much water (measured in the same form as MDBA SDL's are set) has been recovered? What is the average price per Megalitre and per Gigalitre paid for buybacks?

Answer:

1. (a) No. (b) No. (c) The proposal relating to Nimmie-Caira is the subject of a feasibility study by the NSW Government, funded under the Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure Program.
2. The Australian Government is currently developing a water recovery strategy which will be released for community consultation.
3. Water purchasing will be included in the water recovery strategy currently under development (see Question 2).
4. On 23 February 2012, the government announced a new targeted water purchase initiative in the southern connected system of the Murray-Darling Basin which opened on 27 February 2012. Through this initiative the government aims to purchase entitlements held outside of shared irrigation delivery networks, or strategic purchases from within districts provided the irrigation infrastructure operator advises the sale is, in their view, consistent with their plans to modernise and reconfigure their delivery network.
5. The total funding committed to the 'Restoring the Balance in the Murray-Darling Basin' program is \$3.1 billion. The timing of future program expenditure will be determined by the settings in the final Basin Plan the market response to future water purchase initiatives.

6. Total administered expenditure under the 'Restoring the Balance in the Murray-Darling Basin' program for the period 2007-08 through to 31 January 2012 was \$1.843 billion.

The Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (the department) reports aggregated information on purchases secured through exchanged contracts which is updated on a monthly basis, including the average price paid for each entitlement class over the life of the 'Restoring the Balance in the Murray-Darling Basin' program. This information can be accessed at: <http://www.environment.gov.au/water/policy-programs/entitlement-purchasing/progress.html>.

The department also reports the average prices paid, broken down by water entitlement class, in each tender conducted since the beginning of 2010. This data is available at: <http://www.environment.gov.au/water/policy-programs/entitlement-purchasing/average-prices.html>.

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Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: WED **Question No:** 063
Topic: Water infrastructure
Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. What volume of water entitlements has been secured to date via infrastructure projects?
2. What is the volume of water entitlements expected to be secured from projects approved but not yet completed?
3. What volume of water entitlements is expected to be secured from as yet unallocated funds?
4. What is the average cost per megalitre of water entitlements secured under the on farm program compared to the off farm program?
5. Please provide a table outlining for each catchment the volume of water recovered from each infrastructure program, the proportion of such water being returned to the environment, the cost per megalitre of this water since 2007.
6. How much has been spent on water-saving infrastructure projects to date since 2007? How much water (measured in the same form as MDBA SDL's are set) has been recovered? What is the average price per Megalitre paid for water-saving infrastructure?
7. How much does the Government expect to expend on water saving infrastructure projects still? Please provide breakdowns of planned expenditure in each year and size of entitlements expected to be acquired.

Answer:

1. As at 31 January 2012, 187.6 gigalitres (long term average annual yield) had been secured under signed works agreements towards bridging the gap to the Sustainable Diversion Limits under the Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure Program (SRWUIP). This volume will be progressively transferred to the Commonwealth over the life of SRWUIP as projects are delivered.
- 2&3. Over the life of the program, SRWUIP investment is estimated to acquire around 600 gigalitres (long term average annual yield) towards bridging the gap to Sustainable Diversion Limits.

As noted in question 1, at 31 January 2012, 187.6 gigalitres (long term average annual yield) had been secured under signed works agreements towards bridging the gap to the Sustainable Diversion Limits. The remaining water entitlements are expected to be secured from water savings projects that are currently approved and under negotiation and projected water savings from the remaining SRWUIP investments.

4. The average cost per megalitre of water entitlements secured under the on-farm program compared to the off-farm program is in the table below. Note that water entitlements will vary between projects and catchments in terms of their long term annual average water yield. This table includes value propositions which were agreed under the Intergovernmental Agreement on Murray-Darling Basin Reform in 2008.

Description	Programs included	Volume-weighted average cost per ML Commonwealth entitlements (\$/ML)
On-farm	On-farm Irrigation Efficiency Pilot Projects; On-farm Irrigation Efficiency Program (OFIEP) Round 1; New South Wales Irrigation Farm Modernisation Pilot Project; NSW Metering Scheme Pilot Project; Queensland Healthy Headwaters On-farm Water Use Efficiency Project Phase 1.1; NVRIP on farm component	\$3,304/ML
Off-farm	NSW Private Irrigation Infrastructure Operators Program (PIIOP) Round 1; Private Irrigation Infrastructure Program for South Australia (PIIPSA) Round 1; PIIPSA Round 2; SA Riverine Recovery Project; NVIRP Stage 2	\$6,430/ML

5. The table below shows a breakdown of water secured under signed works agreements, at 31 January 2012, towards bridging the gap to the Sustainable Diversion Limits under the Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure Program (SRWUIP).

Catchment	Border Rivers		Condamine Balonne	Goulburn Broken	Gwydir	Lachlan	Macquarie	Murrumbidgee	Murray			Water Savings (GL LTAAY)		Cost (\$/ML entitlement) for savings for the environment
	NSW	Qld							NSW	Vic	SA	Total Savings	Savings towards 'Bridging the Gap'	
On-farm Irrigation Efficiency Pilot Projects					0.375	0.436			0.784			1.595	1.595	2,323
OFIEP				8.233		2.048		6.893	15.798	4.140	0.635	37.747	24.534	2,655
NSW PIIP							19.809	15.268				35.077	34.106	3,886
SA PIIPSA											2.936	2.936	2.117	4,784
NSW Irrigation Farm Mod. Pilot	0.215				0.724							0.939	0.470	5,267
NSW Metering Scheme Pilot									8.570			8.570	3.973	4,541
SA Riverine Recovery (Early Works and Phase 1 only)											4.702	4.702	4.702	5,933
Qld Healthy Headwaters On-farm Water Use Efficiency		3.130	4.697									7.827	4.074	4,601
Vic NVIRP Package				108.606						115.394		224.000	112.000	7,614
Total	0.215	3.130	4.697	116.839	1.099	2.484	19.809	22.161	25.152	119.534	8.273	323.393	187.571	

Note: Allow for minor rounding.

6. At 31 January 2012, under SRWUIP, the Australian Government had paid \$903 million on water saving infrastructure and water efficiency and water knowledge and planning projects and programs. This includes \$412.9 million which had been spent on projects which have delivered or are expected to deliver water savings which will contribute towards the Sustainable Diversion Limits.

At 31 January 2012, the volume-weighted average cost per megalitre of Commonwealth entitlements from agreed SRWUIP projects was \$5,716/ML. This includes projects which were agreed under the Intergovernmental Agreement on Murray-Darling Basin Reform in 2008

7. The government has committed \$5.8 billion for the SRWUIP and the budget profile for this specific program for the forward estimates is provided below. Until project details are agreed and/or competitive funding grant rounds are complete, information about the expected spend on water saving infrastructure projects nor the volume, character and source of water savings that will be transferred is not available.

Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure Program	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
	767,740	808,999	645,997	797,000

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Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities portfolio
Additional Budget Estimates, February 2012

Program: Division: 4.1: WED **Question No:** 064

Topic: Private Irrigators Infrastructure
Program – South Australia

Proof Hansard Page and Date Written

or Written Question:

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. How much of the announced \$110 million has been spent under this program to date? How much water has been recovered? How many projects have been funded? Please provide details of each. How many applications were received for funding? Please provide details of why any unsuccessful applications were unsuccessful.

Answer:

2. At 29 February 2012, contracted funding under the Private Irrigation Infrastructure program for South Australia (PIIP-SA) amounted to \$13.97 million (GST exclusive). An amount of \$2.38 million (GST exclusive) had been spent.

Approved projects will generate a total of 3.57 gigalitres (long-term average annual yield) of water savings. Of this, 2.71 gigalitres (long-term average annual yield) will be transferred to the Commonwealth for environmental watering purposes. At 29 February 2012, 0.88 gigalitres (long-term average annual yield) of water had been recovered.

Thirteen projects have been approved for funding under PIIP-SA, one of which is with a Delivery Partner with 16 sub projects.

Details of approved PIIP-SA grant recipients are at **Attachment A**.

A total of 20 applications were received for funding under Rounds One and Two of PIIP-SA, including two under Delivery Partners with sub projects (one with three sub projects and one with 16 sub projects).

In accordance with the PIIP-SA guidelines, applications were assessed against the following criteria: Economic and Social; Environmental and Technical; Value for Money and Governance. A total of seven applications across Rounds One and Two were unsuccessful. Six of these were not considered to have met the Value for Money and Governance criterion, while the seventh application was not eligible as it did not meet the program guidelines.

Details of Approved Grant Recipients under PIIP-SA

Grant Recipient	Project Description	Region	Cwth Funding (GST Excl)
Barossa Infrastructure Ltd	Upgrade of metering to overcome losses due to inaccurate metering. Involves the replacement of mechanical meters with electronic flow meters.	Tanunda, South Australia	\$704,000
Central Irrigation Trust - Berri Irrigation Trust	Modernisation of the Berri Pumping Station with a new electrical switchboard, variable speed drive motors, cooling fans and air conditioning to remove extra heat generated by pumps, and telemetry and SCADA control.	Barmera, South Australia	\$1,000,000
Haslett Holdings Pty Ltd	Supply and installation of a variable speed pump and automation, an integrated moisture monitoring system and conversion from sprinkler to drip irrigation.	Paringa, South Australia	\$219,227
Pyap Irrigation Trust	Modernisation of the Pyap Pump Station through the purchase and installation of new variable speed drive pumps (to be operated in conjunction with existing pump) and the installation of pipe work and associated fittings.	Loxton, South Australia	\$84,000
Smith Family Trust	Irrigation upgrade including automation, new sprinkler heads and drip irrigation and pump relocation.	Waikerie, South Australia	\$382,028
Sunlands Irrigation Trust	Modernisation of Sunlands water delivery system through the installation of variable speed drives to pumps, and relocation of pumps to a new floating pontoon. The project also involves the installation and programming of system automation software.	Waikerie, South Australia	\$664,000
Woodlane Irrigation Trust	Re-establishment and modernisation of the irrigation and domestic water supply to the 126 hectares of agricultural land within the Woodlane Irrigation District.	Mypolonga, South Australia	\$347,725

Grant Recipient	Project Description	Region	Cwth Funding (GST Excl)
Overland Corner Estate Pty Ltd	Upgrade and improvement of irrigation infrastructure including installation of a new mainline pipe, a larger filtration systems, drip irrigation, a new irrigation control and monitoring software and soil moisture probes.	Barmera, South Australia	\$1,195,000
Vitalharvest Ltd – Kangara	Modernisation and upgrade of irrigation system including the installation of variable speed drive on river pump, spring loaded nozzles on filters, a new larger capacity PVC mainline, a new flowmeter and valves, a new diesel pump, new floating suction, new dripline and soil moisture monitoring probes.	Paringa, South Australia	\$1,281,376
Vitalharvest Ltd – Solora	Modernisation and upgrade of irrigation infrastructure including the installation of a variable-speed drive on the river pump, spring loaded nozzles on filters, storage tanks to filter and re-use back flush water and soil moisture monitoring probes.	Berri, South Australia	\$125,641
Jubilee Almonds Irrigation Trust Inc	Modernisation and improvement of irrigation system including the installation of new stainless steel impellers in pumping station and new herbicide-impregnated filter/pod dripper.	Waikerie, South Australia	\$433,380
Overland Vineyards Pty Ltd	Upgrade of irrigation infrastructure including the installation of new Hydrotitan pumps with variable frequency drives, new pipeline, two variable frequency drives, a control package, moisture monitoring equipment and drip irrigation.	Morgan, South Australia	\$796,799
South Australian Murray-Darling Basin Natural Resource Management Board (delivery partner for 16 sub-projects)	The South Australian Murray-Darling Basin Natural Resources Management Board will act as the Delivery Partner for 16 recommended sub projects. Each of the sub projects will undertake upgrades and improvement of irrigation infrastructure.	Various regions within South Australia	\$7,208,144

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Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: WED **Question No:** 065
Topic: Menindee Lakes
Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. What progress has been made on progressing a joint discussion paper analysing NSW and Federal Government options for reengineering Menindee Lakes? When is this expected to be completed?

Answer:

1. On 3 February 2012, New South Wales' Minister for Primary Industries, the Hon Katrina Hodgkinson MP, responded to a September 2011 letter from the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, the Hon Tony Burke MP, proposing the formation of a joint evaluation team to investigate potential compromise options for Menindee Lakes.

The timeline for completing joint work has not yet been determined.

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Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities portfolio
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Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: WED **Question No:** 066
Topic: Irrigator-led Group Proposal program
Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question: Written

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. How much has been expended on proposals under this program? How many programs have been funded? How much funding is available?
2. How many proposals have been received? How is the program promoted?

Answer:

1. As at 29 February 2012, \$1,874,504.90 has been expended under the program.

As at 29 February 2012, funding has been approved and committed to one project.

Irrigator-led Group Proposals are funded through the following two elements of Water for the Future:

- Water entitlements are purchased using funds from the Restoring the Balance in the Murray-Darling Basin program.
- Infrastructure decommissioning is funded using the Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure program.

All proposals are funded within the funds appropriated to each program.

2. As at 29 February 2012, three proposals have been received by the department. The program is promoted through the department's website.

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Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: WED **Question No:** 067
Topic: Small Block Irrigators Exit Grant Program
Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question: Written

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. How many grants were made under the Small Block Irrigators Exit Grant program? Please detail grants by state. How much land was involved? Please break down by state.
2. Is it correct that all plantings and irrigation infrastructure had to be removed as a condition of the grant? Please detail the terms of the grants related to future land use.
3. Has any research been undertaken as to what has become of this land? How is this land now used?
4. How long does the ban on irrigated agriculture apply to this land?

Answer:

1.

	NSW	SA	VIC	Total
Number of recipients of Small Block Irrigators Exit Grants	13	176	108	297
Farm Area (ha)	138	1,687	922	2,747
Total Irrigated Area (ha)	136	1,432	882	2,450

2. Yes. All permanent plantings and all above ground production related infrastructure on the irrigation block had to be removed prior to receiving the exit grant. In addition, all works approvals, usage licences and supply contracts with the supplier of irrigation water to the irrigation block had to be terminated.

A condition of receiving the exit grant was that grant recipients and no other entity could use the block to carry on an irrigation farming enterprise for five years from the date the exit grant was paid.

3. Centrelink contacts grant recipients annually to confirm that no irrigation is being conducted on the block.

4. Five years from the date the grant was paid to the exit grant recipient. However, the land can be returned to irrigated agriculture before that date if the exit grant recipient repays the exit grant to the Commonwealth.

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Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: WED **Question No:** 068
Topic: Irrigation Efficiency Partners
Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Joyce asked:

1. Does IEP still propose to deliver 11,818 ML of water savings under its application?
2. How do their savings compare to the average cost of other applicants?
3. Please provide a list of all applications, their proposed water savings and at what cost?
4. Has a funding application with IEP been reached? If so, can we have a copy of it?
5. Has the department given IEP more time to meet any of the requirements it needed to provide the department following its successful stage 1 application? If so, what have been the extensions for and for how long?
6. Have any other successful applications been given extensions of time?
7. Has IEP given the department details of the specific projects that it will proceed with? If so, when were these receive and were these delivered within the times originally requested by the department?
8. Has the department given IEP the opportunity to rewrite, adjust or in any way modify the details of the projects it was planning to fund in its original application? If so, have any other applicants been given this opportunity? If so, what have been the details of these adjustments? Has the amount of water savings proposed by IEP changed in any way?

Answer:

1. The Stage 1 application by Irrigation Efficiency Partners Pty Ltd (IEP) offered 11,818 megalitres (ML) of water entitlements (10,760 ML Long Term Annual Average Yield - LTAAY) to the Australian Government from on-farm irrigation infrastructure works. At Stage 2, IEP have offered 9,540 ML of water entitlements (8,010 ML LTAAY) with a commensurate reduction in grant funding.
2. In IEP's Stage 2 application the amount of Australian Government funding requested per megalitre of water entitlement LTAAY offered is \$2,896/ML LTAAY. This compares with \$3,001/ML LTAAY proposed at Stage 1 by IEP. The average for all of the other applicants at Stage 2 is \$3,599/ML LTAAY.
3. The first of the tables below provides a list of: 1) all Stage 1 applications (successful, unsuccessful and ineligible applications); 2) water entitlements offered to the Australian Government; 3) water entitlements offered to the Australian Government in LTAAY terms; and 4) funding requested from the Australian Government. The second table provides equivalent information for Stage 2 assessments.

1) Stage 1 applications	2) Water entitlements offered to the Australian Government ML	3) Water entitlements offered to the Australian Government ML LTAAY	4) Funding requested from the Australian Government \$
Northern Victoria Fresh Tomato Industry Development Committee	1000	950	\$4,635,000
Irrigation Efficiency Partners Pty Ltd	11818	10760	\$32,289,160
Fruit Growers Victoria Limited	992	942	\$6,370,000
Lachlan Catchment Management Authority	5177	2787	\$7,997,138
Best Practice Irrigators Association Inc	4950	4703	\$22,245,300
Ricegrowers' Association of Australia Inc – Murrumbidgee	13602	9138	\$32,222,620
Ricegrowers' Association of Australia Inc - Murray	3206	2617	\$32,222,620
South Australian Murray-Darling Basin Natural Resource Management Board	3295	2965	\$13,998,592
Western Land Planning Pty Ltd	2537	1066	\$7,584,696
Australian Processing Tomato Research Council Inc.	4734	4455	\$23,130,408
Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority	20504	19479	\$80,268,874
Murray Irrigation Limited	14481	11730	\$34,818,115

1) Stage 2 applications	2) Water entitlements offered to the Australian Government ML	3) Water entitlements offered to the Australian Government ML LTAAY	4) Funding requested from the Australian Government \$
Northern Victoria Fresh Tomato Industry Development Committee	1000	936	\$4,635,000
Irrigation Efficiency Partners Pty Ltd	9540	8010	\$23,196,747
Fruit Growers Victoria Limited	1376	1307	\$5,151,571
Lachlan Catchment Management Authority	4734	4447	\$23,130,408
Ricegrowers' Association of Australia Inc - Murray	1182	1008	\$2,292,840
South Australian Murray-Darling Basin Natural Resource Management Board	2853	2331	\$6,910,340
Australian Processing Tomato Research Council Inc.	3143	2837	\$13,179,684
Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority	6363	6045	\$25,095,420
Murray Irrigation Limited	13896	11256	\$33,801,555

4. A funding agreement between IEP and the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities was signed on 8 March 2012. The signing of this agreement is reported on the department's website. The agreement is commercial in confidence as it contains commercial information about individual irrigators and as such it is not appropriate to release.
5. Yes, the department agreed to IEP having an extension of 25 days for submitting their Stage 2 detailed irrigator project plans.
6. Yes, extensions were given to five other successful applicants.
7. Yes, IEP has provided detailed irrigator project plans. The detailed irrigator project plans were received during September and October 2011. The detailed irrigator project plans for one of IEP's projects was provided within the original time-frame requested by the department. With an agreed extension, the remaining two project plans were delivered by IEP.

8. Between Stage 1 and Stage 2 the water saving projects proposed by IEP have been specified in greater detail, as per all other applicants, as explained above. Between Stage 1 and Stage 2, there has been an improvement in value for money for IEP in terms of \$/ML LTAAY. The IEP proposal remains a strong value for money proposal within the On-Farm Irrigation Efficiency Program.

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Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: WED **Question No:** 069

Topic: Strengthening Basin Communities program

Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question: Written

Senator Joyce asked:

1. How much has been spent so far under this program and what has this money been spent on?
2. Has any funding been granted under round 2 of the Water Savings Initiative component?
3. Does the department have any plans to award funding under round 2 of the Water Savings Initiative component?
4. Has the Department advised anyone that it does not intend to fund further projects under this program?
5. If the government does decide not to fund any more projects under this program, how much water would it have actually saved?
6. This program was the result of an agreement that the government reached with Senator Xenophon to acquire his support for its stimulus measures. Has the government advised Senator Xenophon of any potential changes to this program?

Answer:

1. As at 29 February 2012 a total of \$23,179,516.35 has been spent under this program for the completion of contractual milestones for projects awarded grants under the Planning Component and the Water Saving Initiatives Component of the program.
- 2.&3. Yes, offers of funding were made under round 2 of the Water Savings Initiative component for 24 projects (\$34,616,428). Of these, 3 offers (\$3,371,605) were declined; 19 offers (\$19,569,823) were accepted, grant recipients have executed funding agreements and commenced their projects; the remaining 2 offers (\$11,675,000) have been accepted but in both cases the applicant has not yet been able to provide evidence of the required matching cash contribution for the project. There are no plans to award any further grant offers under round 2 of the Water Savings Initiative component.
4. No, the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (the department) has not advised anyone that it does not intend to fund further projects under this program.
5. As at 29 February 2012, Water Savings Initiative component projects are expected to save 19.365 gegalitres. Completed Water Savings Initiative component projects have modelled savings of 1.613 gegalitres (as built) against proposed savings of 1.377 gegalitres. Actual savings are not known yet as none of the projects have yet operated in the completed arrangements for a full year.

6. The department has not prepared any correspondence to Senator Xenophon in regards to any potential changes to this program.

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Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: WED **Question No:** 070
Topic: Water buybacks and infrastructure
Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Joyce asked:

1. How much water do you expect to be returned to the environment from the current Water for the Future program? How much through buyback and how much through infrastructure?
2. What is the Department's best estimate of how much it costs to buyback 1 ML of water? What is the average cost of saving 1 ML of water through infrastructure funding?

Answer:

1. The Australian Government remains committed to 'bridge the gap' to the Sustainable Diversion Limits to be set in the Basin Plan. This will be achieved through investment in water infrastructure, environmental works and measures, a review of river operational rules and water purchase.

It is expected that around 600 gigalitres (long term average annual yield) will be recovered from the Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure Program (SRWUIP) towards bridging the gap. The volume of water which needs to be acquired through water purchasing will not be known until the Basin Plan is finalised, and the water return from SRWUIP, state water recovery efforts, the review of river operational rules and possible environmental works and measures are known.

2. The Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (the department) reports aggregated information on purchases secured through exchanged contracts which is updated on a monthly basis, including the average price paid for each entitlement class over the life of the Restoring the Balance in the Murray-Darling Basin program. This information can be accessed at: <http://www.environment.gov.au/water/policy-programs/entitlement-purchasing/progress.html>.

The department also reports the average prices paid, broken down by water entitlement class, in each tender conducted since the beginning of 2010. This data is available at: <http://www.environment.gov.au/water/policy-programs/entitlement-purchasing/average-prices.html>.

At 31 January 2012, the volume-weighted average cost per megalitre of water entitlements secured by the Commonwealth from agreed SRWUIP projects was \$5,716 per megalitre. This includes projects agreed under the Intergovernmental Agreement on Murray-Darling Basin Reform in 2008.

(Note: This average price covers a wide array of entitlement types and reliabilities.)

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Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: WED **Question No:** 071

Topic: Decommissioning of water infrastructure at Toorale Station

Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question: Written

Senator Joyce asked:

1. Has the government decided against a full decommissioning of the dams and other water infrastructure at Toorale station?
2. Has any infrastructure been decommissioned at Toorale? When is that likely to start?
3. What are the plans for the future of Toorale station? When are these plans likely to be finalised?
4. Can you confirm that one of the reasons you will not be fully decommissioning is that a new ecology has grown in the dams over its 150 years of history? In other words, irrigation infrastructure can actually be good for the environment in some instances? How are we going to protect both natural and artificial ecologies through a basin plan? That would appear to be impossible to fully achieve?
5. If the department is not going to fully decommission the water infrastructure will it consider allowing farming to recommence on Toorale? Is there any possibility that grazing could occur at Toorale in the future?

Answer:

1. No.
2. No infrastructure has been decommissioned as yet. Decommissioning could only be done after achieving all required planning and environmental approvals.
3. Toorale station is owned and administered by the New South Wales (NSW) Government and this question should be directed to them.
4. Any proposal to decommission infrastructure will need to comply with all environmental and planning requirements under state and Commonwealth legislation. The local ecology will be considered in any plan to decommission infrastructure and restore environmental flows.
5. Toorale is managed by NSW in perpetuity under the provisions of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NSW) as an International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) category II reserve.

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Program: Division: 4.1: WED **Question No:** 072

Topic: Water infrastructure at Toorale Station
– impact on ecology

Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question: Written

Senator Joyce asked:

1. If you are letting water go through the infrastructure at Toorale to downstream, how can you be protecting the ecology located at Toorale at the same time?
2. In 2009, the then Minister Wong said that the Toorale purchase would provide up to 80 billion litres of water downstream in flood years. Yet in 2010-11, certainly a flood year, only 7.6 billion litres was provided downstream. Why? Was the outcome to only let 7.6 billion litres downstream at all influenced by the need to protect the local ecology at Toorale?

Answer:

1. Environmental water can provide benefits at connected sites depending on the conditions that apply in that area. For example Toorale water entitlements can be used for the Western flood plain or for benefits along the Darling river. Decisions on use are made after considering the benefits to the local ecology as well as to connected sites.
2. Not all of the maximum water available against Toorale licences was taken in 2010-11 as environmental requirements were being met from natural flows and the balance could be carried over for potential use in later years. Local and downstream requirements were considered as part of this decision.

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Program: Division or Agency 4.1: WED **Question No:** 073

Topic: Water entitlement through Toorale Station

Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question: Written

Senator Joyce asked:

1. Would the entitlement available through Toorale have entitled you to more water in 2010-11 than 7.6 billion litres. How much were you entitled to use and what happened to this water?

Answer:

1. In 2010-11 the maximum volume that could be 'taken' at Toorale was 7.672 gigalitres against the Darling River irrigation entitlements, while a further 2.602 gigalitres was available for use against the Toorale Warrego River irrigation entitlements.

The 7.672 gigalitres 'taken' against the Toorale Darling irrigation entitlements early in the water year contributed to in-stream flows between Toorale and Menindee Lakes. A total of 6.58 gigalitres was delivered to the Great Darling Anabranch, providing in-stream and floodplain wetland benefits to the Anabranch and its system of ephemeral lakes. The remaining 1.092 gigalitres provided environmental benefits along the Darling River and at Menindee Lakes.

Access to the 2.602 gigalitres available against the Toorale Warrego River irrigation entitlements in 2010-11 became available following subsequent heavy rainfall that also generated significant flows in the Darling River. As demand for further environmental water was low at that time, the 2.602 gigalitres was carried over to provide for environmental demands in 2011-12.

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Program: Division: 4.1: Water Efficiency **Question No:** 074

Topic: Provision of water from Toorale Station

Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question: Written

Senator Joyce asked:

1. How much water has the purchase of Toorale provided to the Murray mouth?

Answer:

1. Up to 31 January 2012, the Toorale Warrego and Darling River entitlements had returned 67 gigalitres of water to the environment, providing in-stream benefits in the Warrego and Darling Rivers (including the Darling Anabranh) and to support wetlands in the lower Darling and lower River Murray.

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Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: WED **Question No:** 075

Topic: Social and economic analysis of
Toorale Station on Bourke Township

Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Joyce asked:

1. Has the department ever undertake an economic or social impact analysis on the town of Bourke before it bought back Toorale station?
2. Is the department aware Toorale station represented 10 per cent of Bourke's business and 4 per cent of the shire's rates?
3. What compensation has the government offered to the town of Bourke?

Answer:

1. Toorale station was purchased by the New South Wales Government with financial assistance from the Commonwealth Government. In 2008, the then New South Wales' Department of Environment and Climate Change and Department of Water and Energy completed a report on the local impacts of the purchase of Toorale.
2. The then Mayor of Bourke, Councillor Wayne O'Malley, wrote to the then Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator the Hon Penny Wong, on 5 September 2008 advising that Toorale Station contributed 4 per cent of total shire rates.
3. This is a matter for the New South Wales Government.

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Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: WED **Question No:** 076

Topic: Impact of water saving infrastructure on Sustainable Diversion Limits

Proof Hansard Page and Date Written

or Written Question:

Senator Joyce asked:

1. What volume of water entitlements has been secured for the Murray-Darling, to go towards the sustainable diversion limit set by the basin plan, to date via infrastructure projects?
2. How much has been spent on infrastructure projects which have delivered or are expected to deliver water savings into the Murray-Darling to contribute towards the SDL set by the basin plan?

Answer:

1. As at 31 January 2012, entitlements with a long term average annual yield of 187.6 gigalitres had been secured under works contracts through Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure Program (SRWUIP) towards bridging the gap to Sustainable Diversion Limits.
2. At 31 January 2012, under SRWUIP \$412.9 million had been spent on projects which have delivered or are expected to deliver water savings towards bridging the gap to Sustainable Diversion Limits.

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Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: WED **Question No:** 077

Topic: Increase in impairment losses – water buybacks

Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question: Written

Senator Joyce asked:

1. Can you please explain why the department has experienced an \$84m increase in impairment losses recognised on water entitlement assets, in 2010–11 impairments of \$183.9m were recognised (2009–10: \$99.8m). Does this mean that taxpayers have lost \$184 million by overpaying for water buybacks over the past two years?

Answer:

1. Water entitlements are considered under Australian Accounting Standards as intangible assets with an indefinite useful life. Water entitlements are carried at cost and subject to annual testing for impairment. The values used in this assessment reference relevant water entitlement sales data. The market prices of water entitlements vary up and down over time and many factors affect these prices including water availability and commodity prices. Apart from entitlements flowing from infrastructure investments, water entitlements were almost all purchased through tender processes, set firmly in a market context, which made a cost effectiveness comparison of the offer price with the relevant market price prevailing at the time. Once acquired, the water entitlements become part of the Commonwealth environmental water holdings and are managed for environmental purposes as provided for under the *Water Act 2007*.

No.

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Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: WED **Question No:** 078

Topic: Menindee Lakes - status

Proof Hansard Page and Date Written

or Written Question:

Senator Joyce asked:

1. What is the status of negotiations between the government and the NSW government on works on Menindee Lakes?
2. How much water are works at Menindee expected to contribute towards the sustainable diversion limit set by the basin plan?

Answer:

1. On 3 February 2012, the New South Wales Minister for Primary Industries, the Hon Katrina Hodgkinson MP, responded to a September 2011 letter from the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, the Hon Tony Burke MP, agreeing to a joint evaluation team to investigate potential project options at Menindee Lakes.
2. There are a range of potential projects involving combinations of infrastructure works, operational changes and volume of water savings. The Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities is in discussion with the Murray-Darling Basin Authority about how much of these potential savings could contribute towards bridging the gap to new Sustainable Diversion Limits.

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Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: WED

Question No: 079

Topic: Expenditure for water programs

Proof Hansard Page and Date Written

or Written Question:

Senator Joyce asked:

1. Can the Department please provide a list of expenditure under each of the following programs for all financial years beginning 2007-08, and include the most up to date spending for the current financial year. Can the Department also provide forecast or projected for these programs over the forward estimates?

- a. Restoring the Balance.
- b. Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure.
- c. National Water Security Plan for Cities and Towns
- d. National Rainwater and Greywater Initiative
- e. Green Precincts Fund

Answer:

1a.

	Expenditure (\$'000) [#]					Estimates (\$'000) ^{# *}			
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12 1 Jul – 31 Jan	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Restoring the Balance	33,059	371,706	780,188	357,677	300,229	521,789	229,671	150,013	349,190

1b.

	Expenditure (\$'000) [#]					Estimates (\$'000) ^{# *}			
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12 1 Jul – 31 Jan	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure	122,001	63,485	213,704	225,666	276,821	737,178	785,571	645,997	797,000

1c.

	Expenditure (\$'000) [#]					Estimates (\$'000) ^{# *}			
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12 1 Jul – 31 Jan	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
National Water Security Plan for Cities and Towns	10,000	13,041	13,659	17,240	37,933	145,704	22,409	21,288	8,000

1d.

	Expenditure (\$'000) [#]					Estimates (\$'000) ^{# *}			
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12 1 Jul – 31 Jan	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
National Rainwater and Greywater Initiative	Nil	620	4,661	2,315	241	533	Nil	Nil	Nil

1e.

	Expenditure (\$'000) [#]					Estimates (\$'000) ^{# *}			
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12 1 Jul – 31 Jan	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Green Precincts Fund	Nil	500	5,097	5,188	568	2,527	Nil	Nil	Nil

Notes:

All figures provided refer to Administered program funding.

* Estimates per updates at 2011-12 Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements.

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Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities portfolio
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Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: WED **Question No:** 080

Topic: Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal
Project Stage 2 – MDBA analysis

Proof Hansard Page and Date Written

or Written Question:

Senator Hanson-Young asked:

1. Regarding the NVIRP stage 2 water savings, has due diligence been completed for this project?
2. How much water is certain to be regained through NVIRP and what is the best case scenario projected?
3. Are the water savings contingent on a commitment in principle from the Victorian government and has that commitment been given?
4. What amount of the NVIRP water savings is expected to be lost to evaporation?
5. How much will the water cost per mega litre?
6. Is there a business case in existence which demonstrates the cost efficiency of the billion dollar federal funding for stage 2 water purchases which is said to achieve 214GL in water savings?
7. Does the MDBA have any analysis on which it is relying which shows that the water purchased through this program will be cost efficient and at appropriate market price?

Answer:

1. Yes.
2. The Commonwealth will receive 214 gigalitres (long term average annual yield) of water through the three elements of the Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal Project (NVIRP) Stage 2 package, including water sale.
3. There were commitments required from the Victorian Government - these are set out in the Intergovernmental Agreement on Murray-Darling Basin Reform, the Commonwealth/Victoria Water Management Partnership Agreement, the Heads of Agreement and the Project Schedule.
4. It is not possible to state what proportion of water holdings will be lost to evaporation, as this will depend on factors including the duration and location of the holdings, and climatic conditions.

5. The sale of 102 gigalitres (long term average annual yield) to the Commonwealth as part of the NVIRP Stage 2, for a payment of \$219 million, gives an average cost of \$2,147/megalitre (long term average annual yield). With respect to the other 112 gigalitres (long term average annual yield) of savings to be obtained through NVIRP Stage 2, the cost for savings for the environment is calculated to be \$7,614/megalitre (long term average annual yield).
6. From analysis of the business cases submitted by the Victorian Government, it was confirmed as part of the due diligence assessment process that it will be cost efficient to undertake NVIRP Stage 2 in return for the range of outcomes that will be achieved, including the delivery of water to the Commonwealth.
7. The Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Populations and Communities, not the Murray-Darling Basin Authority, is responsible for determining that water purchased through this program will be cost efficient and at an appropriate market price. In determining value for money under the Restoring the Balance in the Murray-Darling Basin Program, the Commonwealth references the prevailing market price for the entitlement being offered and draws upon independent expert advice on market conditions. Price information obtained from state registers, irrigation water provider registers, agents, brokers and water trading exchanges is used to guide this process.

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Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities portfolio
Additional Budget Estimates, February 2012

Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: WED **Question No:** 081

Topic: Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal
Project Stage 2

Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Joyce asked:

1. In what catchments will the 214 GL from NVIRP stage 2 be recovered from?

Answer:

1. The 214 gigalitres long term average annual yield of water savings from the Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal Project Stage 2 package, agreed under a Heads of Agreement exchanged with the Victorian Government on 18 October 2011, will be recovered from the Goulburn and the Victorian Murray catchments.

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

Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: WRD **Question No:** 082
Topic: Water budget
Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Joyce asked:

1. How much additional money does the department expect it to cost to reach the MDBA's proposed target of 2750 GL, on top of money that is already set aside in the Water for the Future program?
2. What provision has the government made in the budget for these additional costs?

Answer:

1. The Australian Government remains committed to 'bridge the gap' to the sustainable diversion limits to be set in the Basin Plan. This will be achieved through investment in water infrastructure, environmental works and measures, a review of river operational rules and water purchase.

The volume of water which needs to be acquired through water purchasing will not be known until the Basin Plan is finalised, and the water return from Sustainable Rural Water Use Infrastructure Program (SRWUIP), state water recovery efforts, the review of river operational rules and possible environmental works and measures are known. The cost of acquiring the required volume will depend on future water entitlement prices.

2. The government announced in the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook in November 2010 that additional funding of \$310 million per year would be provided for water purchases from 2014-15 so that the 'bridging the gap' commitment could be delivered.

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

Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: WGD **Question No:** 083
Topic: Adelaide Desalination Plant
Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. Please outline the milestone payment delays experienced for the 50GL Adelaide Desalination Project? Have any such payment delays been incurred under the implementation plan for the 100GL Adelaide Desalination Plant? What payments have been made? What milestones have been met? What milestones remain outstanding?

Answer:

1. The status of milestone payments for the Adelaide Desalination Project (50 gigalitres per annum), as at 3 March 2012, is:
 - Milestone 1: \$25.0 million paid.
 - Milestone 2: \$35.0 million paid.
 - Milestone 3: \$30.0 million paid. Achievement of this milestone was delayed due to factors including: an occupational health and safety incident, inclement weather, and high voltage electrical equipment supply and installation delays.
 - Milestone 4: Final milestone was scheduled for August 2011. Achievement of this milestone has been delayed as a consequence of the delays experienced under milestone 3.

The status of milestone payments for the Adelaide Desalination Project (100 gigalitres per annum), as at 3 March 2012, is:

- Milestone 1: \$76.0 million paid.
- Milestone 2: Not yet achieved (no immediate payment is associated with this milestone).
- Milestone 3: \$53.2 million paid.
- Milestone 4: Scheduled for May 2012.
- Milestone 5: Final milestone scheduled for December 2012.

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Answers to questions on notice
Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities portfolio
Additional Budget Estimates, February 2012

Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: WGD **Question No:** 084
Topic: Adelaide Desalination Plant
Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Joyce asked:

1. When will the government complete payments to the South Australian government for the Adelaide Desalination project? Have payments under this program been held up for any reason? If so, why? Have any milestones been missed? If so, which ones?

Answer:

1. Payments to the South Australian Government for the Adelaide Desalination Plant are made on completion of milestones set out under the two relevant implementation plans. As currently scheduled the final payment is expected to be made on 31 December 2012.

The implementation plan for the Adelaide Desalination Project (50 gigalitres per annum) has experienced milestone payment delays as construction has been later than originally scheduled. As at 3 March 2012, no milestone payments have been delayed under the implementation plan for the augmentation of the Adelaide Desalination Plant (100 gigalitres per annum). However milestone two, for which there is no immediate payment, has not yet been achieved.

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
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Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: WRD **Question No:** 085
Topic: EPBC Act – Water trigger
Proof Hansard Page and Date 41
or Written Question: (14/2/12)

Senator Waters asked:

Senator WATERS: Water is not a current trigger under the act, is it?

Mr Parker: Not of itself. But when the act is triggered because of a matter of national environmental significance, then water becomes relevant.

Senator WATERS: Are you aware of a bill that I have tabled in the Senate to add a water trigger as regards mining impacts?

Mr Parker: Yes, Senator.

Senator WATERS: Have you provided the minister with any advice as to the scope and impact of that bill?

Mr Parker: Yes, Senator.

Senator WATERS: I suppose I cannot get a copy of that, can I? I would love one if I can.

Mr Parker: Ordinarily we do not provide the advice that we have provided to the minister, but if you were to ask for it then we could take the question on notice.

Answer:

The department advised the Minister on the proposed Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Protecting Australia's Water Resources) Bill. As has been longstanding practice, the department does not table policy advice provided to the Minister.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
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Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: WRD **Question No:** 086

Topic: Mining on Stradbroke Island – proximity to Ramsar site

Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question: 42 (14/2/12)

Senator Waters asked:

Senator WATERS: ...I want to move now to mining on Stradbroke Island in Queensland. As you would know, Moreton Bay was designated as a Ramsar site about 18 years ago. Can you confirm for me that no ecological character description and no management plan exists for the North Stradbroke Island area of Moreton Bay?

Mr Parker: Senator, I will see if we have someone who can answer that question.

Mr Slatyer: That is under my responsibility, Senator, but regrettably I cannot answer that question right here, so I will have to take it on notice.

Senator WATERS: If you could, thank you. It is my understanding that there is not, but please, by all means.

Mr Slatyer: I may be able to get an answer for you.

Senator WATERS: That would be helpful, thank you. Are you aware that the Queensland government has authorised open-cut sand mining to take place within 30 metres of the Ramsar boundary of 18 Mile Swamp on North Straddie?

Mr Slatyer: I will have to take it on notice whether the department has been notified of that.

Answer:

Ecological Character Description and Management Plan

A draft ecological character description for the Moreton Bay Ramsar site is being finalised by the Queensland Department of Resource Management in consultation with the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (the department). There is no single management plan for the Ramsar site. However, there are a number of state-based statutory and non-statutory management plans which apply over broader areas of Moreton Bay and Southeast Queensland which cover much of the Ramsar site, including North Stradbroke Island.

Awareness of mining 30 metres from 18 mile Swamp

The department is aware that under the *North Stradbroke Island Protection and Sustainability Act 2011*, the Queensland Government has given approval to undertake mining actions within a restricted mine path that includes Mining Lease (ML) 1105, ML 1117 and other leases. The documents available to the department do not specify a precise distance between these leases and 18 Mile Swamp.

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
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Additional Budget Estimates, February 2012

Program: Division or Agency:	4.1: WRD	Question No:	087
Topic:	Mining on Stradbroke Island – Advice received by Commonwealth from Queensland Government		
Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question:	42 (14/2/12)		

Senator Waters asked:

Senator WATERS: ...Did the Queensland government ask the Commonwealth about the Ramsar impacts of this renewed mining lease?

Mr Slatyer: Again I apologise, Senator. I do not have that data.

Senator WATERS: If you could take that on notice as well. If the Queensland government did not consult, is the Commonwealth aware that, in renewing the expired lease to allow the mine, deep dredging mining below the water level has been permitted by the state government—and obviously with Ramsar implications? If you could take that on notice as well.

Answer:

Assuming the question is in relation to Mining Lease 1105, the Queensland Government did not inform or consult with the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities on this matter.

See also answer to Question on Notice number 86.

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Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: WRD **Question No:** 088

Topic: Mining on Stradbroke Island –
management plan for Ramsar site

Proof Hansard Page and Date 42-43

or Written Question: (14/2/12)

Senator Waters asked:

Senator WATERS: My question is about whether or not the Commonwealth will develop its own management plan for that relevant area as a Ramsar site?

Mr Slatyer: We only do that for Commonwealth owned property; it is the state that develops the management arrangements and implements those management plans.

Senator WATERS: That is done in conjunction with the Commonwealth, it is my understanding.

Mr Slatyer: Yes. We are consulted, of course, but it is the state's responsibility to manage the site.

Senator WATERS: So, given this threat to the Ramsar values of Eighteen Mile Swamp, will the Commonwealth now suggest to the Queensland government that it begin to develop a management plan to deal with those threats?

Mr Slatyer: I will take on notice our interaction with Queensland on that site. I did not bring that with me.

Answer:

The Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (the department) continues to work with the states regarding the status of all Ramsar sites. Management and management planning for Ramsar sites on State land and waters is the responsibility of the relevant State jurisdiction. Queensland already has a range of management plans which aim to improve or protect the values at the Moreton Bay Ramsar site, including North Stradbroke Island.

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Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: WRD **Question No:** 089
Topic: Water for the Future
Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. Can you please update me on the Water for the Future programs review. When is this review expected to be completed? Released?
2. Please detail how much has been expended to date and how much water has been recovered to date under each of the following programs:
 - a. Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure
 - b. Restoring the Balance in the Basin
 - c. Great Artesian Basin Sustainability Initiative
 - d. National Water Security Plan for Cities and Towns
 - e. Green Precincts
 - f. National Rainwater and Greywater Initiatives
 - g. National Urban Water and Desalination Plan
 - h. Water Smart Australia

Answer:

1. The 'Water for the Future' Review is being considered through Cabinet processes.
2. Please see detail below on how much has been expended to date and how much water has been recovered to date for each of the aforementioned programs. For the purposes of this answer recovered water is interpreted as water entitlements secured for environmental purposes.
 - a. At 31 January 2012, \$901.7 million had been expended under the 'Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure' Program (SRWUIP). Water entitlements with a long term average annual yield of 187.6 gigalitres had been secured under works contracts through SRWUIP towards bridging the gap to Sustainable Diversion Limits.
 - b. At 31 January 2012, total administered expenditure for the 'Restoring the Balance in the Murray-Darling Basin' program was \$1,842.9 million. At 31 January 2012, the 'Restoring the Balance in the Murray-Darling Basin' program had secured 989.1 gigalitres of water for the environment, measured in long term average annual yield terms.

- c. At 31 January 2012, \$13.7 million of Australian Government funding had been expended under the Great Artesian Basin Sustainability Initiative (Phase 3) resulting in 16.2 gigalitres of water per annum being retained in the Great Artesian Basin system.
- d. At 31 January 2012, expenditure under the National Water Security Plan for Cities and Towns is \$91.9 million. Under this urban water program water entitlements are not secured for environmental purposes.
- e. At 31 January 2012, expenditure under Green Precincts is \$11.4 million. Under this urban water program water entitlements are not secured for environmental purposes.
- f. At 31 January 2012, expenditure under the National Rainwater and Greywater Initiative is \$7.8 million. Under this urban water program water entitlements are not secured for environmental purposes.
- g. At 31 January 2012, expenditure under the National Urban Water and Desalination program is \$352.0 million. The Implementation Plan for Augmentation of the Adelaide Desalination Plant (100 gigalitres per annum) secures within South Australia six gigalitres of permanent environmental water entitlement and 120 gigalitres of environmental provision over a ten year rolling period.
- h. At 31 January 2012, expenditure under the Water Smart Australia program is \$1.4 billion. This program commenced in 2005 and has secured 232.57 gigalitres of water for environmental purposes, of which 2.57 gigalitres is being transferred to the Commonwealth, and 230 gigalitres is being transferred to relevant State Government environmental water managers.

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Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: WRD **Question No:** 090
Topic: National Water Commission review
Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question: Written

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. Has Dr David Rosalky's review of the NWC been completed? When will this review be released?

Answer:

1. Yes, the Review has been completed. It was tabled in Parliament on 14 March 2012.

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Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: WRD **Question No:** 091

Topic: Removal of Structures in the Lower Lakes

Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question: Written

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. Have all conditions imposed under EPBC Act approvals or funding agreements associated with the removal of structures built around Lake Alexandrina and Lake Albert during the recent drought been adhered to? If not, please detail those that have not and what action has been taken as a result of such breaches?

Answer:

EPBC Act conditions

Approval requirements imposed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* for the removal of temporary structures built around Lake Alexandrina and Lake Albert during the recent drought have been adhered to.

Funding Agreement conditions

Narrung Bund removal funding agreement

All conditions under the funding agreement for the removal of the Narrung Bund have been adhered to with the exception of:

- excavate introduced sand and disposal by 7 June 2011 – completed 18 July 2011; and
- undertake site cleanup, demobilisation and baseline bathymetric survey by 8 July 2011 – completed 26 July 2011.

These two requirements were delayed due to adverse weather conditions creating occupational health and safety concerns at the site.

Clayton regulator removal and Currency Creek regulator removal investigations funding agreement

All conditions for the Clayton regulator removal and Currency Creek regulator removal investigations funding agreement have been adhered to with the exception of:

- removal of the land based roadway portion of the Clayton regulator; and
- complete the business case and implementation plan for the removal of the Currency Creek regulator by 31 December 2011.

The removal of the land based portion of the Clayton regulator is underway. A draft business case for the Currency Creek regulator removal was provided on 31 January 2012.

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Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: WRD **Question No:** 092

Topic: Continuation of the National Water Commission

Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question: Written

Senator Joyce asked:

1. Has the Department provided any advice to the government on whether the National Water Commission should continue? If so, does the department consider that the National Water Commission should continue?

Answer:

1. The department has provided advice to the Australian Government on matters arising in the Review of the National Water Commission. The government announced on 14 March 2012 that it is proposing that the National Water Commission continue, and is seeking COAG's endorsement of this position.

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Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: WRD **Question No:** 093
Topic: Refined purchase plan
Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Joyce asked:

1. In the advice the Department gave to the Minister after the election it proposed to announce a refined “purchase plan” as soon as the Guide is released. Was that purchase plan released? Does the government plan to release a refined “purchase plan” in the future? If so when?

Answer:

1. In its response to the Windsor Inquiry tabled on 24 November 2011, the Australian Government agreed to develop a publicly released water recovery strategy. Consistent with the response, the government is currently working with stakeholders to develop and refine this strategy, including the proposed approach to future purchasing. The strategy will be released for community consultation.

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Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: WRD **Question No:** 094
Topic: Water for the Future Review
Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question: Written

Senator Joyce asked:

1. Please provide an update on the Water for the Future program review. When is it due for completion?

Answer:

1. The Water for the Future Review is being considered through Cabinet processes.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
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Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: WRD **Question No:** 095

Topic: North Stradbroke Island - Ramsar wetland

Proof Hansard Page and Date Written

or Written Question:

Senator Waters asked:

1. Is the Department aware that the Queensland government has authorised the open cut sand mine, Enterprise mine, to take place within 30 metres of the Ramsar boundary adjacent to the 18 mile swamp wetland on the East coast of North Stradbroke Island?
2. Prior to the Queensland government renewing expired lease ML 1117 at the Enterprise mine in April 2011 under special legislation (North Stradbroke Island Protection and Sustainability Act 2011) to 31 December 2019, did the Queensland government inform or consult with the Commonwealth on this matter?
3. If the Queensland government did not consult, is the Commonwealth aware that the Queensland government renewed this expired lease which allows open cut sand mining, including deep dredge mining below the island's water table level, to continue at Enterprise mine?
4. Section 333 of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act requires that the Government use its best endeavours to ensure a management plan is prepared and implemented in co-operation with relevant States or territories. What steps has the Government taken to ensure its obligations in accordance with s.333? Has the Government taken any steps to ensure that an Ecological Character Description and management plan for these areas on North Stradbroke Island be prepared? If so, what steps have been taken to date, and when can these documents be expected for public release?
5. Has the Minister or the Department engaged in any discussions or correspondence with representatives for Enterprise mine regarding mining on North Stradbroke Island?
6. Has the Minister or the Department engaged in any discussions or correspondence with the Queensland Government regarding the Enterprise mine, or sand mining more broadly on North Stradbroke Island?

Answer:

1. If this question is in relation to Mining Lease (ML) 1105, the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Sustainability (the department) is aware that under the *North Stradbroke Island Protection and Sustainability Act 2011*, the Queensland Government has given approval to undertake actions including a dredge path and dry mining within a restricted mine path that includes ML 1105, ML 1117 and other leases. The document available to the department does not specify a precise distance from the Ramsar site.

2. No.
3. The department is aware that under the *North Stradbroke Island Protection and Sustainability Act 2011*, the Queensland Government has given approval for mining to continue at Enterprise mine. See also response to Question 1.
4. A draft ecological character description for the Moreton Bay Ramsar site is being finalised by the Queensland Department of Resource Management (DERM) in consultation with the department. The release of the finalised ecological character description will be determined by DERM in consultation with the department.

There is no single management plan for the Ramsar site. However there are a number of state-based statutory and non-statutory management plans which apply over broader areas of Moreton Bay and Southeast Queensland which cover the Ramsar site, including North Stradbroke Island.

5. Yes.
6. The department has no record of discussions or correspondence with the Queensland Government regarding the Enterprise mine or sand mining more broadly on Stradbroke Island in connection with the removal of the existing lease.

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Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: WRD **Question No:** 096

Topic: Role of the Murray-Darling Reform
Joint Taskforce

Proof Hansard Page and Date Written

or Written Question:

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. What role does this group have in the development of the Basin Plan?
2. What input have they had and what changes have been suggested by the group?

Answer:

- 1-2. A taskforce of officers drawn from the Murray-Darling Basin Commission and the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (the department) was formed to assist with the establishment of the Murray-Darling Basin Authority and manage changes to associated administrative arrangements. It had no role in relation to development of the Basin Plan and completed its administrative tasks before the work to develop the Basin Plan commenced.

Separately, in March 2011, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) and the department established a joint taskforce on issues relating to water reform in the Murray-Darling Basin. The Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport also contributed to the work of this taskforce. This taskforce, which wound-up in September 2011, played no role in the development of the Basin Plan.

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Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: WRD **Question No:** 097

Topic: Basin Plan – Interdepartmental committee

Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question: Written

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. Please detail the members of the interdepartmental committee formed to assist in progressing input into the draft Basin Plan.
2. Please provide all minutes of meetings of this committee.
3. How often has the committee met?
4. What input has the committee had into the draft Basin Plan?
5. What role does the committee have in relation to the Basin Plan?
6. What input has the MDBA sought from the committee?
7. Did the committee review the draft Basin Plan before its release? Did the committee make any recommendations or propose changes to the draft Basin plan? Were these recommendations or changes accepted?

Answer:

The Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities periodically convenes meetings of officers from various Commonwealth departments and agencies (including the Murray-Darling Basin Authority) to update and receive feedback from them on developments related to the draft Basin Plan and associated policies.

These meetings do not formally make recommendations or propose changes to the draft Basin Plan. The Authority is an independent statutory body. The Authority considers views expressed in all consultative forms as part of its statutory responsibility to prepare a Basin Plan for consideration by the Minister and the Parliament.

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Program: Division or Agency: 4.1: WRD **Question No:** 098

Topic: Dr Rosalky's Review of the National Water Commission

Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question: Written

Senator Joyce asked:

1. Has the government received Dr Rosalky's Review of the National Water Commission? When does it expect to respond to this review and make a decision on the future of the National Water Commission?

Answer:

1. The Review was tabled in the Parliament on 14 March 2012. On the same day, the Australian Government announced its intention to continue the National Water Commission, subject to COAG endorsement.