

**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 2013

<b>Program: Division or Agency:</b>	MDBA	<b>Question No:</b>	220
<b>Topic:</b>	MDBA – Budget restrictions to the Authority’s operations		
<b>Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question:</b>	44 (12/2/13)		

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

Senator BIRMINGHAM: On notice, would you provide a bit of a breakdown for us in terms of the reductions undertaken and where they have targeted New South Wales versus where they had been spread across the board.

Dr Dickson: Certainly.

**Answer:**

As a result of New South Wales reducing its funding for the joint programs from \$32.2 million to \$12.4 million in 2012/13, the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council (the Ministerial Council) agreed to a range of budget reductions in 2012/13 across the River Management Program, Natural Resource Management Program and Murray-Darling Basin Authority administration as outlined in **Table 1** below.

In addition, the Ministerial Council agreed to discontinue the Climate Change project and to cease the Native Fish Strategy and the Sustainable Rivers Audit on 30 June 2013.

The Ministerial Council has not yet decided which programs will be affected by the further New South Wales reduction of approximately \$3 million in 2013/14.

**Table 1: 2012/13 budgeted expenditure before and after the application of the New South Wales funding reductions**

<b>Program</b>	<b>Pre cuts 2012-2013 budgeted expenditure (\$ '000)</b>	<b>Reduction to NSW activities (\$ '000)</b>	<b>Reduction to other activities (\$ '000)</b>	<b>Total reduction (\$ '000)</b>	<b>Post cuts 2012-13 budgeted expenditure (\$ '000)</b>
River Murray Management	\$65,103	-\$4,500	-\$4,632	-\$9,132	\$55,971
<i>Hume Dam</i>		-\$808		-\$808	
<i>Menindee Lakes</i>		-\$101		-\$101	
<i>Wentworth Weir</i>		-\$101		-\$101	
<i>Euston Weir</i>		-\$1,100		-\$1,100	
<i>Lake Victoria</i>		-\$315	-\$2,103	-\$2,418	
<i>Dartmouth Dam</i>			-\$133	-\$133	
<i>Yarrawonga Weir</i>			-\$75	-\$75	
<i>Torrumbarry Weir</i>			-\$39	-\$39	
<i>Mildura Weir</i>			-\$800	-\$800	
<i>Locks 1-9 and barrages</i>			-\$411	-\$411	
<i>Salt interception schemes</i>		-\$475	-\$1,050	-\$1,525	
<i>Hydrometric network</i>		-\$337		-\$337	
<i>River channel management</i>		-\$1,155		-\$1,155	
<i>Forest water management</i>		-\$108		-\$108	
<i>River Murray Office</i>			-\$21	-\$21	
The Living Murray	\$16,599	-\$1,400	\$190 <sup>(1)</sup>	-\$1,210	\$15,389
Basin Salinity Management Strategy	\$2,281		-\$215	-\$215	\$2,066
Cap Implementation	\$971		-\$367	-\$367	\$604
River Murray Water Quality	\$1,278	-\$114	-\$56	-\$170	\$1,108
Water Trade	\$427		-\$42	-\$42	\$385
River Murray Modelling	\$830				\$830
Murray–Darling freshwater research centre	\$1,259				\$1,259
Indigenous Engagement	\$2,242	-\$180	-\$274	-\$454	\$1,788
Geospatial services	\$1,172		-\$695	-\$695	\$477
Emergency Measures	\$5,000		-\$3,413	-\$3,413	\$1,587
Sustainable Rivers Audit	\$3,225		-\$1,343	-\$1,343	\$1,882
Climate change project (SEACI)	\$600		-\$600	-\$600	\$0
Native Fish Strategy	\$2,800	-\$382	-\$701	-\$1,083	\$1,717
Secretariat Services	\$562				\$562
Reviews	\$1,000		-\$271	-\$271	\$729
Corporate and enabling services	\$7,314		-\$804	-\$804	\$6,510
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$112,663</b>	<b>-\$6,576</b>	<b>-\$13,223</b>	<b>-\$19,799</b>	<b>\$92,864</b>

(1) Additional funding for Victorian component of icon site management where previously shared with New South Wales.

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**Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities portfolio**  
Additional Budget Estimates, February 2013

**Program: Division or Agency:** MDBA **Question No:** 221  
**Topic:** MDBA - Budget  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written  
**or Written Question:**

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

1. What activities will be cut as a result of reduced funding from NSW and SA to the MDBA?
2. How will this affect the MDBA's ability to implement the Basin Plan?
3. How will this affect the MDBA's ability to manage the river?
4. For each of the following financial years 2012-13, 2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16, can details be provided of the overall budget for the Murray-Darling Basin Authority, including a breakdown of funding provided, or expected to be provided, by federal and individual jurisdictions?

**Answer:**

1. As a result of New South Wales reducing its funding for the joint programs from \$32.2 million to \$12.4 million in 2012/13, the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council (the Ministerial Council) agreed to a range of Budget reductions in 2012/13 across the River Management Program, Natural Resource Management Program and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority administration as outlined in **Table 1** below.

In addition, the Ministerial Council agreed to discontinue the Climate Change project and to cease the Native Fish Strategy and the Sustainable Rivers Audit on 30 June 2013.

The Ministerial Council has not yet decided which programs will be affected by the further New South Wales reduction of approximately \$3 million in 2013/14 or the South Australian reduction of \$14.3 million in 2014/15.

**Table 1: 2012/13 budgeted expenditure before and after the application of the New South Wales funding reductions**

<b>Program</b>	<b>Pre cuts 2012-2013 budgeted expenditure (\$ '000)</b>	<b>Reduction to NSW activities (\$ '000)</b>	<b>Reduction to other activities (\$ '000)</b>	<b>Total reduction (\$ '000)</b>	<b>Post cuts 2012-13 budgeted expenditure (\$ '000)</b>
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<i>Mildura Weir</i>			-\$800	-\$800	
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(1) Additional funding for Victorian component of icon site management where previously shared with New South Wales.

2. Murray-Darling Basin Plan (the Basin Plan) functions are separately funded by the Commonwealth. The Basin Plan builds on a long history of effort made by both governments and communities to mitigate the impacts of water extraction, including activities undertaken through the joint programs.
3. As a result of New South Wales reducing its contributions for the joint programs from \$32.2 million to \$12.4 million in 2012/13, the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council reduced the River Murray Management Budget for 2012/13 from \$65.103 million to \$55.971 million (a reduction of \$9.132 million), as detailed in **Table 1** above.

This included reducing expenditure on: upgrades to the Mildura-Merbein and Rufus River salt interception schemes; the Lake Victoria dam safety upgrade; the trestle structure replacement program at Mildura Weir; the Hume to Yarrawonga riparian program; land management at Lake Victoria; water quality monitoring; and small reductions to the operation and maintenance across the New South Wales sites of Hume Dam, Menindee Lakes, Wentworth Weir and Euston Weir.

The decision by the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council to reduce expenditure on River Murray management was a short-term response to a last minute and unexpected funding reduction. Delays to critical works and upgrades cannot be sustained indefinitely. Continuing delays, or any further reductions, to the River Murray Management Budget could result in deterioration of key assets such as dams, locks, weirs and barrages.

The Ministerial Council has not yet decided on the Budget for river management activities for 2013/14 and 2014/15.

4. The overall Budget and anticipated funding from each source across the four financial years 2012/13, 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16 is provided in **Table 2**.

**Table 2**

	2012-13 Budget \$000	2013-14 Estimate \$000	2014-15 Estimate \$000	2015-16 Estimate \$000
<b>Appropriation</b>				
Appropriation - Basin Plan activities*	38,105	16,199	16,082	16,438
Appropriation - Interest equivalency <sup>a</sup>	9,403	-	-	-
Federal Government contribution for restoration of Hume Dam <sup>b</sup>	3,334	-	-	-
<b>Total Appropriation</b>	<b>50,842</b>	<b>16,199</b>	<b>16,082</b>	<b>16,438</b>
<b>Jurisdictions contributions</b>				
New South Wales <sup>c</sup>	12,430	8,900	8,900	8,900
Victoria	30,650	31,876	33,151	34,477
South Australia <sup>d</sup>	26,445	27,502	14,301	14,873
Queensland	1,044	1,085	1,129	1,174
Australian Capital Territory	298	310	323	335
Federal Government	19,320	20,093	20,897	21,733
Jurisdictions share of contributions - MDB Agreement Functions	<b>90,186</b>	<b>89,767</b>	<b>78,701</b>	<b>81,492</b>
Jurisdictions Contribution for restoration of Hume Dam	10,000	-	-	-
<b>Total funding from Jurisdictions</b>	<b>100,186</b>	<b>89,767</b>	<b>78,701</b>	<b>81,492</b>
<b>Other revenue</b>	<b>3,915</b>	<b>3,317</b>	<b>4,501</b>	<b>4,466</b>
<b>Total funding provided or expected to be provided</b>	<b>154,943</b>	<b>109,283</b>	<b>99,284</b>	<b>102,396</b>
<sup>a</sup> Interest equivalency is reflected in the current budget year only once agreed with Department of Finance and Deregulation.				
<sup>b</sup> Funding for restoration of Hume Dam (\$40 million) was specific funding agreed by Commonwealth and state jurisdictions and was provided to the MDBA in three financial years (2010-11 to 2012-13).				
<sup>c</sup> NSW Government 2012-13 funding contribution to the MDBA was reduced by 61% (excluding the contribution of \$3.8m to the Hume Dam works) with an additional 12% reduction (totalling 73%) effective from 2013-14.				
<sup>d</sup> Contributions are based on the information available in the SA Government's Mid-Year Budget Review where 2014-15 and 2015-16 contribution is indicated to be reduced by 50% (\$14.3 million and \$14.9 million respectively).				
* Funding for 2013-14 and subsequent years for Basin Plan activities will be considered in the 2013-14 Budget context.				

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**Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities portfolio**  
Additional Budget Estimates, February 2013

**Program: Division or Agency:** MDBA **Question 222**  
**Topic:** MDBA – invasive fish species **No:**  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written  
**or Written Question:**

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

1. Have any new plans to combat invasive fish species been presented to basin ministers? If not, when is there likely to be a new plan presented?
2. Have any programs been cut or reduced due to funding restrictions?
3. What does the latest data on invasive fish indicate about river health?

**Answer:**

1. Murray-Darling Basin states are responsible for invasive fish species within their jurisdictional areas. No new plans to combat invasive fish species have been presented to Murray-Darling Basin ministers (Basin ministers) through the Legislative and Governance Forum on the Murray-Darling Basin. The Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities is not aware if or when a new plan may be presented to Basin ministers.
2. As a result of New South Wales' reductions in their contribution to the joint programs, the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council decided in August 2012 to reduce the Murray-Darling Basin Native Fish Strategy joint program budget from \$2.5 million in the 2011/12 financial year to \$1.6 million in the 2012/2013 financial year. The Native Fish Strategy program will cease from 30 June 2013.
3. There are a number of indicators that need to be considered in determining river health status. Invasive fish is just one component. No data is available beyond 2010 at this stage. The most recent is the Sustainable Rivers Audit Report 2 (2008–2010) prepared by the Independent Sustainable Rivers Audit Group shows most of the 68 altitudinal zones of the 23 designated river valleys within the Murray-Darling Basin were rated as being in poor (39 zones) or very poor (20 zones) ecosystem health. The Sustainable Rivers Audit report 2 (2008–2010) indicates the condition of fish communities improved significantly in seven valleys and declined significantly in seven valleys from 2004 to 2010, with the remaining valleys showing no significant change.

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Additional Budget Estimates, February 2013

**Program: Division or Agency:** MDBA **Question No:** 223

**Topic:** MDBA – environmental watering plans

**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written

**or Written Question:**

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

1. What progress is being made on developing environmental watering plans?
2. Have any state governments expressed concerns or raised potential problems with their role or ability to produce plans on time?

**Answer:**

1. The requirement for state long-term environmental watering plans to be developed under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan (the Basin Plan) is within 12 months of the Murray-Darling Basin-wide (Basin-wide) environmental watering strategy being published, or within another time-frame agreed to by the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (the Authority) and a Murray-Darling Basin state (Basin state). The Basin-wide environmental watering strategy will be published within 24 months of commencement of the Basin Plan.
2. The Basin Plan provides flexibility to negotiate delivery of these plans with the states. This provides an opportunity to mitigate any concerns expressed about deadlines or resourcing. There are ongoing discussions with the states to clarify and assist with interpretation of the requirements outlined in the Basin Plan.

The Basin Plan provides that the Authority may enter into an agreement with Basin states with respect to any implementation obligation. Discussions with states have commenced.

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Additional Budget Estimates, February 2013

**Program: Division or Agency:** MDBA

**Question** 224

**No:**

**Topic:** MDBA – Adelaide metro cap

**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written

**or Written Question:**

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

1. Has the Metro Adelaide cap model been submitted to the MDBA? Is it still expected to be in February?
2. What if the cap model changes relevant Basin Plan information?
3. Will it be publicly released?

**Answer:**

1. No. The Metro Adelaide cap model was not submitted to the Murray-Darling Basin Authority for accreditation as of the end of February 2013.
2. The Baseline Diversion Limit (BDL) for South Australia Murray (which includes Metro Adelaide) in the Basin Plan is a description which allows for the incorporation of improved estimate of use.
3. The public release of the Metro Adelaide cap model report will be a decision for the South Australian Government.

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Additional Budget Estimates, February 2013

**Program: Division or Agency:** MDBA

**Question** 225

**No:**

**Topic:** MDBA – constraints management strategy

**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written

**or Written Question:**

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

Please detail the timeline in developing the constraints management strategy?

**Answer:**

The Murray-Darling Basin Plan (the Basin Plan) requires the Murray-Darling Basin Authority to prepare a Constraints Management Strategy within 12 months of the commencement of the Basin Plan (that is, before 23 November 2014) and to provide progress reports to the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council annually thereafter.

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Additional Budget Estimates, February 2013

**Program: Division or Agency:** MDBA **Question No:** 226  
**Topic:** MDBA – easement purchases  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written  
**or Written Question:**

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

1. What easements have been purchased since the tabling for the Basin plan?
2. What easements are under consideration?

**Answer:**

1. Since the tabling of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (the Authority) has not acquired any easements.
2. The Authority is currently in the process of acquiring two flooding easements (total of approximately four hectares) on a voluntary acquisition basis, in accordance with the *Commonwealth Lands Acquisition Act 1989*, as part of the Gunbower Forest Environmental Works and Measures Project. Negotiations for the voluntary acquisition of a further seven flooding easements is underway as part of the project totalling an additional 52 hectares. These activities are associated with The Living Murray Program.

Consideration of easements in general will be part of the Constraints Management Strategy (the strategy) being prepared by the Authority this year. Any decision to proceed with specific easements arising from the strategy will be a matter for relevant governments to make.

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**Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities portfolio**  
Additional Budget Estimates, February 2013

**Program: Division or Agency:** MDBA **Question 227**  
**No:**

**Topic:** MDBA – Murray-Darling Basin Plan reviews and statutory deadlines

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

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

Please detail all reviews and statutory deadlines required under the Water Act or Basin Plan associated with its implementation?

**Answer:**

The reviews and statutory deadlines set out in the *Water Act 2007* (the Water Act), the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement (as Schedule 1 to the Water Act) and the Murray-Darling Basin Plan (the Basin Plan), associated with the implementation of the Basin Plan, are as follows:

Description	Source	Timing/Comments
Review of Basin Plan – General.	Subsections 50(1)-(4) of the Water Act.	The Murray-Darling Basin Authority (the Authority) must review the Basin Plan every 10 years. The Minister or Murray-Darling Basin states (Basin states) may also under limited circumstances request the Authority to undertake a review of the Basin Plan.
Review of operation of Act.	Section 253 of the Water Act.	To be undertaken by the Minister before the end of 2014.
Review of the Water for the Environment Special Account.	Section 86AJ of the Water Act.	Two independent reviews, by the Minister, the first to be undertaken by 30 September 2019 and the second by 30 September 2021.
Review of groundwater Sustainable Diversion Limit resource units.	Subsections 6.06 (6)-(9) of the Basin Plan.	To be undertaken by the Authority two years after the commencement of the Basin Plan.
Review and update of Basin-wide environmental watering strategy.	Subsections 8.17 (1)-(2) of the Basin Plan.	The Authority may review and update the Murray-Darling Basin-wide (Basin-wide) environmental watering strategy at any time. However, it must review the strategy no later than five years after it was first made or last reviewed and updated.

Review and update of long-term watering plans.	Subsections 8.22 (1)-(2) of the Basin Plan.	A Basin state must review and update a long-term watering plan if a water resource plan is accredited, amended or adopted by the Minister affects the long-term watering plan, if the Authority updates the Basin-wide watering strategy, or if it is five years since the plan was last reviewed.
Review and update of Basin annual environmental watering priorities.	Section 8.31 of the Basin Plan.	The Authority may review and update the Basin annual environmental watering priorities at any time, including during the watering accounting period.
Review of the water shepherding arrangement under the Basin Plan Water Trading Rules	Subsection 12.02(5) of the Basin Plan.	Review by the Authority to be completed by 1 July 2020.
Reviews of the water quality and salinity management plan targets.	Section 13.08 of the Basin Plan.	The Authority must conduct a review of the water quality targets in the water quality and salinity management plan every five years after the commencement of the Basin Plan.
Reviews of the environmental watering plan.	Section 13.09 of the Basin Plan.	The Authority must conduct a review of the environmental watering plan every five years after the commencement of the Basin Plan.
Reviews under the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement (the Agreement)	Schedule 1 to the Water Act	The Agreement requires reviews to be undertaken under clauses 53(7), 135(11), 142(1), 151, 152 (completed), Schedule B(9), Schedule B(35), Schedule D(18).

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Additional Budget Estimates, February 2013

**Program: Division or Agency:** MDBA **Question No:** 228

**Topic:** MDBA - Reduction in funding to jointly-funded programs

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

**Senator McKenzie asked:**

In 2012 the South Australian and New South Wales Governments announced significant cuts to jointly-funded programs in the Murray–Darling Basin.  
([http://www.mdba.gov.au/media\\_centre/media\\_releases/Statement-from-MDBA-Chair](http://www.mdba.gov.au/media_centre/media_releases/Statement-from-MDBA-Chair))

1. Could you individually list the affected programs and specify the magnitude of funding cuts to each of those programs?
2. Please explain how the short falls in funding will be accommodated and or in general terms what effect will funding reductions have on these programs?
3. Have any other Basin States, i.e. Victoria and Queensland indicated that they will also be reducing funding to these jointly Murray–Darling Basin programs?

**Answer:**

1. As a result of New South Wales reducing its funding for the joint programs from \$32.2 million to \$12.4 million in 2012/13, the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council (the Ministerial Council) agreed to a range of budget reductions in 2012/13 across the River Management Program, Natural Resource Management Program and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority administration as outlined in **Table 1** below.
2. As shown in **Table 1**, the budget for 2012/13 for most programs was reduced by the Ministerial Council.

The Ministerial Council reduced the River Murray Management Budget for 2012/13 from \$65.103 million to \$55.971 million (a reduction of \$9.132 million). This included reducing expenditure on: upgrades to the Mildura-Merbein and Rufus River salt interception schemes; the Lake Victoria dam safety upgrade; the trestle structure replacement program at Mildura Weir; the Hume to Yarrawonga riparian program; land management at Lake Victoria; water quality monitoring; and small reductions to the operation and maintenance across the New South Wales sites of Hume Dam, Menindee Lakes, Wentworth Weir and Euston Weir.

The decision by the Ministerial Council to delay these was a short-term response to a last minute and unexpected funding reduction. Delays to critical works and upgrades cannot be sustained indefinitely. Continuing delays, or any further reductions, to the River Murray Management Budget could result in deterioration of key assets such as dams, locks, weirs and barrages.

The Ministerial Council has not yet decided which programs will be affected by the further New South Wales reduction of approximately \$3 million in 2013/14 or the South Australian reduction of \$14.3 million in 2014/15.

3. No other jurisdiction has indicated that they will be reducing their contribution to the Murray-Darling Basin Authority joint programs.

**Table 1: 2012-13 budgeted expenditure before and after the application of the NSW funding reductions**

<b>Program</b>	<b>Pre cuts 2012-2013 budgeted expenditure (\$ '000)</b>	<b>Reduction to NSW activities (\$ '000)</b>	<b>Reduction to other activities (\$ '000)</b>	<b>Total reduction (\$ '000)</b>	<b>Post cuts 2012-13 budgeted expenditure (\$ '000)</b>
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Corporate and enabling services	\$7,314		-\$804	-\$804	\$6,510
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$112,663</b>	<b>-\$6,576</b>	<b>-\$13,223</b>	<b>-\$19,799</b>	<b>\$92,864</b>

(1) Additional funding for Victorian component of icon site management where previously shared with New South Wales

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**Program: Division or Agency:** MDBA **Question No:** 229  
**Topic:** Murray-Darling Basin Plan – Senate Inquiry  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question:** Written

**Senator Xenophon asked:**

I refer to QON 294 provided in Supplementary Budget Estimates of October last year.

“The Senate Committee’s second interim report identifies what some stakeholders have interpreted as flaws in the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. We have assessed the issues raised in the report, and consider that many of the ‘flaws’ raised by stakeholders are statements that pursue a particular interest and are not based on an objective assessment of the facts.”

Which particular stakeholders are you referring to in this statement?

**Answer:**

This statement was made in the context of the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee’s second interim report on management of the Murray–Darling Basin report.

The stakeholders and their quoted views referred to in this statement were:

- Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists on the scientific basis of the 2750 gigalitres per year recovery figure (paragraph 2.11 of the second interim report) and consistency with the Australian Government position on climate change (paragraph 2.20).
- Irrigator views on the documentation of the science supporting the 2750 gigalitres per year recovery figure (footnote 14) and environmental watering plan (paragraphs 4.11 to 4.14 of the second interim report).

The statement could also be extended to the quotation of the Australian Conservation Foundation in paragraph 1.25 of the Australian Greens’ minority report, regarding views on the Murray-Darling Basin Plan in regard to a ‘healthy river’ and use of taxpayers’ money.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** MDBA **Question No:** 230  
**Topic:** MDBA - costs  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written  
**or Written Question:**

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. Please provide a breakdown of the MDBA's costs between its different divisions for this financial year and over the forward estimates?
2. What proportion of the MDBA's costs relate to the payment of water licence and delivery charges? Please provide figures for this financial year and for the forward estimates?
3. What amount of water do these charges relate to in each financial year?
4. What proportion of the MDBA's costs relate to staff costs?

**Answer:**

1. The Murray-Darling Basin Authority (the Authority) 2012/13 Budget by divisions is as follows:

<b>Divisions</b>	<b>Budget \$'000</b>
River Management	110,994
Environmental Management	30,847
Policy and Planning	11,325
Corporate Services	25,453
Information and Compliance	8,087
<b>Total</b>	<b>186,706</b>

Budgets at the divisional level have not been finalised for the forward years.

2. The estimated costs of water licences and delivery charges in 2012/13 are approximately 2 per cent (\$3.5 million) of the total Budget. These costs include fixed charges for holding entitlements as well as usage and spillable water charges.

Forward estimates have not been agreed and are subject to the outcome of a decision by the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council (the Ministerial Council) on the 2013/14 Joint Program Budget.

3. The 2012/13 charge is based on the estimated utilisation of up to 332,000 megalitres of allocation.
4. In 2012/13 staffing costs are 21 per cent of the Authority's total estimated costs. It is not possible to determine the proportion of the forward estimates until the Joint Program Budget is finalised by the Ministerial Council.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** MDBA **Question No:** 231

**Topic:** MDBA – Murray-Darling Basin Plan costs

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

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. Please outline how much has been spent on the basin plan to date for each financial year?
2. Please provide estimates of what will be spent on the basin plan for each financial year of the forward estimates?
3. What proportion of the Basin Plan costs are covered by the Commonwealth?
4. What proportion of other costs (ie, non Basin Plan costs) are covered by the Commonwealth? What proportion are covered by each of the States?

**Answer:**

1. The Murray-Darling Basin Authority spending on the Basin Plan to date for each financial year is as follows:

<b>Financial year</b>	<b>Spending on Basin Plan \$'000</b>
2008-09	10,039
2009-10	27,190
2010-11	27,784
2011-12	34,539
2012-13 (1 July 2012 to 31 January 2013)	15,132

2. The budget for the Basin Plan for each financial year of the forward estimates as published in PBS 2012-13 are as follows:

<b>Financial year</b>	<b>Basin Plan budget \$'000</b>
2013-14	16,199
2014-15	16,082
2015-16	16,438

3. 100 per cent.

4. Murray-Darling Basin Agreement functions (i.e. non-basin plan functions) related cost for 2012-13 are covered as follows:

Jurisdictions	Proportion (per cent)
New South Wales <sup>1</sup>	13.78
Victoria	33.98
South Australia	29.33
Queensland	1.16
Australian Capital Territory	0.33
Commonwealth	21.42

<sup>1</sup>NSW Government 2012-13 funding contribution to the Authority was reduced on 1 July 2012.

In addition to the above, specific funding was agreed by the Commonwealth and States for the 'restoration of Hume Dam' project totalling \$40 million over three financial years (2010-11 to 2012-13). The funding for 2012-13 of \$13.333 million is as follows:

Jurisdictions	Proportion (per cent)
New South Wales <sup>a</sup>	28.50
Victoria	26.25
South Australia	20.25
Commonwealth	25.00

<sup>a</sup> NSW reduction did not have any impact on the funding for 'restoration of Hume Dam'.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** MDBA **Question No:** 232  
**Topic:** MDBA – efficiency dividend  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question:** Written

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. Has the MDBA been subject to the efficiency dividend over the past few years?
2. If so, what proportion of the MDBA's costs are subject to that dividend?
3. How much lower is the MDBA's spending in 2012-13 due to the efficiency dividends applied since the 2010 election?
4. What expenses have you reduced to meet the efficiency dividend over the past few years?

**Answer:**

1. Yes.
2. Approximately 20 per cent of the Murray-Darling Basin Authority's costs in 2012/13 are subject to the efficiency dividend.
3. \$1.377 million.
4. The reduced resourcing has been absorbed through ongoing efficiencies, primarily in the areas of consultancies and improvements in business processes.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** MDBA

**Question No:** 233

**Topic:** MDBA – funding provided to the  
MDBA from the states

**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written

**or Written Question:**

**Senator Joyce asked:**

What level of funding do the states provide to the MDBA for this financial year and for each of the financial years in the forward estimates? Please provide figures for each State or Territory separately for each financial year.

**Answer:**

The level of funding provided/estimated by states to the Murray-Darling Basin Authority for undertaking Murray-Darling Basin Agreement functions is as follows:

<b>States</b>	<b>2012-13 Budget \$'000</b>	<b>2013-14 Estimates \$'000</b>	<b>2014-15 Estimates \$'000</b>	<b>2015-16 Estimates \$'000</b>
New South Wales	12,430	8,900	8,900	8,900
Victoria	30,650	31,876	33,151	34,477
South Australia <sup>(1)</sup>	26,445	27,502	14,301	14,873
Queensland	1,044	1,085	1,129	1,174
Australian Capital Territory	298	310	323	335
<b>Total state funding</b>	<b>70,867</b>	<b>69,673</b>	<b>57,804</b>	<b>59,759</b>

<sup>(1)</sup>Contributions are based on the information available in the SA Government's Mid-Year Budget Review where 2014-15 and 2015-16 contribution is indicated to be reduced by 50 per cent (\$14.3 million and \$14.9 million respectively).

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<b>Program: Division or Agency:</b>	MDBA	<b>Question No:</b>	234
<b>Topic:</b>	MDBA – cost of River Murray operations		
<b>Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question:</b>	Written		

**Senator Joyce asked:**

How much does it cost to run the River Murray system, or the River Murray Operations?

**Answer:**

The River Murray operations cost \$73,889,198 in 2010/11, excluding dam safety projects at Hume Dam, construction of new environmental works and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority's corporate overheads.

In 2011/12, the equivalent cost of operating the River Murray was \$63,360,650.

The main difference between these two years related to the extent of the capital works program which was disrupted in 2011/12 by high flows.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** MDBA **Question No:** 235  
**Topic:** MDBA – proportion of SES staff  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written  
**or Written Question:**

**Senator Joyce asked:**

I refer you to your annual report which shows that the MDBA employs 15 staff at SES classification and above out of a total staff of 334. That is about 4.5 per cent of staff are classified as SES or above.

The Department's annual report shows that in Canberra, the Department employs 63 staff at SES classification and above out of a total staff of 2,149. That is about 3 per cent of staff are classified as SES or above.

Why does the MDBA employ a greater proportion of staff at the SES level and above?

**Answer:**

The Murray-Darling Basin Authority's role covers policy development and implementation; program development, management and implementation; regulator; coordination and corporate management. These roles are across a diverse range of functions including Basin planning, managing large infrastructure projects, river operations associated with the River Murray system and coordination of Natural Resource Management programs. The number of SES reflects the senior executive leadership which is required to effectively deliver on the Agency's roles and responsibilities.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** MDBA **Question 236**  
**Topic:** MDBA – Hobart based staff **No:**  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written  
**or Written Question:**

**Senator Joyce asked:**

In answer to question 307 at last estimates you stated that:

“As at 30 September 2012, the Murray-Darling Basin Authority has eight employees employed outside of Canberra. The locations are Adelaide, Albury, Sydney, Toowoomba and Hobart.”

How many people are employed in Hobart? Why do you employ someone in Hobart?

**Answer:**

The Murray-Darling Basin Authority (the Authority) employs a part-time (0.4 Full-Time Equivalent) non-ongoing officer as a Science Advisor. The officer has specialist skills required by the Authority.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** MDBA **Question No:** 237  
**Topic:** MDBA – acquisition of easements for environmental watering  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question:** Written

**Senator Joyce asked:**

I refer to your answer to question 277 from the last estimates where you state:

“The Murray-Darling Basin Authority (the Authority) is considering acquisition of two easements between Hume Dam and Lake Mulwala. The easements are being obtained for the purposes of River Murray System operations.”

“For the first easement, an agreement was developed with the property owner, who has subsequently decided against taking up the offer.”

“In relation to the second easement, the Authority has commenced work to develop an easement proposal for consideration by the property owner.”

1. Are these easements for watering under the current Basin Plan, or only for watering above 2750 GL?
2. What happens if the owners persist in declining to accept easements on their property?
3. Does the Australian Government have any power to compulsorily acquire easements for the purposes of environmental watering?

**Answer:**

1. These easements are for regulated releases up to 25,000 megalitres per day measured at Doctor’s Point, in line with current operational practice. The Murray-Darling Basin Plan, with a reduction amount of 2,750 ggalitres, is based on this current operational practice.
2. Operating to 25,000 megalitres per day at Doctor’s Point is a practice which has been in place for many decades.
3. The Australian Government does have the power to acquire easements for environmental watering in accordance with the *Lands Acquisition Act 1985*.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** MDBA **Question No:** 238

**Topic:** MDBA – negotiation of the purchase of easements

**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written

**or Written Question:**

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. How are negotiations to purchase easements at the Gunbower Forest and Koondrook-Perricoota progressing?
2. Can you please provide an update on negotiations to purchase easements between Hume Dam and Lake Mulwala? When does the MDBA expect these negotiations to conclude?
3. Can the MDBA please provide a list of all of the areas where they are currently seeking or negotiating to purchase additional easements for environmental watering purposes?
4. How much land is the MDBA seeking access to?
5. How much has the government budgeted to conclude these easement purchases?

**Answer:**

1. As part of the Gunbower Forest Environmental Works and Measures Project the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (the Authority) is in the process of acquiring two flooding easements (with a total area of approximately 4 hectares) and negotiating the acquisition of a further seven flooding easements (totalling approximately 52 hectares). These easements will be acquired on a voluntary basis, in accordance with the *Commonwealth Lands Acquisition Act 1989*.

Preliminary investigations are underway to identify the need for and magnitude of flooding easements downstream of the Koondrook-Perricoota Forest as part of the Koondrook-Perricoota Forest Environmental Works and Measures project.

2. The Authority is continuing investigations for one remaining full-regulated flow easement in the Hume Dam to Yarrawonga Reach.
3. At this stage, the Authority is seeking or negotiating to acquire easements only in the two areas mentioned above. It is possible that governments will support the negotiation for acquisition of further easements when they consider the Constraints Management Strategy being prepared by the Authority by November 2013.
4. In relation to the investigations mentioned in the answer to question 2, the total land area is not yet finalised, consistent with the status of the work.
5. In relation to the investigations mentioned in the answer to question 2, the total budget to conclude any acquisitions is not yet finalised, consistent with the status of the work.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** MDBA **Question No:** 239

**Topic:** MDBA – briefings provided to the  
Minister and Prime Minister

**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written

**or Written Question:**

**Senator Joyce asked:**

Could you please provide the Committee with a list of the briefings the MDBA has given to the Minister for Water or his staff, and the Prime Minister, or her staff, since 20 May 2012?

**Answer:**

The Murray-Darling Basin Authority (the Authority) has provided a total of three written briefs to the office of the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (the Minister) since 20 May 2012. Details are as follows:

- Public Release of Outcomes from the South Eastern Australian Climate Initiative.
- Murray-Darling Basin Authority Members' Updated Conflict Of Interest Declaration.
- Mekong River Commission Visit to Australia February 2013.

There have also been a number of formal communications between the Authority and the Minister relating to the preparation of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, in accordance with Section 43 and Section 44 of the *Water Act 2007*. Relevant communications are publicly available on the Authority's website.

The Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities is responsible for briefing other ministers including the Prime Minister on Murray-Darling Basin issues.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** MDBA **Question No:** 240

**Topic:** MDBA – record of decisions in accordance with the Water Act

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

**Senator Joyce asked:**

Could the Authority please provide this Committee with all the decisions it has made since 30 September 2012 in accordance with Section 198 of the Water Act which requires the Authority to keep records of all of its decisions?

**Answer:**

The Murray–Darling Basin Authority (the Authority) has confirmed one out-of-session decision since 30 September 2012:

The Authority adopted the following resolution effective 21 November 2012:

- a. **Give in-principle approval** of the draft Regulation Impact Statement for the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4: MDBA **Question 241**  
**Topic:** MDBA – meeting minutes **No:**  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written  
**or Written Question:**

**Senator Joyce asked:**

Could you please provide the minutes to any of the meetings the Authority has held since 30 September 2012?

**Answer:**

The Murray–Darling Basin Authority (the Authority) held the following meetings since 30 September 2012:

- MDBA58 – 2 October 2012 – minutes are at **Attachment A**.
- MDBA59 – 6 November 2012 – minutes are at **Attachment B**.
- MDBA60 – 21 November 2012 – minutes are at **Attachment C**.
- MDBA61 – 4 December 2012 – minutes are at **Attachment D**.

Material disclosing deliberations or relating to the deliberative processes involved in the functions of the Authority have been omitted from these meeting minutes.

## ATTACHMENT A – AUTHORITY MEETING 58 – 2 OCTOBER 2012

### Agenda Item 1: Opening of meeting, disclosure of interests and apologies

1. The Chair **opened** the meeting at 11.00 am.  
*Conflict of Interest*
2. No member declared any conflict of interest, actual or apparent, in relation to any items on the agenda.

### Agenda Item 2: Adoption of draft agenda

3. The Murray–Darling Basin Authority **adopted** the agenda for meeting 58.

### Agenda Item 3: Confirmation of minutes of meetings 55, 56 and 57

4. The Murray-Darling Basin Authority:
  - (a) **reconsidered** and **confirmed** the minutes from meeting 55 – 22 August 2012, and
  - (b) **confirmed** the minutes from meetings 56 – 29 August 2012 and 57 – 4 September 2012.

### Agenda Item 4: Chair's report

5. The Chair **advised** he would report as relevant during the meeting.

### Agenda Item 5: Chief Executive's report

6. The Murray-Darling Basin Authority **noted** the Chief Executive's report.

### Agenda Item 8: Engagement, Media and Communications update

7. Members **supported** the proposed activities highlighted in the Action Plan.
8. The Murray–Darling Basin Authority **requested** a presentation at the next meeting on MDBA's education program.

### Agenda Item 9: MDBA Advisory Committees

#### Agenda Item 9.2: Northern Basin Advisory Committee update

9. The Chair **reported** that the inaugural meeting of the Northern Basin Advisory Committee was held last week (27 & 28 September) and that it was a constructive and effective meeting.
10. The Murray-Darling Basin Authority **noted** the update on the Northern Basin program.

### Agenda Item 10: Independent Advice on WHS Act obligations

11. It was **reported** that members of the Basin Community Committee received a briefing on their obligations under the *Work Health and Safety Act* and were provided with a self assessment checklist for their home offices. Any issues relating to this would be followed up by the MDBA.

12. Members also **noted** that the establishment of new advisory MDBA committees requires members to formally acknowledge their responsibilities under the *Work Health and Safety Act* by signing a declaration provided with the appointment documents.
13. The Murray-Darling Basin Authority:
  - (a) **noted** the advice from AGS dated 17 May 2012, and
  - (b) **requested** a high level report to each Authority meeting included in the Chief Executive's report to inform members about internal Work Health and Safety related activities.

#### **Agenda Item 11: Updated Delegations under the Water Act and Agreement**

14. The Murray-Darling Basin Authority **approved** and **executed** the Instrument of Delegation No. 1 (2012).

#### **Agenda Item 12: Other Business**

15. There were no other items of business.

#### **Agenda Item 13: Next Meeting**

16. The Murray-Darling Basin Authority:
  - (a) **confirmed** that Authority meeting 59 will take place in Canberra on 6 November, and
  - (b) **agreed** to the proposed meeting schedule for 2013.

#### **Meeting Closed**

The Chair **closed** the meeting at 4.10pm.

## ATTACHMENT B – AUTHORITY MEETING 59 – 6 NOVEMBER 2012

### Agenda Item 1: Opening of meeting, disclosure of interests and apologies

1. The Chair **opened** the meeting at 9.14 am.  
*Conflict of Interest*
2. No member declared any conflict of interest, actual or apparent, in relation to any items on the agenda.

### Agenda Item 2: Adoption of draft agenda

3. The Murray–Darling Basin Authority **adopted** the agenda for meeting 59.

### Agenda Item 3: Confirmation of minutes of meeting 58

4. The Murray–Darling Basin Authority **confirmed** the minutes from meeting 58 – 2 October 2012.

### Agenda Item 4: Chair's report

5. The Chair **advised** he would report as relevant during the meeting.

### Agenda Item 5: Chief Executive's report

6. Members **noted** that planning for Basin Plan implementation has commenced.
7. **The Murray-Darling Basin Authority:**
  - (a) **noted** the Chief Executive's report
  - (b) **requested** a copy of:
    - (i) the *Water Amendment (Long term Average SDL Adjustment) Bill 2012*
    - (ii) the media articles/press commentary on the Native Fish Strategy.
  - (c) **noted** that a paper seeking an amendment to the MDBA Corporate Plan will be provided to the next ordinary meeting.

### Agenda Item 7.1: Explanatory Statement and Regulation Impact Statement

8. The Murray-Darling Basin Authority **endorsed** the following proposed approach to finalising the Explanatory Statement and Regulation Impact Statement (RIS):
  - (a) when the MDBA receives the revised draft RIS (anticipated during the week beginning 5 November) the Authority will be asked to give in-principle endorsement to that draft
  - (b) the Authority delegate to the MDBA Chief Executive the authority to work with MDBA staff to finalise the text of the document, and seek formal certification of the RIS from OBPR, and
  - (c) the Authority will receive the final RIS (together with the Basin Plan and Explanatory Statement) for final sign off just prior to provision to the Minister. Only changes of a critical nature will be possible at this stage.

### **Agenda Item 8.1: MDBA Education Program**

9. The Murray–Darling Basin Authority **noted** the presentation on the MDBA Education Program.

### **Agenda Item 9: MDBA Advisory Committees**

#### **Agenda Item 9.1: Basin Community Committee**

10. The Murray-Darling Basin Authority:
  - (a) **noted** the outcome of the 30 October BCC meeting
  - (b) **noted** the BCC advice relating to future BCC priorities, and
  - (c) **agreed** to the extension of the current members until 30 June 2013, pending further consideration of the role and scope of work of the second term BCC to support implementation of the Basin Plan.

### **Agenda Item 10: Other Business**

11. There were no other items of business.

### **Agenda Item 11: Next Meeting**

12. The Murray-Darling Basin Authority **confirmed** that Authority meeting 60 will take place in Canberra on 4 December.

### **Meeting Closed**

The Chair **closed** the meeting at 2.38 pm.

**Agenda Item 1: Opening of meeting, disclosure of interests and apologies**

1. The Chair **opened** the meeting at 5.10pm.

*Conflict of Interest*

2. No member **declared** any conflict of interest, actual or apparent, in relation to any items on the agenda.

**Agenda Item 2: Adoption of draft agenda**

3. The Murray–Darling Basin Authority **adopted** the agenda for meeting 60.

**Agenda Item 3: Basin Plan**

4. Confirmation of the Royal Assent to the Water Amendment (Long-term Average Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment) Bill 2012, **provided** by the Governor General, Ms Quentin Bryce AC CVO, was **received** before the teleconference meeting.
5. the Murray-Darling Basin Authority adopting the following resolutions:
  - (a) **approved** the Basin Plan as prepared pursuant to section 44(2) of the Act
  - (b) **approved** the Guidelines for the method to determine priorities for applying environmental water (Chapter 8), which must accompany the 'Basin Plan' as a statutory requirement
  - (c) **approved** the Basin Plan - Authority's views on the Minister's suggestions on the altered proposed Basin Plan prepared pursuant to section 44(2)(c) of the Act; to provide to the Minister
  - (d) **approved** the Explanatory Statement as prepared pursuant to the *Legislative Instruments Act 2003*, and the accompanying Regulation Impact Statement
  - (e) **approved**, under section 44 of the Act, giving to the Hon Tony Burke MP, Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities copies of the:
    - (i) Basin Plan legislative instrument, for adoption;
    - (ii) Guidelines for the method to determine priorities for applying environmental water (Chapter 8), and
    - (iii) Basin Plan - Authority's views on the Minister's suggestions on the altered proposed Basin Plan.
  - (f) **approved** giving to the Hon Tony Burke MP, Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities copies of the:
    - (i) Explanatory Statement, and
    - (ii) Regulation Impact Statement.
  - (g) **agreed** pursuant to section 44(2)(c) that the Chair write to the Hon Tony Burke MP, Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, on behalf of the Authority, to give the Basin Plan to the Minister for adoption, with a transmittal letter. This letter includes the attached:
    - (i) Summary of how the Authority has met certain statutory requirements in relation to the Basin Plan development, content and preparation process.
    - (ii) Synthesis of analysis associated with the determination of an environmentally sustainable level of take (ESLT) for surface water and groundwater in the Basin Plan.

- (h) **approved** publishing the documents outlined in paragraph (f) and (g) above, on the MDBA website Thursday 22 November 2012, and
  - (i) **noted** that links to the Basin Plan, Guideline, Explanatory Statement and Regulation Impact Statement will be provided on the MDBA website after the Minister adopts the Basin Plan.
6. The MDBA Chair, the Hon Craig Knowles, **highlighted** the historic nature of this meeting and on behalf of the Authority expressed sincere appreciation of the exceptional and sustained professional work of MDBA staff who showed immense willingness to bring this to fruition.

**Agenda Item 4: Murray–Darling Basin Agreement Clause 152 review of Schedules B, D, E, F, G and H**

7. The Murray–Darling Basin Authority adopting the following resolution:
- (a) for the purposes of clause 152 of the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement, the Murray-Darling Basin Authority **adopted** the reviews of Schedules B, D, E, F, G and H.

**Agenda Item 6: Next Meeting**

8. The Murray-Darling Basin Authority **confirmed** that the next Authority meeting will be held on Tuesday 4 December 2012 in Canberra.

**Meeting Close**

The Chair **closed** the meeting at 5.30pm.

**Agenda Item 1: Opening of meeting, disclosure of interests and apologies**

1. The Chair **opened** the meeting at 10.30am.

*Conflict of Interest*

2. No member **declared** any conflict of interest, actual or apparent, in relation to any items on the agenda.

**Agenda Item 2: Adoption of draft agenda**

3. The Murray–Darling Basin Authority **adopted** the agenda for meeting 61.

**Agenda Item 3: Confirmation of minutes of meetings 59 and 60**

4. The Murray–Darling Basin Authority **confirmed** the minutes from meeting 59 – 6 November 2012 and meeting 60 – 21 November 2012.

**Agenda Item 4: Chair’s report**

5. The Chair **highlighted** the adoption of the Basin Plan by Minister Burke on 22 November 2012 and that the disallowance motions were defeated in both Houses.
6. The Murray–Darling Basin Authority **noted** the oral report from the Chair.

**Agenda Item 5: Chief Executive’s report**

7. The Murray–Darling Basin Authority:
  - (a) **noted** the High Court challenge was heard on 29 November 2012 and was referred to the Federal Court
  - (b) **noted** the delivery of the largest regulated flows to South Australia last week
  - (c) **noted** The Living Murray audit report was approved by the Murray–Darling Basin Ministerial Council at their meeting on 30 November 2012
  - (d) **noted** the Sustainable Rivers Audit report 2 was approved for release by the Murray–Darling Basin Ministerial Council at their meeting on 30 November 2012, and
  - (e) **noted** the Chief Executive’s report.

**Agenda Item 7: Basin Plan Implementation**

8. Members **noted** the MDBA’s obligations and associated timeframes under the Basin Plan.
9. The Murray–Darling Basin Authority **noted** the information in the paper.

**Agenda Item 8: Review of the Murray–Darling Basin Agreement as required under Clause 142 of the Agreement**

10. The Murray–Darling Basin Authority **adopted** the following resolution:

For the purposes of clause 142 of the Murray–Darling Basin Agreement, the Murray–Darling Basin Authority **approved** that the scope of the clause 142 review of the Murray–Darling Basin Agreement be:

  - (a) an evaluation and analysis of the extent to which the Agreement has logical harmony with, and does not contain logical contradictions with, the Basin Plan, and
  - (b) an evaluation and analysis of any limitations in the manner in which the Agreement gives effect to the Basin Plan.

## **Agenda Item 9: MDBA Advisory Committees**

### **Agenda Item 9.1: Basin Community Committee (BCC)**

11. The Murray-Darling Basin Authority **adopted** the following resolutions:
  - (a) **noted** that the BCC were provided with a briefing on the Sustainable Rivers Audit Report 2
  - (b) **noted** that the BCC Chair attended and provided advice on behalf of the BCC to the Legislative and Governance Forum on the Murray-Darling Basin Meeting 3 – 30 November 2012
  - (c) **noted** that the process for extending current BCC members' appointment is underway
  - (d) **noted** that applicants for membership of BCC term 2 will be notified of the delay in the appointment process, and
  - (e) **agreed** to revise the BCC quorum to 50%+1 of the membership, for the remainder of BCC term 1.

### **Agenda Item 9.2: Northern Basin**

12. The Murray–Darling Basin Authority:
  - (a) **endorsed** the establishment of the Northern Basin Intergovernmental Working Group with Terms of Reference, and
  - (b) **noted** the update on the Northern Basin Program.

### **Agenda Item 9.3: Advisory Committee on Social, Economic and Environmental Sciences (ACSEES)**

13. The Murray-Darling Basin Authority **noted** the verbal feedback from the informal meeting of ACSEES members on the 19 November 2012.

## **Agenda Item 10: Amendment to the MDBA Corporate Plan 2012-13 to 2015-16**

14. The Murray–Darling Basin Authority **approved** the revised MDBA Corporate Plan 2012-13 to 2015-16 to reflect the carryover of unspent funds from 2011-12.

## **Agenda Item 11: Other Business**

15. There were no other items of business.

## **Agenda Item 12: Next Meeting**

16. The Murray–Darling Basin Authority **confirmed** that Authority meeting 62 will take place in Canberra on 5 February 2013.

## **Meeting Closed**

The Chair **closed** the meeting at 4.00 pm.

**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 2013

**Program: Division or Agency:** MDBA **Question No:** 242

**Topic:** MDBA – Living Murray Initiative

**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written

**or Written Question:**

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. How much water under the Living Murray Initiative has been carried over to 2012-13?
2. How much water do you expect to be allocated under the Living Murray Initiative in 2012-13 and how much do you expect to use?

**Answer:**

1. Recently updated figures show almost 124 gigalitres was carried over from 2011/12 into the 2012/13 water year under the Living Murray Initiative.
2. As of 1 November 2012, 348 gigalitres of allocation had become available on the Living Murray Initiative portfolio (inclusive of carryover). In addition to this, 18 gigalitres was carried over in Victorian Spillable Water Accounts. 11 gigalitres of this Victorian Spillable Water Accounts volume has subsequently spilt and the remaining volume (seven gigalitres) is currently not yet available.

As of 28 February 2013, 332 gigalitres of this water has been committed for environmental watering actions during the Spring/Summer period. The Living Murray Initiative is also currently planning environmental watering actions in autumn.

**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 2013

**Program: Division or Agency:** MDBA **Question No:** 243

**Topic:** MDBA – cap models for South Australia and the ACT

**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written

**or Written Question:**

**Senator Joyce asked:**

When does the MDBA expect that cap models for South Australia and the ACT might be concluded?

**Answer:**

The Metro Adelaide cap model for South Australia has not been submitted to the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (the Authority) for accreditation. The Authority is working with South Australia to progress the accreditation of this model.

The ACT Cap model (submitted to the Authority in September 2012) is being audited. Subject to a successful audit outcome, the Authority expects accreditation to be concluded by the end of June 2013.

**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 2013

**Program: Division or Agency:** MDBA

**Question No:** 244

**Topic:** MDBA – operational deficits

**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written

**or Written Question:**

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. Why has the MDBA sought Ministerial approval to run operational deficits over the forward estimates?
2. How much do these operational deficits amount to?
3. Could you provide the brief provided to the Minister titled “Approval for the Murray-Darling Basin Authority to Incur Revised Operating Deficits in 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15”?

**Answer:**

1-3. See answers to question on notice 319 from Supplementary Budget Estimates in October 2012.

**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 2013

**Program: Division or Agency:** MDBA **Question No:** 245

**Topic:** MDBA – development of environmental watering plans

**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written

**or Written Question:**

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. The Basin Plan requires that State governments develop the Environmental Watering Plans. What happens if the States refuse to develop these Plans?
2. Does the MDBA have the resources to develop these plans if the States refuse to do so?

**Answer:**

1. States are required to develop long-term environmental watering plans within 12 months of the Murray-Darling Basin-wide (Basin-wide) environmental watering strategy being published, or within another time-frame agreed to by the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (the Authority) and a Murray-Darling Basin state. The Murray-Darling Basin Plan (the Basin Plan) provides flexibility to negotiate delivery of these plans. The Authority is required to develop the Basin-wide environmental watering strategy within two years of the commencement of the Basin Plan (November 2014). The Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities is not aware of any suggestions that the states will not develop these plans. That said, environmental water management in the Murray-Darling Basin will benefit from state long-term watering plans, but is not critically dependent on those state plans.
2. The Basin Plan does not anticipate that the Authority would develop state long-term environmental watering plans.

**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 2013

**Program: Division or Agency:** MDBA **Question** 246  
**No:**

**Topic:** MDBA – Murray River operating constraints – South Australia border

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

**Senator Joyce asked:**

I note that the MDBA has previously indicated that : "... under current river operating constraints it might be possible to reinstate a sustainable flow regime up to a flow rate of about 60,000 ML/d for the River Murray at the SA Border."

1. What was the peak flow over the SA border over the past year?
2. Did authorities try to take flows beyond 50,000 ML per day over the past year?
3. Has the government ever taken "managed" flows (ie not during a flood) to 60,000 ML per day?
4. When did that occur?

**Answer:**

1. Peak daily flow reached about 60,070 megalitres per day on 3 April 2012.
2. Authorities did not use environmental water to try and take flows beyond 50,000 megalitres per day in the last year. During the period late March to end April 2012, however, when natural high flows were in transit, the flow to South Australia was temporarily increased by around 4,000 megalitres per day, but not beyond 60,070 megalitres per day. This was due to normal operational requirements to lower the level of Lake Victoria at this time of year. Lake Victoria is operated in accordance with the Lake Victoria Operating Strategy and the requirements of the Aboriginal Heritage Impact Permit under Section 90 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (New South Wales) to balance water conservation and protection of cultural heritage and native vegetation.
3. No. In December 2000, releases from Lake Victoria were temporarily increased to boost a high flow event from a peak of about 55,000 megalitres per day to 64,000 megalitres per day. Reinstatement of sustainable flow regimes in South Australia will, regardless of the easing of any constraints, require management actions which build upon natural flow events.
4. See the answer to question 3.