

**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:** NWC

**Question No:** 247

**Topic:** NWC – office space

**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written

**or Written Question:**

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

1. Does the NWC still have a vacant floor in its office?
2. For how long has it been vacant?
3. How long is your lease on the office space?
4. What efforts have been made to fill the vacant office space?

**Answer:**

1. Yes.
2. The third floor of the building (331 square meters) was vacated in September 2012 following the consolidation of the National Water Commission's (the Commission) staffing on the first two floors in response to the reduction in its staffing level.
3. The Commission's property lease expires on 30 June 2014.
4. The Commission has sought assistance from the current leasing agent and a second property agent to attract a tenant to take a sub-lease of the third floor. The vacant space has been notified in a Canberra property market newsletter. The Commission has advised it is prepared to surrender the lease of the third floor or the whole building earlier than the expiry date if a replacement tenant can be found. The Commission has advised it is prepared to negotiate on the rental amount if that would assist in the lease of the vacant space.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** NWC **Question No:** 248

**Topic:** NWC – audit of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan

**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written

**or Written Question:**

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

1. What is the status of the audit required to be completed by March 2013 under Section 88(1) of the Water Act?
2. Will this still be released on March 3?
3. Will it be publically released on this date?
4. What limitations does NWC face in completing their report given the short timeframe between the finalisation of the Basin Plan and its due date?
5. When is the next audit after March?

**Answer:**

1. The National Water Commission (the Commission) has completed its first report under Section 88(i) of the *Water Act 2007*.
2. The Commission's first report under Part 3 of the *Water Act 2007* (the Act) was required to be provided to the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (the Minister), Murray-Darling Basin State water ministers and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority five years after commencement of the Act (3 March 2013). The Commission met its obligation regarding this first report. The Minister is required by the Act to table the report in both Houses of Parliament within 15 sitting days of receiving the report.
3. The report was made publicly available via the Commission's website on Monday, 25 March 2013, following tabling.
4. The commencement of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan (the Basin Plan) on 22 November 2012 meant that limited implementation activity had commenced by the time the Commission was required to provide its first report under its *Water Act 2007* responsibilities.

The completed report therefore provides a snapshot of the preparedness of the Australian Government and Murray–Darling Basin State governments for implementing the Basin Plan, and signals the Commission's intent in performing its ongoing audit role.

5. The Commission must complete an audit of the implementation of the Basin Plan and associated water resource plans at least every five years. The Commission proposes to complete a full audit in 2015, two years after the commencement of the Basin Plan.