

**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:	6.1: CEWO	Question No:	128
Topic:	Overheads and costs for the CEWO as an independent agency		
Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question:	49 (12/2/13)		

Senator Nash asked:

Senator NASH: ...I would appreciate it if you would take on notice exactly what the overheads and costs would have been that would have been attributable to setting up this particular entity under the water holder independently rather than absorbing it into the department.

Dr Grimes: By all means, we can take it on notice. I am not sure we are going to be able to provide you with specific information because we know that that would require us to go off and do further analysis to provide you with that material, but we will take it on notice and see if there is anything that we can provide.

Answer:

Section 116 of the *Water Act 2007* (the Act) states that:

“The staff necessary to assist the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder are to be persons engaged under the Public Service Act 1999 who are:

a) employed in the Department; and

b) made available for the purpose by the Secretary of the Department.”

As the Act does not allow for the establishment of a separate agency for the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder, the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities has not undertaken detailed costings of such an arrangement.

**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:	6.1: CEWO	Question No:	129
Topic:	Impairment on the asset of water held by the CEWH		
Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question:	50-51 (12/2/13)		

Senator Joyce asked:

Senator JOYCE: What is the impairment you have booked for that asset?

Page 51

Mr Costello: I do not have that information available. I would have to take that on notice.

Answer:

The accumulated impairment relating to water entitlements held and managed by the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (the department) is \$313.470 million. The department also carries a \$39.486 million impairment relating to the Commonwealth Government's share of jointly controlled assets held in the Living Murray Initiative joint venture (the Commonwealth has a 20 per cent share in this joint venture).

**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: 6.1: CEWO **Question No:** 130
Topic: Water trading
Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question: Written

Senator Birmingham asked:

Please detail any water trading undertaken by CEWO this financial year?

Answer:

The Commonwealth Environmental Water Office has not undertaken any water trading to date.

**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: 6.1: CEWO **Question 131**
No:

Topic: Environmental water allocation

Proof Hansard Page and Date Written

or Written Question:

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. On what sites and for what purpose has environmental water allocated this year been used?
2. How is water being used this year? On what sites?
3. How much do you expect will be carried over? What is the maximum that could be carried over?

Answer:

1. As at 31 January 2013, up to 1034.2 gigalitres of Commonwealth environmental water has been made available for use in 2012/13, with 751.2 gigalitres delivered. The table below shows approved watering actions for 2012/13 (as at 31 January 2013).

Location	Purpose	Approved for use in 2012/13 – up to (gigalitres)
Murray	Contribute towards environmental outcomes at multiple sites in the Murray River.	399.1
Edward-Wakool River System	Improve water quality, vegetation health and native fish movement.	65
Macquarie Marshes	To inundate semi-permanent wetland vegetation in the marshes.	110
Loddon River	Provide flows for supporting native aquatic species, maintaining native vegetation within riparian communities, and providing key ecosystem functions.	2.7
Lower Broken Creek	Facilitate native fish passage, and support native fish habitat, migration and breeding.	45.2
Mid Murrumbidgee	Facilitate recruitment of large-bodied fish.	150
Lower Murrumbidgee	Promote continued recovery of wetland vegetation communities, and provide habitat for waterbirds and native aquatic fauna.	6

Campaspe	Support the maintenance of native riparian vegetation, fish and macro-invertebrates, and ecosystem function.	6.8
Goulburn	Support fish habitat, aquatic ecosystem function and vegetation condition.	201.1
Ovens River	Supplement in-stream flows.	0.07
Lachlan	To support colonial waterbird breeding in the lower Lachlan system, in particular Booligal wetlands.	10
Namoi	To increase the wetting duration of a diversity of in-channel habitat, stimulate primary food production and provide migration opportunities for aquatic species to feed, breed and/or shelter.	7.7
Border Rivers	To stimulate production through all levels of the aquatic food chain; provide migration and dispersal cues to native fish; wet and interconnect riparian areas.	8
Gwydir	To support the recovery of wetland vegetation and maintain habitat for threatened and migratory listed species.	22.5

In addition, subject to trigger conditions being met, we can account for use of up to 157 gigalitres of Commonwealth environmental water associated with unregulated entitlements held in Queensland catchments.

2. See response to Question 1.
3. The volume that is expected to be carried over is in the range of 300–600 gigalitres. The actual volume carried over will depend on environmental watering actions in the remainder of the water year and climatic conditions.

As at 31 January 2013, the maximum volume of water that the Commonwealth could carry over under limits associated with the entitlements was 1,098 gigalitres.

**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: 6.1: CEWO **Question No:** 132
Topic: South Australian environmental water
Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. How much Environmental water is expected to flow into SA during 2012/13?
2. What were total flows on environmental water over the barrages? What is this as a percentage of water flowing through the barrages?
3. What were the tangible benefits to the lower lakes of this environmental water?

Answer:

1. An estimated 624 gigalitres of Commonwealth environmental water is expected to flow into South Australia during 2012/13.
2. The total flow of Commonwealth environmental water through the barrages during 2012/13 (as at 12 February 2013) is estimated at 355 gigalitres. This volume contributed approximately eight per cent of the total flows through the barrages.
3. Commonwealth environmental water contributed to:
 - Improved water quality in Lake Albert where salinity levels have reduced to <3500EC (12 February 2013).
 - Maintenance of connectivity between the Lower Lakes and Coorong, supporting continuous flows through the barrage fishways to enable the movement of freshwater and diadromous fish species.
 - Maintenance of targeted water levels in the Lower Lakes improving connectivity to fringing wetlands.

**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: 6.1: CEWO **Question No:** 133
Topic: Community Liaison Officers
Proof Hansard Page and Date Written
or Written Question:

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. Is the CEWO hiring community liaison officers? If so, how many?
2. At what cost?
3. Where will they be based?
4. What will their role be?

Answer:

1. The Commonwealth Environmental Water Office will employ up to six local engagement officers.
2. The Commonwealth Government has committed \$4.934 million over seven years.
3. The local engagement officers will be based in regional locations in the Murray-Darling Basin (the Basin). The Commonwealth Environmental Water Office is seeking expressions of interest from relevant organisations within the Basin to assist with hosting these officers. The final locations of local engagement officers will be informed by responses to the hosting request.
4. Local engagement officers will work directly with people in Basin communities, seeking their views and knowledge on options for the use, delivery, monitoring and communication of results of Commonwealth environmental water. This information will inform environmental water management decisions.

Local engagement officers may also assist the community to develop water use proposals for consideration by the Commonwealth Environmental Water Office.

The local engagement officers will be active, visible and approachable in areas of the Basin, and will provide local communities with greater access to information about Commonwealth environmental water.

They may assist the Commonwealth Environmental Water Office with other water management functions such as providing information which contributes to watering options and decisions, informing communities of environmental water use actions, supporting monitoring and evaluation, and producing and contributing to communications materials.

**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: 6.1: CEWO **Question 134**
No:

Topic: Locations and volumes of
environmental entitlements

Proof Hansard Page and Date Written

or Written Question:

Senator McKenzie asked:

In reference to Supplementary Budget Estimates, October 2012 Question 162, could you verify whether the table of entitlements supplied include all entitlements, which are irrigation, urban and environmental?

Answer:

The table includes all entitlements that were in the Commonwealth environmental holdings on 30 September 2012. These entitlements have been transferred to environmental use, mostly from irrigation use.

**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: 6.1: CEWO **Question No:** 135

Topic: Local Engagement Officers for environmental watering

Proof Hansard Page and Date Written

or Written Question:

Senator McKenzie asked:

The Minister for Water Tony Burke has recently announced that Local Engagement Officers for Environmental Watering will be working with the community to develop CEWH environmental watering plans.

State governments already have well established engagement with their local and indigenous communities and robust processes for determining environmental watering priorities and plans, consistent with community expectations and environmental requirements.

How does the CEWH intend to work within these well-established networks, without duplicating processes, creating another level of bureaucracy and further work for state-based catchment managers?

Answer:

Local engagement officers will be staff members of and report to the Commonwealth Environmental Water Office. They will work with existing state and local networks and processes where they exist, to seek the views of local communities. The Commonwealth Environmental Water Office is continuing to work closely and collaboratively with state agencies in implementing engagement arrangements.

**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: 6.1: CEWO **Question No:** 136

Topic: Release of Trading of Commonwealth environmental water position paper

Proof Hansard Page and Date or Written Question: Written

Senator Joyce asked:

I refer you to the “Discussion paper – Trading of Commonwealth environmental water” released in November 2011. That document was released for comment until May 2012.

Your website says: “The next step in the process will be the public release of a position paper with our responses to the issues raised in the submissions. This will inform development of operating rules which will establish the general framework within which trade will occur.”

When will the position paper be released?

Answer:

The position paper is still being developed and will be released as soon as it is completed.

The position paper will include details of necessary safeguards that will be put in place to protect against the risk of insider trading, as required under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. The Commonwealth Environmental Water Office will not trade until it is satisfied that it has the necessary safeguards in place.