

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications  
Legislation Committee**

Answers to questions on notice

**Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities portfolio**

Supplementary Budget Estimates, October 2010

**Program: Division or Agency:** 4.1: WED

**Question No:** 30

**Broad Topic:** Environmental water and  
SRWUIP

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

**Senator Joyce asked:**

The Guide to the Basin Plan reports that 705GL of water has been bought back or saved so far (p. 152). How much of this water has been delivered by the Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure program? Can you please provide a breakdown between water purchases and individual state water recovery programs that add up to this estimate?

**Answer:**

The Murray-Darling Basin Authority has advised that the following State recovery programs have been included in the 705 GL figure for surface water recovered within the Murray-Darling Basin:

- a) Riverbank program – New South Wales Rivers Environment Restoration Program (approximately 42 GL);
- b) Riverbank – New South Wales Wetlands Water Recovery program (approximately 5 GL); and
- c) Victorian Loddon River Sales Deal (approximately 1 GL).

The remaining balance of the 705 GL can be attributed to water recovered by the Commonwealth.

The figures outlined above (estimates as at 30 June 2010) do not represent the actual entitlements obtained through purchases or other government initiatives but represent the long term average yield of the entitlement products.

The Department had recovered 2.7 GL of long term average yield from projects funded through the Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure program as at 31 October 2010.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4.1: WED

**Question No:** 62

**Broad Topic:** Commonwealth water -  
infrastructure projects

**Proof Hansard Page and Date** 40-41 (19/10/10)  
**or Written Question:**

**Senator Nash asked:**

Senator NASH—I will put a number of questions on notice, Chair, and I do know that we need to move to the NWC. I want to ask this. In the guide it says that as at 30 June 2010 the Australian government water buyback and state water recovery programs had secured some 705 gigalitres of surface water in the basin. What are the state recovery programs? How much have they delivered? In terms of the government buyback, how much of that 705 is entitlement purchased by the Commonwealth and how much allocation of real water actually goes against the total of the entitlement purchased by the Commonwealth so far?

...

Dr Horne—Almost all of the Commonwealth water held at the moment is entitlement water. In fact, it is entitlement water from buybacks. A very small amount of it is water that is derived from infrastructure projects.

Senator NASH—Okay, so can you take on notice for me exactly how much water there is from the infrastructure programs?

Dr Horne—Yes, we can do that.

**Answer:**

As at 31 October 2010, 2.7 GL (long term average yield) had been secured under contract for transfer to the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder from infrastructure projects.

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Supplementary Budget Estimates, October 2010

**Program: Division or Agency:** 4.1: WED

**Question No:** 63

**Broad Topic:** Private Irrigation  
Infrastructure Program for  
South Australia

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

**Senator Xenophon asked:**

1. Can the Department confirm how much of the PIIP-SA program has been taken up? How many projects did this cover?
2. The Department would be aware of an application from a date farmer in South Australia at Gurra Downs, whose application was rejected as it did not rate high enough in the merit criteria.
  - a. Given that this is a project aimed at establishing a new, drought resistant crop with a large international market, why was it considered to be without merit?
  - b. And, given that the application was for the relatively small amount of \$1 million and the fund remains basically untouched, why will the Department not consider this project?
3. Given that so few projects were approved and only a small part of the fund has been used, will the Department be reassessing applications?
4. This project has received large amounts of funding and other support from Government departments and agencies, including DAFF. Why did the Department not take this into account?
5. If this was taken into account, why did the Department consider this widely supported project to be without merit?

**Answer:**

1. Seven projects involving grants totalling up to \$3.4 million (excl GST) have been approved to the end of Round 1 of PIIP-SA.
- 2a. Successful applications under PIIP-SA needed to meet merit criteria that were framed against the following objectives:
  - i. deliver substantial and lasting returns of water for the environment;
  - ii. secure a long-term future for irrigation communities; and
  - iii. deliver value for money in the context of the first two tests.

Following a comprehensive assessment against the PIIP-SA merit criteria it was concluded that the Gurra Downs application did not deliver value for money. PIIP-SA is a program focused on water efficiency, with funding to support irrigation infrastructure improvements in South Australia, with a share of the resultant water savings to be made available for the environment.

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- 2b. The Gurra Downs project, like all Round 1 applications, was assessed against the eligibility and merit criteria by a panel of assessors that comprised departmental officials, a technical expert from the SA irrigation sector and a South Australian Government official. Applications needed to represent good value for money against the PIIP-SA merit criteria, which included taking into account the grant funding sought relative to the value of water savings proposed for transfer to the Commonwealth.
3. No the department is not intending to reassess Round 1 outcomes. Round 2 has been announced and is open for applications.
4. The applicant's income sources, including government funding, were taken into account in assessing the short and long term financial viability of the business. The business' activities were also taken into account in assessing its broader regional economic contribution.
5. All applications need to represent good value for money against the PIIP-SA merit criteria.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4.1: WED

**Question No:** 64

**Broad Topic:** Sustainable Rural Water Use  
and Infrastructure Program -  
SA projects

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

**Senator Xenophon asked:**

1. Can the Department provide figures regarding the take up of the \$5.8 billion fund for water efficiency projects?
2. How much of this has been taken up in South Australia?
3. How many South Australian applications for funding were received by the Department?
4. How many were approved, and what was the value of the projects?

**Answer:**

1. Of the \$5.8 billion under the Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure Program, \$5.05 billion of administered funding had been allocated in principle at 31 October 2010. Full allocations will depend on the outcome of assessment and due diligence process.
2. Out of the in-principle allocation of \$5.05 billion, \$536 million has been identified for South Australian projects, subject to relevant assessment processes. Other national level and Basin-wide projects will also benefit South Australia.
3. As at 31 October 2010, 31 South Australian applications for funding under the following grant programs had been received by the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities:
  - a. Strengthening Basin Communities Program;
  - b. South Australia Private Irrigator Infrastructure Program;
  - c. On Farm Irrigation Efficiency Program;
  - d. Metering Test Facilities; and
  - e. Irrigation Modernisation Planning Assistance Program.
4. As at 31 October 2010, fourteen of the 31 applications received from South Australia had been successful in being approved for grants totalling \$9.7 million.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4.1: WED

**Question No:** 65

**Broad Topic:** Menindee Lakes MoU with  
NSW Government

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

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. Did the Government consult with the MDBA or the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder before the MoU was signed?
2. Did the Department or the Government consult with the South Australian Government before signing this MoU?
3. What steps is the Government taking to ensure that the MoU does not jeopardise the ability to supply South Australia with minimum daily flows?
4. Did the Department or the Government consult with the Victorian Government before signing this Memorandum of Understanding?
5. Will the eventual implementation of the agreement require a change to the water sharing arrangements between the Basin states? If so, why aren't representatives from Victoria and South Australia on the Joint Standing Committee overseeing the agreement?
6. Did the Department or the Government consult with irrigators over the Memorandum of Understanding with the NSW Government?
7. What steps is the Government taking to ensure that irrigation entitlements are not diluted as a result of this agreement?
8. The MoU identifies \$300 million to be spent on regional urban water projects in New South Wales. What projects have been allocated funds from these amounts?
9. How will other projects be selected for funding? Will the New South Wales Government have the final say over which projects are funded?

**Answer:**

1. Yes
2. Yes.
3. The MoU requires hydrological modelling be undertaken to assess the implications of changes to the operating regime at Menindee Lakes, including assessment of possible downstream impacts and implications for Murray River system management. As required by Clause 8 of the MoU, "any operational changes at Menindee Lakes must be shown to have no directly attributable adverse impact on the water security of existing entitlement holders at Menindee Lakes and in the Lower Darling River, or the Murray River."

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4. Yes.
5. The MoU recognises the potential need to address changed water sharing arrangements under the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement in relation to any decision about the future operations of the Menindee Lakes. In such a case, the MoU requires the Australian and NSW Governments to jointly negotiate with other Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council member jurisdictions any proposed changes to the water sharing arrangements between the Basin states. Any agreement resulting from these negotiations would be considered by the Basin Officials Committee in its broader review of the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement. Changes to the Agreement would require the agreement of all members of the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council.
6. The MoU commits to stakeholder consultation on proposed changes in light of results of the additional technical studies. Irrigators are specified in the MoU as key stakeholders for this activity.
7. Under Clause 8 of the MoU, any operational changes at Menindee Lakes must not have any directly attributable adverse impact on the water security of existing water entitlement holders at Menindee Lakes and the Lower Darling River or Murray River. This is a key evaluation criterion being applied in the hydrological modelling work being undertaken under the MoU.
8. The MoU (Clause 27) provides for funding of \$20 million by the Australian Government towards Orange City Council's water security project, subject to agreement on a costed proposal.
9. If an agreed project were to proceed at Menindee Lakes, funding for other water security projects could be made available once arrangements have been agreed between the Australian and NSW Governments for the selection and joint approval of such projects.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4.1: WED

**Question No:** 66

**Broad Topic:** Sunraysia Modernisation  
Project

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

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

1. Has the Commonwealth committed at any stage to the Sunraysia Modernisation Project? If so, please detail when and what commitment was made.
2. What progress has been made on this commitment?
3. Has due diligence been undertaken and what were the findings of such assessments?

**Answer:**

1. The Australian Government has allocated, in-principle, up to \$103 million in project funding for Stage 1 of the Sunraysia Modernisation Project (SMP) under the 2008 Council of Australian Governments' *Intergovernmental Agreement on Murray-Darling Basin Reform*. Actual funding for this project is subject to due diligence assessment.
2. A business case seeking Australian Government funding for Stage 1 was lodged by Lower Murray Water in September 2009 and a revised business case was provided by the Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment in June 2010.
3. The Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities is undertaking a due diligence assessment of the Sunraysia project business case.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4.1: WED

**Question No:** 67

**Broad Topic:** Restoring the Balance program

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

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. How much has been expended under the Restoring the Balance program?
2. How much water has been recovered under the Restoring the Balance program? What has been the average price paid for a ML of water under the buyback so far?

**Answer:**

1. As at 30 September 2010, the total amount of administered expenditure incurred under the Restoring the Balance Program was \$1,376 million.
2. As at 30 September 2010, the Restoring the Balance program has secured by contract 920,150 ML of water entitlements. The entitlements have been purchased at a total cost of \$1,315 million. This equates to an average cost of \$1,429 per ML.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4.1: WED

**Question No:** 68

**Broad Topic:** Menindee Lakes and Broken  
Hill water supply

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

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. I refer the Department to the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Australian Government and the New South Wales Government in regards to Menindee Lakes. This agreement aims to save 200 GL of water by changing the operation of the Menindee Storage Lakes. What will be the operational changes at Menindee Lakes? Will the Government consider changing the existing 640/480 transfer arrangements which exist at Menindee?
2. The Darling River Water Saving Project analysed six schemes, which scheme does the MoU adopt or come closest to?
3. That report found that shutting down Menindee and Cawndilla would “result in unacceptable environment, social and heritage impacts” (p. 5). Why has the Government then decided to follow an option which shuts these two Lakes down?
4. The MoU proposes that Broken Hill be supplied with water from an aquifer. Has the Government tested this aquifer for toxic substances, such as arsenic?
5. Does the Department have any knowledge on from where does the aquifer recharge?

**Answer:**

1. A number of options for changed arrangements at Menindee Lakes are being investigated, which includes the implications of altering the existing operational regime for the Lakes.
2. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) does not specify or adopt a particular option from the Darling River Water Saving Project.
3. The MoU commits the governments to “protecting the local environment and heritage (including Kinchega National Park and the nationally important Menindee Lakes wetland).”
4. Under the MoU, the governments are investigating the feasibility of providing a safe and secure water supply for Broken Hill based on aquifer use during extended dry periods, thereby reducing the reliance of Broken Hill’s water supply on water storage at Menindee Lakes. Assessment of groundwater quality as part of this project includes testing a range of water quality parameters as set out in Australian Drinking Water Guidelines.
5. Current studies are assessing the characteristics and performance of a preferred aquifer near Menindee Lakes, including its recharge characteristics. Finalising these studies has been delayed by recent local flooding at Menindee Lakes.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4.1: WED

**Question No:** 69

**Broad Topic:** Sustainable Rural Water Use  
and Infrastructure Program –  
timing and projects

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

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. In a press release issued by Chris Bowen, Lindsay Tanner and Wayne Swan on 12 August, they stated with respect to Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure programs that “there are delays in the roll out of certain projects in some States. To meet this new timetable the funding profile for these projects will be adjusted so that \$200 million of funding will be moved from 2012-13 and 2013-14 to 2014-15 and 2015-16.” What projects will be deferred and why has another \$200 million of funding under this program been deferred when it is already running well behind schedule?
2. Can the Department please provide the Committee with a list of projects under the Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure program, the amount of funding allocated to individual programs, and the amount of money that has been expended under each individual program?

**Answer:**

1. The original funding profile for the SRWUIP necessarily reflected early estimates prior to industry and state input regarding the timing and delivery of the necessary project scoping/planning stages. The Australian Government’s requirement for robust business cases is ensuring that investments represent value for money, are fit for purpose and best provide for a viable and sustainable future for irrigation industries. With many SRWUIP projects yet to pass due diligence and commence contract negotiations, there is flexibility to manage the flow of project expenditure within the budget profile.
2. The majority of funding committed in-principle under the SRWUIP is for 13 state-led State Priority Projects and two Commonwealth-led State Priority Projects. These projects are subject to due diligence assessments. The State Priority Projects and other key projects and programs to be funded through SRWUIP are shown at Attachment A.

At 31 October 2010, \$437 million had been expended under the SRWUIP.

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Attachment A

| State                                                            | Project Title                                       | Max Govt Funding Commitment (\$m) |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>State Priority Projects</b>                                   |                                                     |                                   |
| South Australia                                                  | Integrated Pipelines                                | 120                               |
|                                                                  | Riverine Recovery                                   | 100                               |
|                                                                  | Lower Lakes and Coorong Recovery                    | 200                               |
|                                                                  | Private Irrigation Infrastructure Program           | 110                               |
| Victoria                                                         | Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal Stage 2        | 956                               |
|                                                                  | Sunraysia Modernisation                             | 103                               |
| New South Wales                                                  | On Farm Irrigated Farm Modernisation                | 300                               |
|                                                                  | Basin Pipe (North and South)                        | 137                               |
|                                                                  | NSW Water Metering Scheme                           | 221                               |
|                                                                  | Healthy Floodplains                                 | 50                                |
|                                                                  | Private Irrigation Infrastructure Operators Program | 650                               |
| Australian Capital Territory                                     | Salt Management Strategy                            | 85                                |
| Queensland                                                       | On Farm Water Use Efficiency                        | 115                               |
|                                                                  | SunWater infrastructure modernisation               | 40                                |
|                                                                  | Coal Seam Gas Water feasibility study               | 5                                 |
| <b>Other SRWUIP Major Projects and Programs</b>                  |                                                     |                                   |
| Menindee Lakes Project                                           |                                                     | 400                               |
| On Farm Irrigation Efficiency Program                            |                                                     | 300                               |
| Strengthening Basin Communities Program                          |                                                     | 200                               |
| Supporting more efficient irrigation in Tasmania                 |                                                     | 140                               |
| Small Block Irrigator Exit Grants                                |                                                     | 102.5                             |
| Wimmera Mallee Pipeline                                          |                                                     | 99*                               |
| Gascoyne Irrigation Pipeline Project                             |                                                     | 6.6                               |
| Harvey Pipeline in Western Australia                             |                                                     | 49                                |
| Compliance and Enforcement Systems for Water Resource Management |                                                     | 60                                |
| National Water Market System                                     |                                                     | 56                                |
| * SRWUIP contribution towards the project.                       |                                                     |                                   |

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4.1: WED

**Question No:** 70

**Broad Topic:** On-farm infrastructure projects

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

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

1. Please detail the number and value of all applications received under each round of Commonwealth on-farm infrastructure project programs undertaken during 2009/10.
2. How many of these applications have been approved?
3. To what value and what volume of environmental water is expected to be attained as a result of them?
4. What money has remained unallocated as a result of each of these applications rounds?
5. Has the Department received representations regarding the treatment of grants provided under any of its on-farm infrastructure programs by the Australian Taxation Office? If so, what issues have been identified and what action has been taken to address those issues?

**Answer:**

1. Round One of the On-Farm Irrigation Efficiency Program received 18 applications, of which nine complied with eligibility requirements. The total estimated value of Australian Government funding sought by eligible projects from these nine applications was \$355 million (excluding GST).
2. 16 projects (from six of the nine eligible applications) in Round One were short listed for in-principle funding.
3. The projects from the six delivery partners claim an estimated 50 GL of water savings. Of this, 33.5 GL of water entitlements with a total estimated value of \$38.5 million is expected to be transferred to the Australian Government for environmental use.
4. In-principle funding of \$100 million was granted to the six delivery partners under Round One. As at 31 October 2010 funding agreements worth \$31.8 million (GST exclusive) have been signed, with three remaining applicants expected to sign their funding agreements shortly.
5. The Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities has been in discussion with existing participants and potential participants about the possible taxation treatment of irrigation infrastructure funding:

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- the Department is aware that some delivery partners and individual irrigators have sought advice from the Australian Taxation Office on this matter
- the Department has participated in meetings with infrastructure program participants, their tax advisers and the Australian Taxation Office and some minor changes have been made to project funding agreements to clarify matters.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4.1: WED

**Question No:** 71

**Broad Topic:** Menindee Lakes MoU -  
regional urban water projects

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

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. The MoU identifies \$300 million to be spent on regional urban water projects in New South Wales. What projects have been allocated funds from these amounts?
2. How will other projects be selected for funding? Will the New South Wales Government have the final say over which projects are funded?

**Answer:**

1. Refer to part 8 of Question on Notice 65 (Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2010).
2. Refer to part 9 of Question on Notice 65 (Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2010).

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4.1: WED

**Question No:** 72

**Broad Topic:** Water Reform MoU with  
NSW Government - costs

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

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

1. What options for infrastructure works and/or operational changes at Menindee Lakes are being considered under the July 2010 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the New South Wales Government? What water savings are forecast under each of these options? What is the cost of each of these options?
2. Does the Department envisage drawing funding required under Clause 24 of the MOU (subsidising Broken Hill water costs) from any existing program or funding source? If so, from where? Who will meet any increase in operational and maintenance costs beyond the specified five-year period?

**Answer:**

1. A Joint Steering Committee, established by the Australian and NSW Governments under the MoU, has overseen modelling work which assessed potential water savings and downstream impacts of various scenarios relating to environmental watering requirements, storage and release times, climate change, flooding and infrastructure improvements.
2. Funding for the provisions of Clause 24 of the MoU would be provided from the Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure Program. Arrangements for meeting operational and maintenance costs for Broken Hill's water supply after any Australian Government contribution ceased would be a matter for the NSW Government and Broken Hill City Council.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4.1: WED

**Question No:** 73

**Broad Topic:** Water Reform MoU with  
NSW Government –  
environmental water

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

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

1. Will projects funded under Clause 25 of the MOU be required to make any environmental water savings? Will projects under Clause 25 of the MOU be required to be within the Murray-Darling Basin?
2. Does the Commonwealth expect to increase the holdings of the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder as a result of projects funded under Clause 25 of the MOU?
3. How much water will be saved for environmental purposes from the funding committed towards Orange City Council's water security project under Clause 27 of the MOU?
4. What additional holdings will the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder expect to attain as a result of the project funded under Clause 27 of the MOU?

**Answer:**

1. At this stage, there are no specific water security projects in train under Clause 25 of the MOU. Projects are not required to be in the Murray-Darling Basin.
2. Refer to Answer 1.
3. The objective of the Orange City Council project specified in Clause 27 is to improve the water security for Orange.
4. None.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4.1: WED

**Question No:** 74

**Broad Topic:** Water recovery program and  
the Basin Plan

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

**Senator Joyce asked:**

1. Will the Department make any changes to its water recovery program following the release of the Guide to the Basin Plan? If so, what changes will or has it made? Has the Guide to the Basin Plan caused the Department to reevaluate / change where it buys water from?
2. Does the Government's commitment to "bridge the gap" include purchasing all of this gap? In particular, does it cover the 3% reduction that the MDBA has assigned to climate change factors?

**Answer:**

1. The Murray Darling Basin Authority's (MDBA) Guide to the proposed Basin Plan (the Guide) is the subject of ongoing stakeholder consultation.
2. Water recovery to 'bridge the gap' will be achieved through water saving infrastructure projects and water purchases. This commitment includes the three per cent reduction that the MDBA has assigned to climate change factors.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4.1: WED

**Question No:** 75

**Broad Topic:** Northern Victorian Irrigation  
Renewal Project

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

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

Has the Department been provided with any analysis of the outcomes from Stage One of the Northern Victorian Irrigation Renewal Project? If so, what did such analysis indicate with regard to water savings and was the analysis independently audited or verified?

**Answer:**

The Victorian Government must provide annual independent water savings audits for the Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal Project as one of the conditions of approval of the Sugarloaf Pipeline under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

The audit report for 2008-09 has been publicly released and is available at: [www.ourwater.vic.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/61882/Audit-Report-NVIRP-2008-09.pdf](http://www.ourwater.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/61882/Audit-Report-NVIRP-2008-09.pdf). It was prepared by Cardno (Qld) Pty Ltd, which was engaged by the Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment to undertake the 2008-09 independent audit.

The report estimated water savings for that year of 28.173 gigalitres Long Term Cap Equivalent (page iii). The audited savings are substantially higher than the 8 gigalitres Long Term Cap Equivalent forecast in the Stage One Business Case (page 98), available at [www.nvirp.com.au/publications/businesscasestage1.aspx](http://www.nvirp.com.au/publications/businesscasestage1.aspx).

The estimated volume of water savings for 2009-10 will be reported in the independent water savings audit for that year.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4.1: WED

**Question No:** 76

**Broad Topic:** Market mechanisms for  
recovering water

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

**Senator Joyce asked:**

Has the Government formally responded to recommendation 6.1 of the Productivity Commission's report titled "Market Mechanisms for Recovering Water in the Murray-Darling Basin"? If so, what was the response and what action has been taken so far?

**Answer:**

No. The Government is considering the report's findings and recommendations in detail.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4.1: WED

**Question No:** 77

**Broad Topic:** Commonwealth activity in the  
water market

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

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

I refer to the quote by Minister Burke on ABC TV's Lateline on 8 October 2010 that "... we (the government) are a significant part of the water market but we do not dominate its pricing. We are just one of the buyers there in the market." For each of the last three financial years and/or calendar years please outline the Commonwealth's understanding of, and detail by type:

- a. The value of all permanent water entitlements traded
- b. The volume of all permanent water entitlements traded
- c. The value of Commonwealth purchases
- d. The volume of Commonwealth purchases

**Answer:**

The volume and value of all permanent water entitlement trades is reported by the National Water Commission (NWC) in its annual *Australian Water Markets Report*. The reports can be downloaded from the NWC's website at [www.nwc.gov.au](http://www.nwc.gov.au).

The volume and value of Commonwealth water entitlement purchases is reported on the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities' website at [www.environment.gov.au/waterpurchasing](http://www.environment.gov.au/waterpurchasing).

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Answers to questions on notice

**Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities portfolio**

Supplementary Budget Estimates, October 2010

**Program: Division or Agency:** 4.1: WED

**Question No:** 78

**Broad Topic:** Recovery of water for the  
environment

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

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

In the event that policies designed to recover water for the environment, in line with the Basin Plan objectives, do not succeed in recovering sufficient water, how would the remaining water be recovered and under the proposals outlined in the Guide to the proposed Basin Plan, how would the cost of such recovery be shared?

**Answer:**

The Australian Government has committed to use its water recovery programs (both water purchase and infrastructure investment) to 'bridge the gap' to recover water required in line with the Basin Plan objectives.

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications  
Legislation Committee**

Answers to questions on notice

**Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities portfolio**

Supplementary Budget Estimates, October 2010

**Program: Division or Agency:** 4.1: WGD

**Question No:** 79

**Broad Topic:** Commonwealth  
Environmental Water Holder

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

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

1. For each year of its existence, please summarise what volume of entitlement the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder has held.
2. What allocation has been provided against these entitlements and please detail how much of this allocation has been committed to environmental watering actions and in what locations?
3. What consultation was undertaken with local communities or others prior to decisions about these environmental watering actions being made?

**Answer:**

1. The volume of water entitlement in the Commonwealth environmental water holdings was:
  - 2008-09: 64 GL (30 June 2009)
  - 2009-10: 738 GL (30 June 2010)
  - 2010-11: 808 GL (as at 31 October 2010)
2. To 31 October 2010, a total of 658 GL of water allocation has been made available against the Commonwealth environmental water holdings:

| Year                         | Volume (GL) |
|------------------------------|-------------|
| 2008-09                      | 14          |
| 2009-10                      | 187         |
| 2010-11 (to 31 October 2010) | 457         |
| <b>Total</b>                 | <b>658</b>  |

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Answers to questions on notice

**Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities portfolio**

Supplementary Budget Estimates, October 2010

To 31 October 2010, a total of 295 GL of water has been committed to environmental watering actions. This water has been committed across the following catchments:

| <b>Catchment</b>  | <b>Volume<br/>(GL)</b> |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| Barwon-Darling    | 42.4                   |
| Condamine-Balonne | 4.5                    |
| Gwydir            | 3.1                    |
| Lachlan           | 3.8                    |
| Lower Darling     | 6.0                    |
| Macquarie         | 29.8                   |
| Moonie            | 1.4                    |
| Murray            | 97.9                   |
| Murrumbidgee      | 87.6                   |
| Ovens             | 0.1                    |
| Warrego           | 18.2                   |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>294.8</b>           |
|                   |                        |

3. The Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder works with state governments and local advisory groups to access local knowledge that supports good decisions about the use of water for the environment. In particular, local knowledge is used in the identification of water needs and the preferred arrangements for water delivery.

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications**  
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Answers to questions on notice  
**Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities portfolio**  
Supplementary Budget Estimates, October 2010

**Program: Division or Agency:** 4.1: WGD **Question No:** 80  
**Broad Topic:** Waterproofing Eastern  
Adelaide project  
**Proof Hansard Page and Date** Written Question  
**or Written Question:**

**Senator Xenophon asked:**

1. Is the Department familiar with the Waterproofing Eastern Adelaide project, which brings seven councils in Adelaide's east together on a stormwater harvesting project worth approximately \$33 million?
2. During the election campaign, Prime Minister Gillard and Minister Wong promised this project \$10 million. Is this funding still available?
3. What conditions are there on the funding?
4. What level of Commitment has the South Australian Government made? How has this affected the Federal funding?
5. What other projects have received funding from the Stormwater Harvesting and Reuse Program?
6. Why have these projects received funding while the Eastern Alliance project has not?

**Answer:**

1. Yes.
2. Yes.
3. Support for the project is subject to confirmation of funds from the partner organisations and finalisation of the feasibility study. All projects supported under the National Urban Water and Desalination Plan are required to enter into either a funding agreement or Implementation Plan under the National Partnership Agreement for Water for the Future.
4. The department is not aware of any funding commitments for the project from the South Australian Government at this stage. Support for the project is subject to confirmation of funds from the partner organisations and finalisation of the feasibility study.
5. See table of approved projects under the Stormwater Harvesting and Reuse Program at [Attachment A](#).
6. Funding is available for the Eastern Alliance project as outlined in answers 2 and 3 above.

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**ATTACHMENT A**

| <b>State</b> | <b>Project title</b>                                                                                 | <b>Proponent</b>                                                 |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| NSW          | Terrigal Central Business District and Hylton Moore Park Stormwater Harvesting Project               | Gosford City Council                                             |
| NSW          | Manly Golf Course Stormwater Harvesting and Reuse                                                    | Manly Golf Club                                                  |
| NSW          | Blacktown and Penrith Stormwater Harvesting and Managed Aquifer Recharge Scheme                      | Blacktown City Council                                           |
| NSW          | Apex Oval/East Dubbo Sporting Complex - Stormwater Harvesting at a Regional Sporting Venue           | Dubbo City Council                                               |
| NSW          | Alexandra Canal Catchment Stormwater Reuse Scheme                                                    | City of Sydney                                                   |
| Qld          | Fitzgibbon Stormwater Harvesting (FiSH) Project                                                      | Urban Land Development Authority                                 |
| Qld          | South Bank Stormwater Harvesting and Reuse Centre Project                                            | South Bank Corporation                                           |
| Qld          | Fitzgibbon Potable Roofwater (PotaRoo) Project                                                       | Urban Land Development Authority                                 |
| Qld          | Stormwater Harvesting and Reuse Scheme                                                               | Brisbane City Council                                            |
| Tas          | Moonah Stormwater Harvesting and Industrial Reuse Scheme                                             | Glenorchy City Council                                           |
| Vic          | Working Wetlands                                                                                     | Melbourne Royal Botanic Gardens Board                            |
| Vic          | Harnessing Ballarat's Stormwater - Ballarat City Council                                             | Ballarat City Council                                            |
| Vic          | Clayton South Retarding Basin & Namatjira Park Stormwater Reuse - Melbourne Water                    | Melbourne Water                                                  |
| Vic          | Stormwater Harvesting in Regional Communities                                                        | Mildura Rural City Council                                       |
| Vic          | Stormwater Harvesting - Geelong's Plan. City of Greater Geelong.                                     | City of Greater Geelong                                          |
| Vic          | Melbourne Park Stormwater Harvesting Scheme                                                          | Melbourne and Olympic Parks Trust                                |
| Vic          | City of Hobson's Bay Water Security Project                                                          | City of Hobson's Bay                                             |
| Vic          | City of Maribyrnong Stormwater Harvesting Project                                                    | City of Maribyrnong                                              |
| Vic          | City of Brimbank Alternative Water Project                                                           | City of Brimbank                                                 |
| Vic          | The New Melbourne Wholesale Market Stormwater harvesting and reuse project                           | Department of Innovation Industry & Regional Development (DIIRD) |
| Vic          | Eastern Melbourne Parks and Gardens Stormwater Reuse Scheme                                          | Melbourne City Council                                           |
| Vic          | Coburg Principal Activity Centre Stormwater Harvesting and Reuse Project                             | Yarra Valley Water                                               |
| Vic          | Docklands Stormwater Harvesting and Reuse Project                                                    | Victorian Urban Development Authority (VicUrban)                 |
| Vic          | Melbourne Water Security through Stormwater Harvesting                                               | Manningham City Council (and 11 other councils)                  |
| Vic          | The Kalkallo Stormwater Harvesting and Reuse Project - Yarra Valley Water                            | Yarra Valley Water                                               |
| WA           | Alkimos Eglinton Integrated Water Management Project                                                 | WA Land Authority (LandCorp)                                     |
| SA           | Adelaide Botanic Gardens First Creek Wetland ASR Project -- part of 8 projects managed through DWLBC | SA Department of Environment and Heritage                        |
| SA           | City of Unley Stormwater Harvesting and Reuse Project                                                | City of Unley                                                    |
| SA           | Oaklands Park Stormwater Scheme                                                                      | Marion City Council - Govt SA                                    |
| SA           | Adelaide Airport Stormwater Scheme -- part of 7 projects managed through DWLBC                       | Adelaide Airport                                                 |
| SA           | Water Proofing the West Stage 1 City of Charles Sturt-- part of 7 projects managed through DWLBC     | City of Charles Sturt                                            |
| SA           | Water Proofing the South Stage 2 - City of Onkaparinga-- part of 7 projects managed through DWLBC    | City of Onkaparinga                                              |

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| <b>State</b> | <b>Project title</b>                                                                             | <b>Proponent</b>  |
|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| SA           | Unity Park Biofiltration and Reuse - City of Salisbury- part of 7 projects managed through DWLBC | City of Salisbury |
| SA           | Barker Inlet Stormwater Reuse Scheme -- part of 7 projects managed through DWLBC                 | SA Water          |
| SA           | Playford Stormwater and Reuse -- City of Playford -part of 7 projects managed through DWLBC      | City of Playford  |

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4.1: WGD

**Question No:** 81

**Broad Topic:** Efficient delivery of  
environmental water

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

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

1. What research has been undertaken to date into means of more efficiently, than is currently the case and/or proposed, providing environmental water to key environmental assets?
2. Are there any examples of particular assets and more efficiently delivered water savings that have been identified to date?

**Answer:**

1. There are a number of programs that aim to improve the management of environmental water. For example, The Living Murray Environmental Works and Measures program is implementing infrastructure projects to provide environmental benefits at the six Murray River icon sites.

Funding is also being provided to New South Wales natural resource agencies to improve their adaptive management of environment water at key environmental assets in the Lower Murrumbidgee, Lachlan Wetlands, Macquarie Marshes and Gwydir Wetlands.

2. Yes. The Living Murray works program has identified site-specific infrastructure to deliver environmental water to the six Murray River icon sites. These works are either under construction or at an advanced stage of planning and will help reduce the amount of water required to inundate discrete areas of the floodplain.

Funding has also been provided for an environmental works program at Yanga National Park in the lower Murrumbidgee floodplain, and at the Macquarie Marshes.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4.1: WGD

**Question No:** 82

**Broad Topic:** Chaffey Dam

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

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

1. What role if any did the Department play in the decision to expand the Chaffey Dam?
2. What role if any did the Authority play in the decision to expand the Chaffey Dam?
3. What impact will this Dam have on downstream flows?
4. What conditions were placed on this expansion? Is any federal funding involved in this expansion?
5. Were any representations received by the Murray-Darling Basin Authority, Department or Minister in regard to this expansion?

**Answer:**

1. The decision to expand the Chaffey Dam rests with the NSW Government. The Commonwealth Government has committed both in 2007 and as part of its 2010 election commitments to provide a funding contribution towards the expansion. The Department has provided advice on the implementation of these commitments.
2. The Authority did not play any formal role in the decision. The Authority was consulted by the NSW Government on the Peel Valley Water Sharing Plan, as is required by the *Water Act 2007*.
3. The Dam will not affect the long term cap on diversions from the Namoi catchment which the NSW Government has committed to as a signatory to the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement. Also, the size of the Dam will not affect the requirements placed on the Namoi catchment in relation to diversions or downstream flows under the Basin Plan.
4. Australian Government funding of \$16.945 million for the project has been made available in separate 2007 and 2010 announcements. This is conditional on:
  - developing a water sharing plan for the Peel Valley (complete);
  - providing a satisfactory business plan; and
  - demonstrating that the project is consistent with environmental standards.
5. Yes.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4.1: WGD

**Question No:** 83

**Broad Topic:** Commonwealth environmental  
watering in the Gwydir Valley

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

**Senator Joyce asked:**

Given that the Australian Government has already invested in excess of \$200 million in buying Gwydir Valley irrigation entitlement (and the Basin Plan calls on that amount to either double or triple), why did the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder not take its full allocation of supplementary water during recent supplementary access water events?

**Answer:**

To 30 October 2010 the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder has used 3,056 ML of Commonwealth supplementary water in the Gwydir catchment.

The Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder is established to actively manage water to achieve the maximum environmental benefit. For supplementary water entitlements this involves considering on an event by event basis, the condition of environmental assets, water availability and existing stream flows. Due to an unusual set of climatic conditions during a recent event (over 60 days of natural flow) the Gwydir Wetlands had received a broad scale inundation. Considering these conditions, it was determined that supplementary water would not be called, thereby retaining the option of calling the water later in the 2010-11 water year.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4.1: WGD

**Question No:** 84

**Broad Topic:** Temporary trade of  
environmental water

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

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

Has the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder developed any policies or guidelines allowing it to engage in the temporary trade of allocation under its entitlements? If so, please provide a copy of such guidelines. If not, does it intend to produce such guidelines?

**Answer:**

No, although the general approach to these issues is outlined in the 2010-11 Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder Business Plan. Guidelines will be developed prior to any trading activity.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4.1: WGD

**Question No:** 85

**Broad Topic:** Eastern Adelaide Stormwater  
Project

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

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

I refer to the election promise committing federal support for the Eastern Adelaide Stormwater Project.

1. When will this funding be provided?
2. Has the government had discussions or communications, either before or after the election period, with either the South Australian Government or the local councils involved in this project? If so, please detail the date and content of such communications.
3. Will the project proceed if funding support is not provided by the South Australian Government?

**Answer:**

1. Payment of Australian Government funding for the feasibility study will be made in accordance with milestones to be set out in a funding agreement. Funding beyond the feasibility study is subject to confirmation of funds from the partner organisations and finalisation of the feasibility study.
2. Yes, during November 2009 a departmental official attended a meeting between the then Minister for Climate Change and Water and the Eastern Regional Alliance.

A staff member from Walkerville City Council (a council member of the Eastern Regional Alliance) contacted a departmental official on 28 July 2010 about the Australian Government's announcement of funding for the Waterproofing Eastern Adelaide project.

Senator the Hon Don Farrell, Parliamentary Secretary for Sustainability and Urban Water met with council members of the Eastern Regional Alliance in early November 2010. The department is currently discussing with the proponent the funding arrangements and the scope of the feasibility study.

3. Support for the project is subject to confirmation of funds from the partner organisations and finalisation of the feasibility study.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4.1: WGD

**Question No:** 86

**Broad Topic:** State environmental water  
entitlements

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

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

Is the Department aware of plans in any state to change the status of environmental water entitlements? If so, what changes are proposed and what will their impact be?

**Answer:**

No.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4.1: WGD

**Question No:** 87

**Broad Topic:** National Urban Water and  
Desalination Plan

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

**Senator Joyce asked:**

The government reduced funding for the National Urban Water and Desalination Plan by \$50 million during the election. What is the amount of funds now left allocated in this program?

**Answer:**

The budget profile for this program is now \$854.2 million.

Contact Officer: Tanya Stacpoole

Extension No: 2644

FAS PCD Sig:  
SECRETARY Sig:

Date  
Date

Clearing Officer: Ian Robinson

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4.1: WRD

**Question No:** 88

**Broad Topic:** Becher Point Wetlands

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

**Senator Siewert asked:**

1. Did the Department fund the Ecological Character Description report for the Becher Wetlands in Port Kennedy WA?
2. Does the Department have a copy of the report and if yes, can the report be tabled?
3. If the Department didn't fund the report, did they have access to it while preparing the recent Ramsar report on Becher Wetlands?

**Answer:**

1. Yes. The Department and the Western Australian Government contributed funding to the preparation of an Ecological Character Description for the Becher Point Wetlands Ramsar site.
2. No. The report has not yet been finalised, nor has it been endorsed by the Australian or Western Australian governments. The final report will be publicly released.
3. Not applicable. See answer to part 1 above.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4.1: WRD

**Question No:** 89

**Broad Topic:** Lower Lakes and Goolwa  
Channel

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

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

1. Has any analysis been undertaken, or is any being undertaken, of the impacts of
  - a. the bund between Lakes Alexandrina and Albert; or
  - b. the temporary regulators installed around the Goolwa Channel?
2. Given the recent restoration of water levels, could the issues that led to these measures have been addressed by any other means?

**Answer:**

1. The South Australian Government undertook analysis of the impacts of the bund between Lakes Alexandrina and Albert. South Australian Government agencies have been monitoring and reviewing the impacts of these structures. This has included regular ecological, water quality and acid sulfate soil monitoring.

The Commonwealth Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities analysed the impacts of the temporary flow regulators in the Goolwa Channel, a referral under the *Environment Protection Biodiversity and Conservation Act 1999* (assessments 2009/5227 and 2009/4833).

2. This is a matter for the South Australian Government, as the proponent of the works.

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**Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities portfolio**  
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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4.1: WRD **Question No:** 90

**Broad Topic:** Water for the Future  
communication campaign

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

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

1. Please detail the total cost of the campaign, with a breakdown of spending by stages such as creative development and media buy;
2. Please provide details of all contracts of parties involved with the campaign, including names, costs, dates engaged and by what means engaged;
3. Please detail in which print publications, and on what dates, the advertisements ran;
4. Please detail which electronic media (TV or radio) carried the advertisements, and on what dates (or range of dates);
5. Please provide a copy of all creative concepts prepared for this campaign;
6. Please provide copies of all documents, including emails and notes of telephone conversations, provided by any Minister or Ministerial Office relating to the creative concepts, scripts or contents of this campaign

**Answer:**

1. Costs of the campaign are outlined below. All figures are GST exclusive. Note that some minor adjustments may be made to these figures once final invoices are received.

| Campaign activity   | Total     |
|---------------------|-----------|
| Formative research  | \$246,500 |
| Creative pitch fee  | \$22,727  |
| PR pitch fee        | \$12,726  |
| Concept testing     | \$127,652 |
| Tracking research   | \$70,000  |
| Evaluation research | \$70,000  |

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|                 |                    |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| Creative agency | \$1,397,208        |
| PR agency       | \$150,000          |
| Media buy       | \$2,217,436        |
| <b>Total</b>    | <b>\$4,314,249</b> |

2. Information on the campaign contracts are detailed below, all figures are GST exclusive. Note that some minor adjustments may be made to these figures once final invoices are received.

|                                        |                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Formative and concept testing research | Woolcott Research<br>Engaged on 24 March 2010 via a Deed of Standing Offer<br>Cost: \$374,152                             |
| Creative agency                        | AJF Partnership<br>Engaged on 8 July 2010 via a contract.<br>Cost: \$1,397,208                                            |
| PR agency                              | Sefton and Associates<br>Engaged on 29 September 2010 via a contract.<br>Cost: \$150,000                                  |
| Tracking and evaluation research       | Colmar Brunton<br>Engaged on 22 October 2010 via a contract<br>Cost: \$140,000                                            |
| Media buy                              | Universal McCann<br>Commonwealth master campaign media planning and buying agency contracted by DoFD<br>Cost: \$2,217,436 |

The procurement of services from Woolcott Research, AJF Partnership, Sefton's and Associates, and Colmar Brunton adhered to Department of Finance and Deregulation (DoFD) guidelines and companies were selected from the whole of government Communications Multi-Use list. The procurements were done through select tender processes. Universal McCann is the Australian Government's master campaign media planning and buying agency and is contracted by DoFD.

- 3 & 4. The media schedule for creative elements are detailed in the attached spreadsheet, [Attachment A](#).
5. The original and final creative materials for this campaign are at [Attachment B](#).

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6. Records of Ministerial approvals and comments relating to the creative concepts, scripts or contents of this campaign are at Attachment C.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4.1: WRD

**Question No:** 91

**Broad Topic:** Production efficiency in MDB

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

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

Does the Department or the Murray Darling Basin Authority have any data or estimates on the relative production efficiency of each region within the Murray-Darling Basin? If so, please provide relevant data and/or sources.

**Answer:**

No. However, the Murray-Darling Basin Authority has received data on the gross value of irrigated agricultural production (GVIAP) from Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics – Bureau of Rural Sciences.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4.1: WRD

**Question No:** 92

**Broad Topic:** Briefings from MDBA

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

**Senator Joyce asked:**

Does the Department receive briefings from the MDBA? If so, how many briefings has it received in the last 3 months, and when were those briefings?

**Answer:**

Officers from the department and the MDBA meet frequently to discuss a variety of issues of common interest.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4.1: WRD

**Question No:** 93

**Broad Topic:** Financial decisions based on  
Basin Plan Guide

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

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

Has the Department or the Murray Darling Basin Authority contacted banks or financial institutions in response to reports they are preparing to foreclose or make financial decisions based on proposals contained in the Guide to the proposed Basin Plan? If so, what representations were made, by whom and when?

**Answer:**

Following the release of the Guide to the proposed Basin Plan, the department and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority organised on 19 October 2010 a briefing for financial institutions on the Guide to the proposed Basin Plan and the Government's commitment to bridging the gap. The briefing was attended by representatives from the Australian Bankers' Association, eight banks and Abacus – Australian Mutuals, the industry body for the Australian mutual financial services sector.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4.1: WRD

**Question No:** 94

**Broad Topic:** National Water Initiative –  
state reforms

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

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

Have all reforms committed to by the States as part of the 2004 National Water Initiative been completed? If not, please detail which reforms in which states remain to be completed.

**Answer:**

Details of progress to 2008 can be found in the National Water Commission's 2009 Biennial Assessment, released in October 2009. Details of progress since then will be reported in the National Water Commission's 2011 Biennial Assessment.

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**Program: Division or Agency:** 4.1: WRD

**Question No:** 95

**Broad Topic:** Basin Plan – Australian  
Government cross-agency  
group

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

**Senator Joyce asked:**

On p. xxviii of the Guide to the Basin Plan the MDBA refers to an Australian Government cross-agency group “to consider the implications of the proposed Basin Plan and to coordinate the government’s response.”

1. What is this crossagency group and who is on it? When was (or will) this group be formed? Why was it formed?
2. Does it have a terms of reference? What are its likely outputs?
3. Who is the group reporting to?

**Answer:**

- 1-2. The cross agency group (the group) is comprised of senior executives from the:
  - Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (Chair);
  - Murray-Darling Basin Authority;
  - Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs;
  - Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government;
  - Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry;
  - Treasury;
  - Department of Finance and Deregulation; and
  - Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

The group met for the first time on 1 July 2010. It was formed for the purposes set out in its terms of reference, which are as follows.

To provide a forum for relevant departments to:

- (a) share understanding of potential socio-economic impacts from the Basin Plan (from the development of the Guide to subsequent implementation phases);
- (b) discuss potential policy responses (if any) to such impacts;
- (c) provide coordination and shared oversight of any Commonwealth response, if required.

3. The members of the group report to their respective agency heads or Ministers.