

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Legislation Committee**

Answers to questions on notice

Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio

Additional Estimates, February 2010

Outcome:	4	Question No:	120
Program:	4.1		
Division/Agency:	Murray-Darling Basin Authority		
Topic:	MDBA regional meetings - groups		
Hansard Page ECA:	133 (9/2/09)		

Senator FISHER asked:

Senator FISHER- How many regional meetings has the MDBA had, and the board? Have you held any in South Australia?

CHAIR—This will have to be the last question, Senator Fisher.

Mr Freeman—We have held nine meetings and one of those has been held in South Australia, together with a field trip in South Australia to have a look at the Lower Lakes.

Senator FISHER—Where was the meeting?

Mr Freeman—It was in Renmark.

Senator FISHER—When? Perhaps you can let us know.

Mr Freeman—It was on 7 and 8 September last year.

Senator FISHER—Can you provide on notice the groups that you met with and consulted with on that trip?

Mr Freeman—They are board meetings. There is a public session and we send out wide invitations. I think we would have responses as to who indicated they were going to attend, for catering purposes et cetera, and I can provide that.

Answers:

The following individuals or organisations indicated they or a representative would attend the Murray-Darling Basin Authority's public information session in Renmark on 7 September 2009:

Hon Karlene Maywald, MP, Member for Chaffey & SA Minister for the River Murray,
Minister for Water Security

Riverland Futures Taskforce

Murray Darling Association

Riverland Development Corp

Riverland West Local Action Planning Association

Berri Barmera Local Action Planning Association

Loxton Bookpurnong Local Action Planning Association

Greening Australia SA

Sustainable Horticulture PIRSA

SA Department for Environment and Heritage

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Legislation Committee**

Answers to questions on notice

Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio

Additional Estimates, February 2010

SA Murray Darling Basin NRM Board
Central Irrigation Trust
Renmark Irrigation Trust
SA Irrigators Council
South Australian Murray Irrigators Inc
Renmark Paringa Council
Riverland Wine Grape Growers Association Inc
Murray Citrus Growers Cooperative Association
Staff member from office of Member for Hammond
Agri-Tech Irrigation Enterprises Pty Ltd
Almondco Australia Ltd
Angove's Pty Ltd
Century Orchards
Pike River Fresh Pty Ltd
Rural Solutions SA
Yatco Pty Ltd
Berri Barmera Ministers Association
Indigenous community representative
Local primary producers

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Legislation Committee**

Answers to questions on notice

Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio

Additional Estimates, February 2010

Outcome:	4	Question No:	121
Program:	4.1		
Division/Agency:	Murray-Darling Basin Authority		
Topic:	Fishing – Ban on fishing in Murray-Darling Basin		
Hansard Page ECA:	47 (9/2/09)		

Senator COLBECK asked:

Senator COLBECK—I have just got a very quick question. There was a suggestion by a river ecologist from Charles Sturt University that fishing be banned in large areas of the Murray—I do not know whether you heard me talking about this with DAFF last night—to prevent native fish from facing extinction. I do not have the name of the ecologist, I am sorry, but this person suggested that the Australian governments have been working on this for some time. I have asked DAFF, as they have some responsibilities for that area, and you are an obvious choice to ask as well.

...

Mr Oxley—It is a suggestion that the government has been working for some time on banning fishing in large areas of the Murray-Darling basin to prevent native fish from facing extinction.

Ms Kruk—We have Water on during the course of your hearings so you can pose the question to them while we take it on notice.

Senator COLBECK—I am happy for it to be taken on notice. I am just interested in getting a sense of where things are at.

Answers:

The Murray-Darling Basin Native Fish Strategy has been operating to deal with impacts on native fish stocks in the Murray-Darling Basin since 2003, and is already addressing the issues raised by Dr Humphries.

\$14 million out of \$18 million expended on the Native Fish Strategy over the past 6 years has been delivered directly to community demonstration reaches, habitat restoration, research and communication activities across the Basin. This emphasises significant Government investment in on-ground actions to benefit native fish as well as the close relationship between the Government and jurisdictions, working together to rehabilitate iconic native fish such as Murray cod.

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Legislation Committee**

Answers to questions on notice

Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio

Additional Estimates, February 2010

Basin Governments have invested \$70 million in the internationally acclaimed 'Sea to Hume' project. This is reducing the impacts of man-made barriers to the migration and passage of aquatic fauna through the installation of specially designed fishways along the Murray River. Monitoring has shown that hundreds of thousands of fish are successfully using the fishways.

Local communities are working closely with Government to look after the health of their rivers and rehabilitate native fish populations through practical on-ground measures such as Native Fish Demonstration Reaches (MDBA). Eight Demonstration Reaches have been established in SA, VIC, NSW, ACT and QLD, where local communities are actively managing almost 800 river km to maintain and restore healthy river habitats.

Recreational fishing is regulated by individual Basin Governments, not by the Australian Government.

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Legislation Committee**

Answers to questions on notice

Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio

Additional Estimates, February 2010

Outcome:	4	Question No:	122
Program:	4.1		
Division/Agency:	Murray-Darling Basin Authority		
Topic:	MDBA critical human water needs		
Hansard Page ECA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator FISHER asked:

1. Which organisations and interest groups has the Authority consulted with in their work to further describe the term critical human water needs under section 86A of the *Water Act 2007*?
2. What form did these consultations take?
3. When were these consultations undertaken?
4. Are there any employees within the Murray Darling Basin Authority working specifically on the further definition of critical human water needs? If so, how many?

Answers:

1. With respect to work to further describe the term critical human water needs under section 86A of the *Water Act 2007*, Authority staff have consulted with staff from the following organisations:
 - the Commonwealth Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts;
 - the New South Wales Office of Water;
 - the Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment;
 - the South Australian Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation;
 - the Queensland Department of Environment and Resource Management;
 - the Australian Capital Territory Department of the Environment, Climate Change, Energy and Water;
 - the Commonwealth Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and
 - the Commonwealth Department of Defence.

The Authority has also consulted with the Basin Community Committee.

2. The form of these consultations has varied, depending on the organisation or interest group being consulted. In general, the consultations have been in the form of presentations to, and discussions held at both formal and informal meetings. Specific workshops on this matter have been held with representatives of the jurisdictions nominated by the Basin Officials Committee.

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Legislation Committee**

Answers to questions on notice

Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio

Additional Estimates, February 2010

3. Consultation has occurred in an ongoing fashion during 2009 and 2010.
4. Two employees within the Murray-Darling Basin Authority are, amongst other duties, undertaking work related to the further definition of critical human water needs. Additional employees are involved as required.

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Legislation Committee**

Answers to questions on notice

Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio

Additional Estimates, February 2010

Outcome:	4	Question No:	123
Program:	4.1		
Division/Agency:	Murray-Darling Basin Authority		
Topic:	MDBA regional board meetings		
Hansard Page ECA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator FISHER asked:

1. Where and when have the 9 regional Murray Darling Basin Authority Board meetings taken place, and when?
2. In addition to the Lower Lakes, how many site visits have the Murray Darling Basin Authority Board undertaken, and when?

Answers:

1.
 1. Canberra ACT 1-2 June 2009;
 2. Wentworth NSW 7 July 2009;
 3. Canberra ACT 22 July 2009;
 4. Moree NSW 4 August 2009;
 5. Renmark SA 8 September 2009;
 6. Shepparton VIC 13 October 2009;
 7. Toowoomba QLD 4-5 November 2009;
 8. Albury NSW 30 November 2009; and
 9. Canberra ACT 1 February 2010.
2. Five, in conjunction with regional Authority meetings referred to in 1: 6 July, 3 August, 7 September, 12 October and 5 November 2009.

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Legislation Committee**

Answers to questions on notice

Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio

Additional Estimates, February 2010

Outcome:	4.1	Question No:	124
Program:			
Division/Agency:	Murray-Darling Basin Authority		
Topic:	MDBA – salinity levels in Murray		
Hansard Page ECA:	Written QoN		

Senator XENOPHON asked:

What assessment has been conducted by the Authority into the impact the upgrades to Victoria's irrigation sector will have on the salinity levels in the Murray River?

Answers:

Under Schedule B of the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement, Victoria is required to inform the Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) about any irrigation development that has a significant salinity impact (i.e. any action that will result in a change in average daily salinity at Morgan, South Australia of 0.1 EC within 100 years of commissioning). All actions with significant salinity impact reported to the MDBA by Victoria up to 2009 have been assessed and recorded in the MDBA's Salinity Register which has been independently audited by the Salinity Auditors.

As at 18 May 2010, Victoria has not reported any additional salinity impacts of upgrades to irrigation sector to the MDBA. When Victoria informs the MDBA of such developments as obliged, the Authority will assess the salinity impacts and record them in the Salinity Register. Currently, Victoria has a net credit position in the Salinity Register. This credit position will be changed depending on the salinity impacts of the upgrades to Victoria's irrigation sector.