

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

Answers to questions on notice

Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio

Budget Estimates, May 2009

Outcome:	4	Question No:	170
Program:	4.1		
Division/Agency:	Water Efficiency Division		
Topic:	On-Farm Irrigation		
Hansard Page ECA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator BIRMINGHAM asked:

1. How much has the Government spent on on-farm irrigation projects in the past 12 months?
2. How much is allocated to be spent, and what are the targeted water savings for the next 12 months and for each year of the forward estimates? Please details project commitments where possible.
3. How have these figures varied as a result of any agreements between the Government and Senator Xenophon?

Answers:

1. Under 'Water for the Future' Programs, no funding has been spent on on-farm irrigation projects in the past 12 months.
2. Funding under the On-Farm Irrigation Efficiency (Pilot Projects) Program is \$5.6m for the period of 2009/10 to 2010/11. Water savings to be transferred to the Australian Government under the Pilot Projects Program are approximately 2000 ML.

Under the new On-Farm Irrigation Efficiency Program, funding is \$300m for the period 2009/10 to 2012/13.

The level of water savings under the program will depend on the nature and location of the specific proposals put forward and accepted for funding.
3. These figures have not varied as a result of any agreement between the Government and Senator Xenophon.

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Outcome:	4	Question No:	171
Program:	4.1		
Division/Agency:	Water Efficiency Division		
Topic:	On-Farm Irrigation		
Hansard Page ECA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator BIRMINGHAM asked:

How much was spent by the Federal Government on rolling-out and administering its On-Farm Irrigation Efficiency (Pilot Projects)? Is it true that in the end it handed out \$5.6 million for a return of approximately 2000 ML?

Answer:

Approximately \$100,000 has been spent from administered funds in rolling out the program to date, principally to undertake due diligence on project proposals. Under the On-Farm Irrigation Efficiency (Pilot Projects) Program, approximately \$5.6 million will be provided for on-farm irrigation projects that will provide water savings of approximately 2000 ML to the Australian Government.

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Outcome:	4	Question No:	172
Program:	4.1		
Division/Agency:	Water Efficiency Division		
Topic:	On-Farm Irrigation – Murray-Darling Basin		
Hansard Page ECA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator BIRMINGHAM asked:

The Budget announced the \$300 million On-Farm Irrigation Efficiency Program for the southern connected system of the Murray-Darling Basin.

1. What will be the criteria for funding under this program?
2. When will funding rounds open?
3. How much water, in megalitres, is it anticipated will be saved under this program?

Answers:

1. The criteria for Program funding will be outlined in Program Guidelines that are expected to be finalised in the coming months. A summary of the Program is available at <http://www.environment.gov.au/water/policy-programs/srwui/irrigation-efficiency/index.html>.
2. An initial call for applications is expected to be made later in 2009.
3. The level of water savings under the program will depend on the nature and location of the specific proposals put forward and accepted for funding.

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Outcome:	4	Question No:	173
Program:	4.1		
Division/Agency:	Water Efficiency Division		
Topic:	On-Farm irrigation - State Priority programs		
Hansard Page ECA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator BIRMINGHAM asked:

Please provide information on the status of the State Priority Programmes, and what money has actually been sent out?

Answer:

The following table sets out the status and funds actually expended, to 30 June 2009, on State Priority Projects agreed to, in principle, by the Australian Government and the basin states in July 2008.

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State and project titles	Progress to 30 June 2009	Aust Govt Expenditure to 30 June 2009
NSW		
Modernising infrastructure for direct river diverters	Funding has been allocated to support the development of business cases for each element of the NSW State Priority Project. The NSW Department of Primary Industries provided a proposal for a pilot on-farm program in northern NSW on 19 June 2009.	\$0.232 million for the NSW State Priority Project business cases
On-farm piping for stock and domestic	The NSW Government has provided some preliminary information on this project and is progressing its planning.	Part of above
Upgrading accuracy of water meters: - Groundwater and unregulated - Customer owned	The NSW Government is working on developing a business case for the project. NSW is compiling a database of metering information. Officials from the Australian Government and State Water have had ongoing discussions about technical issues associated with the project.	Part of above
Modification of floodplain structures and extractions	The NSW Government is still scoping this project.	Nil

State and project titles	Progress to 30 June 2009	Aust Govt Expenditure to 30 June 2009
ACT		
Salt Management Strategy	The ACT Government is developing a business case.	Nil
Victoria		
Stage 2- Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal Project (referred to under the IGA as the Food Bowl Project)	Stage 2 is still being scoped by the Victorian Government. A business case for early works for Stage 2 was received on 30 June 2009.	Nil
Sunraysia Irrigation Modernisation	The Victorian Government/ Lower Murray Water are preparing a business case.	Nil
Queensland		
Coal seam gas water feasibility study	The Queensland Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM) provided an exposure draft business case for without-prejudice consideration on 16 June 2009. Start-up funding has been allocated to support the development of this project.	\$1.120 million

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Community irrigation planning and infrastructure investment	The Queensland Department of Environment and Resource Management provided an exposure draft business case for without-prejudice consideration on 16 June 2009. Start-up funding has been allocated to support the development of this project.	\$0.843 million
Sunwater delivery infrastructure modernisation	An assessment of a draft project business case was undertaken in March 2009. Feedback provided to the Queensland Department of Environment and Resource Management and SunWater identified matters to be addressed in the final business case.	Nil

State and project titles	Progress to 30 June 2009	Aust Govt Expenditure to 30 June 2009
SA		
Potable water pipeline for Lower Lakes – Integrated Pipeline Project	The pipelines have been constructed and they were officially opened on 18 February 2009.	\$23.840 million
Irrigation water pipeline for Lower Lakes – Integrated Pipeline Project	Start-up funding has been allocated and a due diligence assessment of the project business case has been finalised. South Australia has commenced pipeline construction, at its own risk, pending finalisation of a funding agreement.	\$1.608 million
Riverine Recovery	Start-up funding has been allocated for the investigations and planning component of this project. The South Australian Government is preparing a business case for early works at high priority sites.	Nil
Response to environmental problems facing Lower Lakes and Coorong	Funding has been allocated for the development of a feasibility study and long term plan for the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth. South Australia released a Directions Document for the long term plan for community consultation in early May 2009. South Australia expects to complete the long term plan in October 2009. The Australian Government has agreed to contribute funding towards the Goolwa Water Level Management Project. A funding deed for this project is under development.	\$3.000 million

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Commonwealth Initiated Activities		Progress to 30 June 2009	Aust Govt Expenditure to 30 June 2009
Private Irrigation Infrastructure Operators	- NSW	The NSW PIIO program was launched on 19 June 2009. The call for applications closes on 27 November 2009.	Nil
	- South Australia	A program is being scoped for South Australia in consultation with the South Australian Government.	Nil
Water Purchasing Programs (a)	-Queensland - South Australia	Two tender rounds were conducted in the Northern Basin during 2008-09, the second of which closed 30 June 2009. The Southern Basin tender opened 7 October 2008 and closed 30 June 2009.	Total \$4.074 million (b)

(a) \$350 million of the Queensland State Priority Project and \$80 million of the South Australian State Priority Project was allocated for water entitlement purchases by the Australian Government.

(b) The amounts shown represent the value of contracts exchanged in 2008/09.

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Budget Estimates, May 2009

Outcome:	4	Question No:	174
Program:	4.1		
Division/Agency:	Water Efficiency Division		
Topic:	Off-Farm irrigation		
Hansard Page ECA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator BIRMINGHAM asked:

1. How much has the Government spent on off-farm irrigation projects in the past 12 months?
2. How much is allocated to be spent, and what are the targeted water savings, for the next 12 months and for each year of the forward estimates? Please detail project commitments where possible.
3. How have these figures varied as a result of any agreements between the Government and Senator Xenophon?

Answer/s:

1. In accordance with Australian Government funding commitments on projects in the Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure Program, the table at Attachment A provides the spend for off-farm irrigation projects to 30 September 2009.

A breakdown of the spend information is as follows:

Column A - Total spend for FY2007-08

Column B – Total spend for FY2008-09

Column C – Total spend for first quarter of FY2009-10

The totals at the bottom of these columns provide spending for the 15 months from the beginning of FY2008-09 to 30 September 2009 this financial year, and also the total spend program-wide.

2. The amount forecast to be spent this financial year is shown in Attachment A in column D. Pending receipt of detailed business plans or program applications for the State Priority Projects as agreed in the Murray-Darling Basin Intergovernmental Agreement, and subsequent due diligence assessment, it is not possible to provide forecasts of expenditure or water savings for each project. Column E shows the amount committed for each project.
3. The figures have not varied for projects as a result of any agreements between the Government and Senator Xenophon.

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Outcome:	4	Question No:	175
Program:	4.1		
Division/Agency:	Water Efficiency Division		
Topic:	Off-Farm Irrigation – Murray-Darling Basin Reform		
Hansard Page ECA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator BIRMINGHAM asked:

1. What water saving/infrastructure projects were committed to or identified by the Intergovernmental Agreement on Murray-Darling Basin Reform signed by Prime Minister Rudd and First Ministers of Murray-Darling Basin states and territories in July 2008?
2. What progress has been made on each of these projects?

Answers:

- 1- 2. The following table sets out the water savings/ infrastructure projects agreed to, in principle, by the Australian Government and the basin states and the progress of the projects to 30 June 2009.

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State and project titles	Progress to 30 June 2009
NSW	
Modernising infrastructure for direct river diverters	Funding has been allocated to support the development of business cases for each element of the NSW State Priority Project. The NSW Department of Primary Industries provided a proposal for a pilot on-farm program in northern NSW on 19 June 2009.
On-farm piping for stock and domestic	The NSW Government has provided some preliminary information on this project and is progressing its planning.
Upgrading accuracy of water meters: - Groundwater and unregulated - Customer owned	The NSW Government is developing a business case for the project. NSW is compiling a database of metering information.
Modification of floodplain structures and extractions	The NSW Government is still scoping this project.
ACT	
Salt Management Strategy	The ACT Government is developing a business case.
Victoria	
Stage 2- Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal Project (referred to under the IGA as the Food Bowl Project)	Stage 2 is still being scoped by the Victorian Government. A business case for early works for Stage 2 was received on 30 June 2009.
Sunraysia Irrigation Modernisation	The Victorian Government/ Lower Murray Water are preparing a business case.
Queensland	
Coal seam gas water feasibility study	The Queensland Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM) provided an exposure draft business case for without-prejudice consideration on 16 June 2009. Start-up funding has been allocated to support the development of this project.
Community irrigation planning and infrastructure investment	The Queensland Department of Environment and Resource Management provided an exposure draft business case for without-prejudice consideration on 16 June 2009. Start-up funding has been allocated to support the development of this project.
Sunwater delivery infrastructure modernisation	An assessment of a draft project business case was undertaken in March 2009. Feedback provided to the Queensland Department of Environment and Resource Management and SunWater identified matters to be addressed in the final business case.
SA	
Potable water pipeline for Lower Lakes – Integrated Pipeline Project	The pipelines have been constructed and they were officially opened on 18 February 2009.

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Irrigation water pipeline for Lower Lakes – Integrated Pipeline Project	Start-up funding has been allocated and a due diligence assessment of the project business case has been finalised. South Australia has commenced pipeline construction, at its own risk, pending finalisation of a funding agreement.
Riverine Recovery	Start-up funding has been allocated for the investigations and planning component of this project. The South Australian Government is preparing a business case for initial on-ground works at high priority sites.
Response to environmental problems facing Lower Lakes and Coorong	<p>Funding has been allocated for the development of a feasibility study and long term plan for the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth. South Australia released a Directions Document for the long term plan for community consultation in early May 2009. South Australia expects to complete the long term plan in October 2009.</p> <p>The Australian Government has agreed to contribute funding towards the Goolwa Water Level Management Project. A funding deed for this project is under development.</p>

Commonwealth Initiated Activities		
Private Irrigation Infrastructure Operators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- NSW <li>- South Australia 	<p>The NSW PIIO program was launched on 19 June 2009. The call for applications closes on 27 November 2009.</p> <p>A program is being developed for South Australia in consultation with the South Australian Government.</p>

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Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio

Budget Estimates, May 2009

Outcome:	4	Question No:	176
Program:	4.1		
Division/Agency:	Water Efficiency Division		
Topic:	Irrigated Communities		
Hansard Page ECA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator BIRMINGHAM asked:

Has any funding been allocated to address the coordination, collaboration and cooperation between the commodity groups, research providers and Research and Development Corporations with relation to irrigation research, development and extension?

Answer/s:

The Department is a partner in the National Program for Sustainable Irrigation. This Program is a collaboration between fourteen funding partners, which include commodity groups, research providers, Research and Development Corporations and irrigation bodies. The Co-operative Research Centre for Irrigation Futures is also contributing to the coordination and collaboration of research and development in the irrigation sector.

Under the auspices of the COAG, a national water knowledge and research strategy is being developed that aims to establish priority research areas, ensure coordinated research effort and ensure the best returns from investment. Research activity and needs in the irrigation sector fall within the scope of that process.

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Budget Estimates, May 2009

Outcome:	4	Question No:	177
Program:	4.1		
Division/Agency:	Water Governance Division		
Topic:	Water Planning Management Charge Rules - irrigators		
Hansard Page ECA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator NASH asked:

1. Is the Department aware that a pass through to irrigators from States means the charge is not a regulated water charge pursuant to the Act?
2. Is the Department aware that this means the charge is not governed by the ACCC derived Water Planning and Management Charges Rules? Given this, some states will pass it on and some won't – how is that contributing to “competitive neutrality”?

Answers:

1. Under the *Water Act 2007*, the water charge rules apply to regulated water charges. Regulated water charges comprise fees or charges payable to an irrigation infrastructure operator for access, changing access, or terminating access to the operator's irrigation network; bulk water charges; and water planning and water management charges. The water charge rules cannot apply where a charge is not currently levied nor can they require that a charge be levied.
2. The Department is aware of different approaches to cost recovery in relation to water planning and management activities across Basin States. Where costs incurred by state governments for water planning and management activities are not recovered through charges, the water charge rules will not apply.

The ACCC concluded in its draft advice on the water planning and management charge rules that in the context of current arrangements and in light of the Minister's power to regulate, the most appropriate action to take at this time is an approach focused on improving the transparency for water planning and water management activities, costs and charges.

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Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio

Budget Estimates, May 2009

Outcome:	4	Question No:	178
Program:	4.1		
Division/Agency:	Water Governance Division		
Topic:	Nyrstar Water Recycling project		
Hansard Page ECA:	133 (28/5/09)		

Senator BIRMINGHAM asked:

Senator BIRMINGHAM—This one in regards to their water recycling proposal, which your then shadow minister for water, Mr Albanese, in November 2007 committed that Labor will give the Port Pirie water recycling proposal urgent attention. What urgent attention is being given to the NyrStar proposal?

Senator Wong—I might have to take that question on notice, Senator.

Senator BIRMINGHAM—Is any attention being given to the NyrStar proposal?

Senator Wong—I said I might have to take this on notice. There are quite a number of projects that the Commonwealth is funding, as you would be aware, and I do not want to give you incorrect information. I would like to take the question on notice.

Answers:

Please refer to the response to Question on Notice 180.

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Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio

Budget Estimates, May 2009

Outcome:	4	Question No:	179
Program:	4.1		
Division/Agency:	Water Governance Division		
Topic:	Surf life saving clubs – rain water tanks		
Hansard Page ECA:	134 (28/5/09)		

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. How many have you budgeted for this financial year?

Answer:

1. Funding is available to provide a grant to each club that applies during the period of eligibility (applications are accepted up until 31 January 2010). An initial allocation of \$3 million was made for the two years of the program, but actual uptake is demand driven.

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Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio

Budget Estimates, May 2009

Outcome:	4	Question No:	180
Program:	4.1		
Division/Agency:	Water Governance Division		
Topic:	Nyrstar Water Recycling project		
Hansard Page ECA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator BIRMINGHAM asked:

1. Has the Government met with Nyrstar and/or the Port Pirie Regional Council regarding its proposed water recycling project? If so, when have these meetings occurred?
2. Has any application for funding been made by Nyrstar or the Port Pirie Regional Council? Has any assistance been provided in the preparation of any application for funding?
3. Has any due diligence or other assessment of the proposed water recycling project been undertaken?
4. Why hasn't this project been fast tracked in the same manner as for the Adelaide desalination plant?

Answers:

1. The Department has not met with either party, but has been in phone and email contact with both parties regarding this project.
2. No.
3. No.
4. The Department has not received a proposal in regard to this project. The project may be eligible for funding under the competitive grants guidelines of the National Water Security Plan for Cities and Towns (NWSPCT), released on 1 October 2009. The Department has provided a copy of the guidelines for the NWSPCT competitive grants to Port Pirie Council and Nyrstar.

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Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio

Budget Estimates, May 2009

Outcome:	4	Question No:	181
Program:	4.1		
Division/Agency:	Water Governance Division		
Topic:	Water Grants – Surf Life Saving Clubs		
Hansard Page ECA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator BIRMINGHAM asked:

On 19 October 2007, Mr Garrett and Mr Albanese promised every surf life saving club in Australia would get \$10,000 each to enable them to install rainwater tanks. The promise was repeated in the Budget in May 2008.

1. How many surf life saving clubs have had rainwater tanks installed under this program since then?
2. What happened to this promise?
3. Has the program been axed? If so, why hasn't it been announced?
4. Have there been any complaints by surf life saving about delays to this program?
5. Please provide a table which outlines which clubs have received rainwater tanks, when they were installed, what federal electorate the club is located in, and the cost of the tank.

Answers:

1. As of 16 October 2009, 38 grants have been approved for surf life saving clubs to install a rainwater tank or other water saving/efficiency devices on club premises.
2. The Government has implemented this element of the National Rainwater and Greywater Initiative.
3. No, the program was launched on 1 October 2008.
4. No.
5. See below:

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Club	Grant Amount	Purpose	Project Status	Federal Electorate
Anglesea	\$8,757	Rainwater tanks	Not yet completed	Corangamite
Black Rock SLSC	\$9,119	Rainwater tanks and water efficient devices	Not yet completed	Goldstein
Bondbeach	\$315	Water audit	Completed	Isaacs
Bondi	\$9,870	Rainwater tanks	Not yet completed	Wentworth
Bulli	\$10,000	Rainwater tanks and water efficient devices	Not yet completed	Cunningham
Burning Palms	\$6,920	Rainwater tanks and water efficient devices	Not yet completed	Cook
City of Bunbury	\$9,571	Water efficient devices	Not yet completed	Forrest
Clovelly	\$10,000	Water efficient devices	Not yet completed	Ranwick
Coogee Beach	\$10,000	Rainwater tanks	Not yet completed	Fremantle
Coolum	\$9,323	Rainwater tank	Not yet completed	Fairfax
Cottesloe	\$8,729	Water efficient devices	Not yet completed	Curtin
Dicky Beach	\$10,000	Water efficient devices	Not yet completed	Fisher
Gerringong	\$9,000	Rainwater tanks	Not yet completed	Gilmore
Henley	\$9,091	Water efficiency devices	Not yet completed	Hindmarsh

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Jan Juc	\$10,000	Rainwater tanks		Corangamite
Long Reef	\$10,000	Water efficient devices	Not yet completed	Mackellar
Maroochydore	\$7,486	Water efficient devices and a water audit.	Not yet completed	Fairfax
Maroubra	\$8,880	Water efficient devices and rainwater tanks	Not yet completed	Kingsford Smith
Mentone	\$10,000	Rainwater tanks	Not yet completed	Isaccs
Mermaid Beach	\$9,900	Rainwater tanks	Not yet completed	Moncreiff
Miami Beach SLSC	\$10,000	Rainwater tank	Not yet completed	Moncrieff
Minnie Water – Wooli SLSC	\$10,000	Rainwater tank and water efficient devices	Completed	Cowper
Mona Vale	\$9,620	Water efficient devices	Not yet completed	Mackellar
Nambucca Heads	\$9,082	Rainwater tank	Not yet completed	Cowper
North Haven	\$10,000	Rainwater tank and water efficient devices	Not yet completed	Port Adelaide
Point Lonsdale SLSC	\$10,000	Rainwater tank and water efficient devices	Not yet completed	Corangamite
South Maroubra	\$10,000	Water efficient	Not yet completed	Kingsford Smith

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		devices		
South West Rocks	\$10,000	Rainwater tanks and other water efficient devices	Not yet completed	Cowper
Surfers Paradise SLSC	\$10,000	Water efficient devices	Not yet completed	Moncrieff
Swansea Belmont SLSC	\$9,091	Rainwater tanks	Not yet completed	Shortland
Taree Old Bar SLSC	\$10,000	Rainwater tank and water efficient devices	Not yet completed	Lyne
Thirroul	\$10,000	Rainwater tanks	Not yet completed	Cunningham
Torquay	\$10,000	Rainwater tanks	Not yet completed	Corangamite
Ulverstone	\$6,606	Water efficient devices	Not yet completed	Braddon
Venus Bay SLSC	\$9,068	Rainwater tank	Not yet completed	McMillan
Warrnambool	\$9,180	Rainwater tanks	Not yet completed	Wannon
Whale Beach SLSC	\$10,000	Rainwater tank	Not yet completed	Mackellar
Wye River	\$4,761	Rainwater tank	Not yet completed	Maribymong

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Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts portfolio

Budget Estimates, May 2009

Outcome:	4	Question No:	182
Program:	4.1		
Division/Agency:	Water Governance Division		
Topic:	National Rainwater and Greywater Initiative – Rainwater Tanks		
Hansard Page ECA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator Birmingham asked:

In 2008, the budget promised \$250 million for grants for rainwater tanks, including for surf life saving clubs. What has happened to this program?

1. Is there still \$250 million allocated to this program?
2. Has this funding been cut, reduced or axed altogether?
3. Since announcing the program in May last year, how many rainwater tanks have actually been installed in people's homes?

Answers:

The Australian Government has implemented both elements of this program. The surf life saving element of the program was launched on 1 October 2008; the household rebate element was launched on 30 January 2009.

1. Yes.
2. No.
3. As at 14 October 2009, a total of 3,342 rebates have been paid under the National Rainwater and Greywater Initiative to households who have installed rainwater tanks or greywater systems.

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Outcome:	4	Question No:	183
Program:	4.1		
Division/Agency:	Water Governance Division		
Topic:	Water for the Future p.207 & 208 Budget Paper No.2-Adelaide Desalination plant		
Hansard Page ECA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator HANSON-YOUNG asked:

1. Given there was an injection of an additional \$228m into the South Australian desalination plant to double the size of its output from 50GL to 100GL per year, were any other water security options offered to the SA Government apart from desal?
2. I asked Minister Wong this question in budget week, but I am interested to know whether I can get an answer this time. Following the federal funding for the desalination plant, Premier Rann stated that "From the end of 2012, there'll be no reason for us to have water restrictions because we'll guarantee water supply for decades to come..." what message does this send to the other states about how serious South Australia is taking the water crisis?
3. Following on from the federal government's commitment to the Adelaide desalination plant, the SA Treasurer stated on ABC 891 when questioned on whether the state government would continue funding to the proposed Point Lowly desal plant that "the need to relieve pressure from the Murray has now been addressed through the desalination plant in Adelaide...so therefore the need to build another desalination plant as it relates to the Upper Spencer Gulf may not be necessary because we are looking at other options about smaller micro desal for various parts of the peninsula.
4. Given that it appears the state government will not provide any further funding, the fact that the federal government provided \$160m in March to the project, is there an intention to continue to support this proposal?
5. If so, what would the Government's purpose be to continue funding, and will you have a say in the exact location?

Answers:

1. The Australian Government is investing \$137 million for eight stormwater harvesting and wastewater recycling projects in South Australia, and further opportunities are available through competitive processes under the National Urban Water and Desalination Plan.
2. Decisions about implementing water restrictions are a matter for state governments or individual water utilities. However, increasing the sources of supply and efficiency of water use in any city should reduce the need for future water restrictions.

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3– 5. No Australian Government funding has been paid for the Upper Spencer Gulf desalination project. The funding remains available, however, the South Australian Government has advised that it has reconsidered its involvement in this project.

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Outcome:	4	Question No:	184
Program:	4.1		
Division/Agency:	Water Governance / Water Efficiency		
Topic:	Murray-Darling Basin		
Hansard Page ECA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator WILLIAMS asked:

1. When the great lakes at the end of the Murray Darling Basin are back to environmental health, will the water licences purchased by the Government be available again for purchase by water users?
2. What measures are or will be put in place for regional communities whose economies are adversely affected by the sale of the water licences to the Government?

Answers:

1. Water entitlements acquired as part of the Government's Water for the Future initiative will, consistent with the *Water Act 2007*, become part of the Commonwealth environmental water holdings and be managed by the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder.

The holdings provide a portfolio of water that will be directed to the protection and restoration of environmental assets across the Murray-Darling Basin. The acquisition of the water entitlements is a long term approach to improving the environmental health of the whole Basin.

The *Water Act 2007* only permits the sale of Commonwealth water entitlements in limited circumstances; the proceeds of any such sale must be used to acquire other water or entitlements that will improve the capacity of the holdings to protect or restore the environment.

2. The Water for the Future initiative is the Australian Government's response to the challenges for the irrigation sector and the environment posed by climate change and historical over-allocation. It is aimed at helping irrigators and their communities make the necessary changes to remain profitable and sustainable in a future where less water will be available as a result of climate change.

As part of this initiative, \$200 million has been committed to the Strengthening Basin Communities program to help local governments in the Murray-Darling Basin plan for a future with less water and to carry out local water saving projects.

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The Government is also spending \$5.8 billion on upgrading irrigation infrastructure and water use efficiency projects. These projects will enhance the productive capacity of the irrigated agriculture sector, helping irrigators maintain and improve agricultural productivity under a future of declining water availability.

The water entitlement purchasing program also plays a key role in helping irrigators adjust to the pressures of climate change and historical over-allocation. The water purchasing program enables individual irrigators to adjust to a future with less water on their own terms. The proceeds that an irrigator receives from selling their water provides a capital injection to their business, with potential flow-on benefits to communities. The review of the 2007-08 round of water entitlement purchasing indicated that many irrigators who have sold their water under the buyback will reinvest the revenue from the entitlement sales back into their communities.

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Outcome:	4	Question No:	185
Program:	4.1		
Division/Agency:	Water Governance Division		
Topic:	Water Flows – Gwydir River		
Hansard Page ECA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator BIRMINGHAM asked:

1. When was the last time the Gwydir River provided any flows into the Darling River?
2. What increased flows are estimated would have been required for the Gwydir to have flowed into the Darling for each of the last 10 years?

Answers:

1. The NSW Department of Water and Energy (DWE) and State Water have advised that the last time the Gwydir River provided flows into the Barwon-Darling River was in January and February 2009.
2. NSW has advised that flows in excess of the channel capacity in the lower reaches of the Gwydir Catchment will break out onto the floodplain and flow through the braided channel systems into the Barwon-Darling. The in-channel capacities of the two main tributaries that provide flows to the Barwon-Darling are:
 - a. approximately 300 ML/day at Carole Creek; and
 - b. approximately 500 ML/day at Moomin Creek.

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Outcome:	4	Question No:	186
Program:	4.1		
Division/Agency:	Water Governance Division		
Topic:	Water Flows – Lachlan River		
Hansard Page ECA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator BIRMINGHAM asked:

1. When was the last time the Lachlan River provided any flows into the Murrumbidgee River?
2. What increased flows are estimated would have been required for the Lachlan to have flowed into the Murrumbidgee for each of the last 10 years?

Answers:

1. The NSW Department of Water and Energy (DWE) and State Water have advised that local anecdotal evidence suggests the last time the Lachlan River provided flows into the Murrumbidgee River was 1989.
2. NSW has advised that flood flows in the Lachlan catchment must first inundate the Great Cumbung Swamp before giving rise to minor flows into the Murrumbidgee. Broad-scale flooding of the Great Cumbung Swamp occurs when flows exceed 3,000 ML/day at the Booligal gauge on the Lachlan River.

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Outcome:	4	Question No:	187
Program:	4.1		
Division/Agency:	Water Governance Divisions		
Topic:	Water for the Future – National stormwater funding		
Hansard Page ECA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator BIRMINGHAM asked:

1. What will be the eligibility criteria for the Water for the Future – national stormwater funding measure and how will eligibility criteria be developed?
2. How will this measure be administered?
3. When will the funding round be advertised and open for applications?
4. What environmental checks and balances will successful applicants have to fulfil?

Answers:

1. The eligibility criteria are set out in the ‘National Urban Water and Desalination Plan: Special call for stormwater harvesting and reuse projects Implementation and Funding Guidelines’. The guidelines are available at <http://www.environment.gov.au/water/programs/urban/stormwater-harvesting.html>
2. The measure will be administered as a grants program by the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) over two funding rounds consistent with the guidelines. The first round closed on 30 June 2009 and the second round closes on 11 December 2009.
3. The guidelines were released and the first funding round opened on 23 March 2009. Guidelines have been available on the DEWHA website from this date. The measure was advertised in national and capital city newspapers on 18 April 2009 and in a range of specialist journals published in May and June 2009. Briefing sessions were also held in Adelaide, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney.
4. The eligibility criteria includes a requirement that projects source 100 per cent of the energy needs from renewable sources or fully offset the carbon emissions from the project's operations. As described in the merit criteria, successful applicants will also demonstrate the project's contribution to reducing the demand for potable water and the project's net environmental and social benefits and/or impacts.

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Outcome:	4	Question No:	188
Program:	4.1		
Division/Agency:	Water Governance Division		
Topic:	High Court challenge – Vic Water cap		
Hansard Page ECA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator BIRMINGHAM asked:

With reference to the promise by the South Australian Premier to launch a High Court challenge against the Victorian water cap:

1. Will the Government support the challenge?
2. What legal advice has the Department received on this? What did it say/recommend?
3. Noting that the water savings resulting from the on-farm water grants program will be deemed to be outside Victoria's 4% cap, is this an admission that the Government will not take on Victoria in relation to the cap? Does this mean that the High Court challenge is being avoided?
4. Exactly what savings are predicted to come from the grants program, by volume and value?

Answers:

- 1-2. The Department is not in a position to discuss whether it has sought legal advice or how the Government might respond if there is a legal challenge.
3. Victoria has agreed to provide exemptions to the four per cent limit on permanent water trade out of specific areas within irrigation districts, to allow the Commonwealth to purchase more water for the environment. As part of this agreement, the Victorian Government has agreed to remove by 31 October 2009 the ten per cent limit on water that can be held separately from land.
4. The Government is consulting with stakeholders on the guidelines for the \$300 million On-Farm Irrigation Efficiency Program. With the guidelines yet to be finalised, it is too early to provide any such predictions.

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Outcome:	4	Question No:	189
Program:	4.1		
Division/Agency:	Water Reform Division		
Topic:	Lower Lakes funding – bioremediation		
Hansard Page ECA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator BIRMINGHAM asked:

1. Over what years is the \$10 million on bioremediation for the Lower Lakes allocated?
2. Please detail how much will be spent each year?
3. Have agreements been reached with parties for the expenditure of those funds? If so, with whom, how much and what works will be undertaken?

Answers:

1. Financial years 2008-09 to 2010-11.
2. \$1m in 2008-09; \$7m in 2009-10; and \$2m in 2010-2011, refer description at Budget Paper No. 2, 2009-10, page 192.
3. The funds are being provided to the South Australian Department for Environment and Heritage (DEH) to:
 - Develop a detailed Workplan and Project Plan;
 - Undertake the necessary scientific studies and community consultation to inform the identification and prioritisation of suitable sites, species, and techniques for bioremediation and revegetation;
 - Develop a Community Engagement Strategy; and
 - Undertake on-ground works such as revegetation, including growing seed and tube stock; weed management; fencing activities; ecological monitoring and reporting and developing best practice manuals for bioremediation and revegetation.

It is expected that DEH will engage in a small number of third-party contracts, which are still under negotiation, for the delivery of most of these activities.

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Outcome:	4	Question No:	190
Program:	4.1		
Division/Agency:	Water Reform Division		
Topic:	Lower Lakes funding – long term solution		
Hansard Page ECA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator BIRMINGHAM asked:

1. Over what years is the \$200 million for a long term solution for the Lower Lakes and Coorong allocated?
2. Please detail how much will be spent each year?
3. Have agreements been reached with parties for the expenditure of these funds? If so, with whom, how much and what works will be undertaken?

Answers:

1. These funds are part of the \$5.8 billion Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure Program which is a 10 year program and runs to 2016/2017. The annual allocation for the entire \$200 million for a long term solution for the Lower Lakes and Coorong has not yet been determined. Timing of funding will depend on the outcomes of the long-term plan for the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth. See response to Part 2.
2. The Australian Government has allocated \$3 million in 2008/09 and \$7 million in 2009/10 for the development of a feasibility study and a long-term plan for the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth. Funding for this project is being provided to the South Australian Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation. As part of this study, South Australia will develop a business case(s) for projects for possible funding support from the balance of the \$200 million.

The Australian Government will also contribute initial funding of up to \$3.72 million in 2009/10 for the Goolwa Water Level Management Project. This funding will also be provided to the South Australian Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation.

3. See response to Part 2.

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Outcome:	4	Question No:	191
Program:	4.1		
Division/Agency:	Water Reform Division		
Topic:	Bioremediation and revegetation trials p.192 Budget Paper No.2		
Hansard Page ECA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator HANSON-YOUNG asked:

1. Where are we up to with the formulation of these trials? When do we expect them to commence?
2. Given this is part of the Nation Building and Jobs Plan that was announced on February 3, have the jobs been advertised? If so, who is managing the application process?
3. Have suitable sites for these trails been identified? If so where, and what level of consultation has occurred with the relevant local communities?
4. What role will the State Government have in the process?
5. What role will Local Government's play in the process, given many have already begun their own bioremediation trials?

Answers:

1. The South Australian Department for Environment and Heritage (DEH) commenced bioremediation and revegetation trials on 7 May 2009, with completion on 23 May 2009. Aerial seeding occurred across approximately 4500 hectares of exposed lakebed at Lake Alexandrina and exposed areas in the Goolwa Channel, and 500 hectares of direct seeding occurred at Lake Albert and at the Northern shorelines of Lake Alexandrina.
2. The \$10m bioremediation and revegetation program is not a component of the Nation Building and Jobs Plan. However, the program was developed at the same time as the Nation Building and Jobs Plan. Local contractors were engaged by SA DEH for seed treatment and handling work that was undertaken in May 2009. The aircraft business engaged to undertake aerial seeding is locally based. It is expected that two Local Action Planning officers will be supported and two new positions will be advertised during July, and that additional local project officers, contractors and co-ordination positions will be engaged as the project rolls out. Procurement will occur locally with materials and resources already being purchased within the Lower Lakes area. It is expected that Local Action Planning groups will be engaged to deliver funding for fencing and revegetation to local landowners and community groups.

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3. Yes, DEH engaged Rural Solutions SA to undertake a technical assessment of acid sulfate soil risk, lakebed wind erosion and ecological values of the lakes to identify management options and priority areas. The Project will target priority areas that were mapped through the assessment.

Consultation with communities has included: several days of on-site assessments that involved talking to local landowners; discussions with local nurseries and several meetings with community and local government.

4. The SA DEH is administering the project on the Australian Government's behalf.
5. Local government have been involved in project planning discussions. Funding for on-ground work by the Coorong District Local Action Planning Committee is expected to occur via the Coorong District Council. The Alexandrina Council and City of Murray Bridge have not indicated that they will seek funding for on-ground work at this stage.

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Outcome:	4	Question No:	192
Program:	4.1		
Division/Agency:	Water Reform Division		
Topic:	Water for the Future - p.207&208 Budget Paper No.2 – Wellington Weir		
Hansard Page ECA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator HANSON-YOUNG asked:

Will the Federal Government be committing any funding to the Wellington weir? Including construction, and community liaison.

Answer:

The Commonwealth has committed up to \$200 million to South Australia to address the long-term environmental problems of the Coorong and Lower Lakes, subject to due diligence and environmental approvals. This includes \$10 million for a feasibility study of long term options to manage this important site and \$3.72 million for the Goolwa Water Level Management Project. Future use of the \$200 million funds will be informed by the outcomes of the feasibility study.

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Outcome:	4	Question No:	193
Output:	4.1		
Division/Agency:	Water Reform Division		
Topic:	Contingent liability		
Hansard Page ECA:	Written Questions on Notice		

Senator NASH asked:

1. Why is there no contingent liability listed in the Budget for risk assignment payments pursuant to the Water Act?
2. Has the Department undertaken any work to estimate the liability for risk assignment pursuant to the Water Act? (Get this broken down by State).

Answers:

- 1-2 It is too early to estimate any liability for risk assignment payments. Under the *Water Act 2007*, attribution of responsibilities under the risk assignment arrangements will be specified in the Basin Plan prepared by the Murray-Darling Basin Authority.

Under Budget Paper Number 1 - *Budget Strategy and Outlook 2009-10* - Statement 8 the Government's share of risk assignment under the National Water Initiative and *Water Act 2007* is noted and classed as an *unquantifiable* contingent liability.

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Outcome:	4	Question No:	194
Program:	4.1		
Division/Agency:	Water Reform Division		
Topic:	MDBA Expenditure		
Hansard Page ECA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator NASH asked:

1. Does the Department intend to recover any of the costs of the MDBA from states? If so, how will this money be recovered?
2. Who is auditing the costs of the MDBA to ensure that they are efficient costs?

Answers:

1. In terms of the work previously undertaken by the Murray-Darling Basin Commission (MDBC), such as State water shares, detailed operations of the River Murray and Basin-wide natural resource management programs, the Commonwealth and the Basin States recommitted to a previous MDBC agreement to at least maintain their 2006-07 contributions in real terms for the four years to 2010-11. The contributions from States for these activities are cost recovered to varying degrees by each jurisdiction.

Funding arrangements after 2010-11 for programs other than those relating to the Basin Plan will be decided by the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council.

2. The Murray-Darling Basin Authority will be audited by the Australian National Audit Office.

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Outcome:	4	Question No:	195
Program:	4.1		
Division/Agency:	Water Reform Division		
Topic:	Sustainable yields project		
Hansard Page ECA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator WILLIAMS asked:

Will the Government quantify the cost of the CSIRO sustainable yields project and confirm its confidence in the date supplied?

Answers:

Four sustainable yields projects have been undertaken by CSIRO. Only the Murray-Darling Basin project has been finalised. Costs are as follows.

Murray-Darling Basin	\$13m (final)
Northern Australia	\$6.3m (budget)
Tasmania	\$4.5m (budget)
South west Western Australia	\$5.5m (budget)

The Government has full confidence in the work conducted by CSIRO.

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Outcome:	4	Question No:	196
Program:	4.1		
Division/Agency:	Water Reform Division/Water Efficiency Division		
Topic:	Water Infrastructure Funding		
Hansard Page ECA:	Written Question on Notice		

Senator NASH asked:

1. How much money was allocated to water infrastructure projects last financial year? Please provide this information on a project by project basis.
2. How much of what was allocated was actually spent against each of these projects.
3. What is the remaining balance?
4. How much was allocated for infrastructure projects this year? Please provide this information on a project by project basis.
5. What is the total balance for each project to be spent? ie. Last years unspent amount including this years allocated.
6. When will the remaining funds be spent?

Answers:

- 1-6. The information on water infrastructure projects for which funding has been provided or allocated under relevant project agreements, disaggregated in the terms requested in questions 1 to 6 above, is shown at Attachment A.