

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2006-2007 BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome: CSIRO

Output Group: CSIRO

DEST Question No. E197_07

Senator Siewert asked on 31 May 2006, EWRE Hansard page 47.

Question:

Dr Morton—Yes, we certainly will. We have just signed up to a major \$7 million program with the Murray Darling Basin Commission, the Department of Sustainability and Environment from Victoria, the Australian Greenhouse Office and Land & Water Australia. In fact, the inaugural steering committee meeting for that was held this week. That program is designed to do precisely that: to extend our information about the likely impact of climate change on water availability in the MDB.

Senator Siewert—Presumably, therefore, that includes environmental flows?

Dr Morton—Absolutely.

Senator Siewert—And the differential impact on water for use and storage as environmental flows?

Dr Morton—It is a very extensive program with five or six themes. My understanding is that the answer to your question would be 'yes' but, given that I am not completely across all of the detail, you would have to take that with a grain of salt. But that is my understanding.

Senator Siewert—Are you able to provide information on notice on that?

Dr Morton—Of the design of the program?

Senator Siewert—Of the design of the program and time lines for when the studies are going to be done.

Dr Morton—Sure—that has all been agreed by the steering committee so that is readily available.

Answer:

CSIRO has provided the following response.

South East Australia Climate Initiative

The South East Australia Climate Initiative was announced in February 2006 and is scheduled to end in 2009. The initiative is designed around four research themes that run concurrently commencing effectively from February 2006. It has four participants (Murray Darling Basin Commission, Australian Greenhouse Office, Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment, and Managing Climate Variability R&D Program) and two research providers (Bureau of Meteorology Research Centre and CSIRO). The initiative has a two-tiered governance arrangement with a Steering Committee and a Technical Working Group.

The four research themes are:

Characterisation & Attribution of Current Climate

This theme will investigate whether, and how, our climate has changed in recent history, the timing and modes of these changes, and what the current baseline climate is.

High-Resolution Climate Projections & Impacts

This theme will investigate how climate is likely to change over the next 25-65 years, what impacts this may have on water availability, whether we can assign probabilities to these changes, and how we can reduce the uncertainty in climate change projections.

Seasonal Forecasts

This theme will investigate whether new, reliable methods can be developed for forecasting climate over 3-12 month time scales. It will also investigate whether the methods can be applied to forecasting stream flow and crop yields with greater predictive skill and longer lead times than currently possible.

Coordination & Reporting

This is a key enabling theme that will provide the coordinating link for the South East Australia Climate Initiative with stakeholders.