

**Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio**

**Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet**

**Additional Budget Estimates Hearings 2006-2007, 12-13 February 2007**

**Question: PM 82**

**Outcome 1**

**Topic: National Plan for Water Security**

**Direct on Notice:**

**Senator Evans asked:**

**In relation to consultation on the National Water Plan, when was the Department of the Environment and Heritage first approached with a copy of the Plan and formally consulted on the details of the package?**

**Answer:** The Department of the Environment and Heritage was represented on the water task force that was established in PM&C in early January 2007 to finalise the National Plan on Water Security. The Department was also closely involved in regular water policy meetings of Commonwealth agencies, chaired by PM&C, throughout 2006 and earlier, as well as ad hoc discussions on water policy matters.

**To date has the Department of Finance and Treasury approved the costings for the \$10 Billion Plan?**

**Answer:** The Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of the Environment and Water Resources are currently preparing detailed costings for inclusion in the 2007-08 Budget papers. In the normal Budget processes, Treasury is not involved in the costing of expense measures.

**What is the first funded year in the Plan and what is the total spend estimated in that year?**

**Answer:** Subject to a referral of powers from the States and the ACT to the Commonwealth for water management in the Murray-Darling Basin, funding will be available from 2007-08 and a funding profile will be included in the 2007-08 Budget papers.

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio**

**Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet**

Additional Estimates Hearings 2004-2005, 14 February 2005

**Did the Department approach the head of the Murray-Darling Basin Commission on 8 February, following reports of a leaked assessment of the Commission on the Water Plan?**

**Answer:** The Department approached the head of the Murray-Darling Basin Commission on 8 February 2007 to discuss the contents of the letter sent to all member jurisdictions of the Murray Darling Basin Ministerial Council, of which the Commonwealth is also a member.

**Was the Department involved in discussions with the Commission to issue a retraction of comments in that assessment?**

**Answer:** The Department discussed with the Commission the details of the National Plan for Water Security, including explaining the basis of the Commonwealth's announced costings which the Commission had misunderstood.