

**Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Budget Estimates May 2007

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question no:** NWC 01

**Division/Agency:** National Water Commission

**Topic:** Latrobe Aquifer

**Hansard page:** Written question

**Senator Fielding asked:**

In October 2006 the Government announced a \$5.2 million study to determine the causes of declining water levels in the (Latrobe aquifer). When will the final report be released. Is it on schedule to be released by June 2007?

**Answer:**

Under the funding agreement between the Australian and Victorian Governments for the *Sustainable Groundwater Management project*, a report on assistance measures to help address the impacts on irrigators of declining water levels in the Latrobe Aquifer must be completed by December 2007.

The issues associated with the Latrobe aquifer are complex and full hydrogeological investigations, including modelling, will be required to support a management plan for the Latrobe groundwater resource. The investigations are due to be completed in mid 2008 and a management plan for the Latrobe Aquifer is due to be completed by the end of 2008.

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Budget Estimates May 2007

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question no:** NWC 02

**Division/Agency:** National Water Commission

**Topic:** Latrobe Aquifer

**Hansard page:** Written question

**Senator Fielding asked:**

Once the report has been released, what is the next course of action?

**Answer:**

Following the release of the report in December 2007 on assistance measures to help address the impacts on irrigators of declining water levels in the Latrobe Aquifer, the Australian Government will seek the support of the Victorian Government to implement assistance measures for affected Yarram irrigators impacted by the declining water levels.

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**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question no:** NWC 03

**Division/Agency:** National Water Commission

**Topic:** Latrobe Aquifer

**Hansard page:** Written question

**Senator Fielding asked:**

Will the Government commit to action to fix the Latrobe aquifer before the end of the year?

**Answer:**

See the second paragraph of the answer to question one above.

**Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Budget Estimates May 2007

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question no:** NWC 04

**Division/Agency:** National Water Commission

**Topic:** Latrobe Aquifer

**Hansard page:** Written question

**Senator Fielding asked:**

The Government has committed to quickly putting together a group with strong local representation to make recommendations on an adjustment package for farmers. How long will it be before this group is established and who will be included in the group?

**Answer:**

A Reference Committee will guide the development of the study and the report on assistance measures to address the impacts on irrigators of declining water levels in the Latrobe Aquifer. Local irrigators and the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority will be represented on the committee. The Committee is scheduled to have its first meeting on 9 August 2007.

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Budget Estimates May 2007

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question no:** NWC 05

**Division/Agency:** National Water Commission

**Topic:** Latrobe Aquifer

**Hansard page:** Written question

**Senator Fielding asked:**

What is the timeline for farmers to receive compensation?

**Answer:**

See the answer to question two above.

**Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport**

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Budget Estimates May 2007

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question no:** NWC 06

**Division/Agency:** National Water Commission

**Topic:** Latrobe Aquifer

**Hansard page:** Written question

**Senator Fielding asked:**

How many reports have been carried out on the Latrobe aquifer over the past ten years?  
Please provide a list of the reports.

**Answer:**

The Latrobe Aquifer Investigations component of the Federal and State Government funded *Sustainable Groundwater Management project* responds to the call for further investigations into the causes of groundwater decline in the Latrobe Aquifer identified in the 2004 CSIRO study, *Falling Water Levels in the Latrobe Aquifer, Gippsland Basin: Determination of Cause and Recommendation for Future Work* (authors Tom Hatton and Jim Unterschultz). This report references earlier work.

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Budget Estimates May 2007

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question no:** NWC 07

**Division/Agency:** National Water Commission

**Topic:** Latrobe Aquifer

**Hansard page:** Written question

**Senator Fielding asked:**

Will this be the final report before farmers receive compensation and action is taken to address the declining water levels in the aquifer and secure water for farming and mining?

**Answer:**

See the answer to question two above.