

Appendix 1

TERMS OF REFERENCE

On 28 October 2011 the Senate moved that the following matter be referred to the Rural Affairs and Transport References Committee for inquiry and report by 30 November 2011:

The management of the Murray-Darling Basin, and the development and implementation of the Basin Plan, with particular reference to:

- (a) the implications for agriculture and food production and the environment;
- (b) the social and economic impacts of changes proposed in the Basin;
- (c) the impact on sustainable productivity and on the viability of the Basin;
- (d) the opportunities for a national reconfiguration of rural and regional Australia and its agricultural resources against the background of the Basin Plan and the science of the future;
- (e) the extent to which options for more efficient water use can be found and the implications of more efficient water use, mining and gas extraction on the aquifer and its contribution to run off and water flow;
- (f) the opportunities for producing more food by using less water with smarter farming and plant technology;
- (g) the national implications of foreign ownership, including:
 - (i) corporate and sovereign takeover of agriculture land and water, and
 - (ii) water speculators;
- (h) means to achieve sustainable diversion limits in a way that recognises production efficiency;
- (i) options for all water savings including use of alternative basins; and
- (j) any other related matters.

IMPACT OF MINING COAL SEAM GAS

The Rural Affairs and Transport References Committee, as part of its inquiry into management of the Murray Darling Basin, is examining the impact of mining coal seam gas on the management of the basin. The committee will examine:

- The economic, social and environmental impacts of mining coal seam gas on:
- the sustainability of water aquifers and future water licensing arrangements;
- the property rights and values of landholders;
- the sustainability of prime agricultural land and Australia's food task;
- the social and economic benefits or otherwise for regional towns and the effective management of relationships between mining and other interests; and
- other related matters including health impacts.

