



Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee
Additional Estimates 2023-24
Friday, 16 February 2024
Daily summary

The committee met from 9.00am until 4.00pm.

The following agencies appeared before the committee: Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (Program 4.1), Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder and Commonwealth Environmental Water Office, Murray-Darling Basin Authority, National Water Grid Authority, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission Water Regulation and Compliance Division, and the Inspector-General of Water Compliance.

The following matters were discussed:

IGWC:

- Commencement of new water trading reporting rules;
- Reporting processes in IGWC's new Water Market Data Standards;
- Concerns about disclosing of sensitive water market information to the media;
- Scope and nature of feedback received from surveys by water license holders resulting from the recent Basin Plan changes;
- Adequacy of staffing levels of the IGWC office and challenges in recruitment;
- Closure rates of IGWC investigations and how different activities are captured in these investigations; and
- Progress of accreditation of NSW water resource plans.

DCCEEW/MDBA/ACCC/NWGA – Program 4.1:

- Status of complaints referred to ACCC regarding water-related matters;
- ACCC's scope to act on complaints about water market intermediaries;
- Cooperation from industry and key stakeholders in developing and designing an intermediaries code;
- Improving information and transparency across water markets;
- Implementation of the recommendations from the Water Market Reform: Final Roadmap report;
- Progress on the implementation of the plan to improve the Upper Murrumbidgee catchment and related engagement with NSW, Victoria and First Nations;
- Issues relating to Snowy Hydro 2.0's future revenue streams;
- Update on the flora and fauna impacts post-flood in South Australia;
- MDBA's Bridging the Gap tender process and catchment-specific amounts;
- DCCEEW's engagement of consultants to provide advice on the price and types of entitlement in regard to water tenders;
- Government's long-term strategy beyond the Basin Plan;
- Methodology for calculating cost recovery analysis of the 450 GL/y and 650 GL/y targets;
- Scope of consultation with locals regarding individual valley targets in the Restoring our Rivers draft framework released by DCCEEW;
- Commonwealth powers in relation to compulsory acquisitions from the Basin;

- Bank degradation along the Murray-Darling, and resulting impact of delivery of water to SA;
- Implications of Victoria not signing the revised Basin Plan agreement with the Commonwealth;
- Status of review into MDBA's two existing contracts with PwC;
- Geographical distribution of the 450 GL/y target outlined in the Restoring Our Rivers Delivering the Basin Plan Discussion Paper;
- Shepherding of environmental water through Menindee Lakes;
- Implications for water usage and availability in South Australia's proposed hydrogen project;
- Details of contract between DCEEW and consultancy firm Marsden Jacobs Associates;
- Division of state and Commonwealth funding associated with the Wilcannia Weir Replacement Project in NSW;
- Status of committed federal funding to the Cairns Regional Council;
- Update on the Aboriginal water entitlements program; and
- Government's approach to cultural flows and managing water for cultural benefit.