

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications**  
**Legislation Committee**  
Answers to questions on notice  
**Environment portfolio**

**Question No:** 55

**Hearing:** Supplementary Budget Estimates

**Outcome:** Outcome 6

**Programme:** Commonwealth Environmental Water Office

**Topic:** Current Environmental Water Holdings And Flows

**Hansard Page:** 104-5

**Question Date:** 18 November 2013

**Question Type:** Spoken

**Senator Urquhart asked:**

Senator URQUHART: Could you update the committee on current environmental water holdings and environmental flows released to date?

Mr Papps: The Commonwealth environmental water holdings as at 31 October 2013 constitute some 1,687 gigalitres. This year, that is 2013-14, the water available for environmental watering is about 1,338 gigalitres, which has been earmarked to cover off our responsibilities under the legislation across the water year. Of that 1,338 gigalitres available this year, I have approved already for delivery 1,002 gigalitres, and there is a great deal of detail associated with those waterings. Perhaps I can provide you with a very detailed statement but in summary. We have undertaken, for example, a very large watering in the River Murray valley which, as well as providing environmental outcomes in New South Wales and through Victoria, eventually also makes its way through to South Australia, its final destination, where it provides environmental outcomes in the Lower Lakes and the Coorong.

It is worth making the point that, as we get increasingly greater amounts of water available, we are moving to, wherever possible, multiple site watering where we aim to, through the passage of the water from where it starts to where it ends, achieve as many environmental outcomes as are possible. Now, in terms of specific waterings, there are quite a number. Did you want me to work through—

Senator URQUHART: No, don't read them through—if you can provide us with a copy of that.

Mr Papps: Happy to do that, yes.

**Answer:**

As at 6 December 2013 a total of 1,110.4 gigalitres of Commonwealth Environmental Water Holdings had been approved for delivery in the 2013-14 water year. Of this amount 525.1 gigalitres had been delivered. A summary of watering actions is provided at [Table 1](#).

**Table 1: 2013-14 approved watering actions**

Catchment	Approved for Delivery 2013-14 (GL)	Delivered 2013-14 (at 6/12/2013) (GL)	Purpose
<b>NSW</b>			
<b>Murray</b>			
Edward-Wakool River System (Edward and Wakool rivers, Colligen, Yallakool, Tuppall, Gwynnes, Jimaringle and Cockran creeks)	45.0	1.7	To contribute in-stream flows to the Edward-Wakool River System, including ephemeral creeks, to support the condition and reproduction of native fish, and to maintain and improve water quality, hydrological connectivity, and vegetation condition.
Murray River Valley	300.0	183.4	To support a broad range of outcomes within the Murray River channel, low-level floodplain wetlands, Coorong and Lower Lakes, by providing opportunities for supporting the recruitment and improving the condition of vegetation, waterbirds, fish and other biota, to support hydrological connectivity and salt and nutrient export.
Lower Darling	47.0	47.0	To contribute to in-channel flows within the Darling Anabranch to support recovery of riverine and wetland communities by providing opportunities for dispersal and improving the condition of riparian vegetation.
Lower Murray	4.0	1.0	To cover environmental water use associated with raising the weir pools of Lock/Weir 8 and 9 in the Murray River, to support ecosystem recovery by improving the diversity, condition and extent of native vegetation.
<b>Murrumbidgee</b>			
Lower Murrumbidgee catchment (Western Lakes, Nimmie Caira, North Redbank, Yanga National Park (South Redbank / Yanga)) <b>Regulated</b>	100.0	79.8	To protect, maintain and in some cases, improve the ecological health and resilience of wetlands and lakes in the lower Murrumbidgee Catchment.
Lower Murrumbidgee catchment (Western Lakes, Nimmie Caira, North Redbank, Yanga National Park (South Redbank / Yanga)) <b>Unregulated</b>	20.8	7.0	To protect, maintain and in some cases, improve the ecological health and resilience of wetlands and lakes in the lower Murrumbidgee Catchment.

<b>Macquarie</b>			
Macquarie Marshes (regulated)	10.0	10.0	To maintain the ecological health and resilience of the Macquarie Marshes by contributing to base and fresh flows between mid-July and November 2013. The fresh flows during spring will provide hydrologic connectivity and access to native fish breeding habitat at key reproduction times.
Macquarie Marshes (supp)	1.9	0.0	To maintain the ecological health and resilience of assets in the lower Macquarie River catchment. Subject to availability, Commonwealth supplementary water will be used to augment unregulated base to fresh flows from July 2013 through to 30 June 2015. The expected ecological outcome is to support wetland and riparian vegetation condition.
<b>Lachlan</b>			
Lower Lachlan system downstream of Lake Brewster	24.2	23.4	To improve the health of native floodplain and wetland communities that are still recovering from drought stress and improve the health of the Lachlan River, downstream from Lake Brewster.
<b>Namoi</b>			
Lower Namoi River	7.9	0.0	To contribute to improved hydrological connectivity, biotic dispersal, primary production of aquatic ecosystems, native fish condition and reproduction
<b>Gwydir</b>			
Mallowa Wetlands	15.0	8.6	To support vegetation condition, germination and reproduction; water bird survival and condition and primary production of aquatic ecosystems.
Gwydir Wetlands	25.0	0.0	To support vegetation condition, germination and reproduction; water bird survival and condition and primary production of aquatic ecosystems.
Mehi River	15.0	8.4	To contribute to improved primary production of aquatic ecosystems, nutrient and carbon cycling, fish movement and fish larval abundance.
Carole Creek	5.0	3.9	To contribute to improved primary production of aquatic ecosystems, nutrient and carbon cycling, fish movement and fish larval abundance.

<b>Border Rivers</b>			
Border Rivers	8.0	4.0	To improve health and resilience by contributing to a Fresh flow in the Border Rivers. The expected outcomes are: Fish population; Fish condition; Hydrological connectivity; Biotic dispersal; primary production of aquatic ecosystems.
<b>Barwon-Darling</b>			
Barwon-Darling	25.6	9.0	To support a more naturally variable flow regime in these systems.
<b>NSW estimated total</b>	<b>654.4</b>	<b>387.2</b>	
<b>VICTORIA</b>			
Loddon River	3.3	2.8	Contribute toward in-stream baseflows and freshes between July 2013 and June 2014 within the Loddon River in support of riparian vegetation condition, native fish reproduction and condition, hydrological connectivity and water quality.
Campaspe River	6.9	6.5	Contribute in-stream base flows and freshes between July 2013 and June 2014 within the Campaspe River in support of native fish reproduction and condition, hydrological connectivity and biotic dispersal. Return flows from the Campaspe River will be used to support downstream actions throughout the Mid Murray, Lower Murray, Coorong and Lower Lakes
Goulburn River	175.0	70.1	Contribute toward in-stream base flows and freshes within the Goulburn River in support of native fish reproduction and condition, hydrological connectivity and biotic dispersal through winter, spring and early summer.
Upper Broken Creek	0.1	0.0	To contribute to an in-stream fresh between August 2013 and March 2014 to support improved native fish condition, hydrological connectivity and biotic dispersal. Yet to commence.
Lower Broken Creek	59.5	15.5	Contribute in-stream base flows and freshes between August 2013 and May 2014 within the lower Broken Creek in support of native fish reproduction and condition, hydrological connectivity and the maintenance of water quality. Return flows from the lower Broken Creek will be used to support downstream actions throughout the Mid Murray, Lower Murray, Coorong and Lower Lakes

Ovens River	0.1	0.0	To contribute to in-stream baseflows and freshes between August 2013 and June 2014 in support of flow variability, improved primary production, and the provision of shallow water habitat to contribute toward macroinvertebrate diversity. Yet to commence.
Gunbower Creek	35.0	5.7	To contribute in-stream baseflows and freshes within Gunbower Creek between July 2013 and June 2014 in support of native fish reproduction and condition, including the maintenance of habitat, suitable water quality, and hydrological connectivity throughout Gunbower Creek. <b><i>The planned action is for 35 GL, however water is being sourced from return flows from other watering actions and therefore has not been included in the total volume made available in Victoria.</i></b>
<b>Vic estimated total</b>	<b>244.9</b>	<b>94.9</b>	
<b>South Australia</b>			
SA Murray	0.5	0.0	To support improved vegetation condition, recruitment and extent, and landscape bird diversity.
Lower Murray Wetlands	1.0	0.0	To protect, maintain and, in some cases, improve the ecological health and resilience of the lower River Murray system.
SA river Murray channel, Coorong and Lower Lakes	105.7	43.0	To contribute towards improving ecological health and resilience of water dependent native vegetation and biota within the Coorong and Lower Lakes. Additional environmental water is provided to the asset from multi-site watering actions in the Murray River valley and northern Victorian Rivers.
<b>SA estimated total</b>	<b>107.2</b>	<b>43.0</b>	
<b>Total (NSW, SA, Vic)</b>	<b>1008.0</b>	<b>525.1</b>	
<b>Queensland</b>			
Condamine Balonne			
Lower Balonne	73.1	0.0	To support a more naturally variable flow regime in these systems.
Nebine Creek	5.9	0.0	To support a more naturally variable flow regime in these systems.
Border Rivers			
Severn River	1.0	0.0	To support a more naturally variable flow regime in these systems.
Lower Macintyre unregulated	4.9	0.0	To support a more naturally variable flow regime in these systems.
Moonie			
Moonie River	1.4	0.0	To support a more naturally variable flow regime in these systems.

Warrego			
Upper Warrego	6.1	0.0	To support a more naturally variable flow regime in these systems.
Lower Warrego	10.0	0.0	To support a more naturally variable flow regime in these systems.
<b>Qld estimated total</b>	<b>102.4</b>	<b>0.0</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,110.4</b>	<b>525.1</b>	