

Shane Rattenbury MLA

Attorney-General

Minister for Consumer Affairs

Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction

Minister for Gaming

Member for Kurrajong

RESPONSE TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

Environment and Communications References Committee

Inquiry into the Water Amendment (Restoring Our Rivers) Bill 2023 [Provisions]

31 October 2023

Senator DAVEY - Asked the Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction:

Reference: Hansard [uncorrected] proof transcript, page 65

In relation to: Commonwealth funding under the Basin Plan

Senator DAVEY: Thank you for appearing and thank you for your submission. Can I honestly thank you for appearing. I'm a bit frustrated that the New South Wales, Victorian and even the South Australian governments didn't appear.

CHAIR: SA is coming later tonight.

Senator DAVEY: Oh, SA is coming? Thank you to SA. I thought they were meant to be on this morning.

Senator HANSON-YOUNG: They're going to be here. I agree with you: New South Wales and Victoria should have turned up as well.

Senator DAVEY: It is disappointing. I welcome the fact that you have made the time to come and talk to us. I'll get straight to the chase. How much funding has the ACT received from the Commonwealth under the Basin Plan to date?

Mr Rattenbury: Do you mean specifically in relation to water returns or just generally?

Senator DAVEY: Generally, under all of the programs under the Basin Plan and Commonwealth.

Mr Rattenbury: I'll have to take that on notice so I can give you an accurate answer. What I can tell you is that under our obligation to return 4.9 gigalitres we are currently negotiating with the Commonwealth to come to an agreement on that. As you've noted before, the ACT has not met its obligation yet, but we are fully committed to. We did come to an agreement with the Commonwealth in 2014 to return water. At that time, we agreed to return water security entitlements from the Murrumbidgee. We signed that agreement with the Commonwealth, and

then in 2019 the Commonwealth received legal advice that that approach could not be accepted five years down the track we had to backtrack. We've been negotiating with the Commonwealth since.

With the commitment in February 2023, the Commonwealth announced it would seek to finalise all the Bridging the Gap commitments. Under that there is a proposal that has been put to us, but that is still being negotiated between the ACT and the Commonwealth. We have received \$85 million separately but that was not MDBA funding; that was a separate pool of money. That was used for water quality projects rather than water return projects if that distinction is clear.

MR RATTENBURY MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

The Directorate has received funding from the Commonwealth Government in relation to the Murray Darling Basin between financial years 2012-13 and 2022-23 totalling \$4.657 million. This funding was provided to support the ACT's engagement on Basin Plan implementation and delivering new water reform commitments. Activities funded include but are not limited to developing the ACT surface and ground water resource plans, water recovery, long-term environmental water planning, development of and revisions to the Basin-wide Environmental Watering Strategy, SDL Accounting Framework and improvement, basin plan implementation monitoring, evaluation and reporting, compliance compact commitments, and supporting community engagement.

Funding received per year as followed:

- 2012-13 \$0.098 million
- 2013-14 \$0.220 million
- 2014-15 \$0.327 million
- 2015-16 \$0.327 million
- 2016-17 \$0.327 million
- 2017-18-\$0.327 million
- 2018-19 \$0.327 million
- 2019-20 \$0.571 million
- 2020-21 \$0.521 million
- 2021-22 \$0.878 million
- 2022-23 \$0.734 million

Approved for circulation to the Member and incorporation into Hansard.

Shane Rattenbury MLA
Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction

Date:.....*6/11/23*.....