

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 On 16 March 2015, the Senate referred the following matter to the Environment and Communications References Committee for inquiry and report:

- (a) the quantum of stormwater resource in Australia and impact and potential of optimal management practices in areas of flooding, environmental impacts, waterway management and water resource planning;
- (b) the role of scientific advances in improving stormwater management outcomes and integrating these into policy at all levels of government to unlock the full suite of economic benefits;
- (c) the role of stormwater as a positive contributor to resilient and desirable communities into the future, including 'public good' and productivity outcomes;
- (d) model frameworks to develop economic and policy incentives for stormwater management;
- (e) model land use planning and building controls to maximise benefits and minimise impacts in both new and legacy situations;
- (f) funding models and incentives to support strategic planning and investment in desirable stormwater management, including local prioritisation;
- (g) asset management and operations to encourage efficient investments and longevity of benefit;
- (h) the role of innovation in supporting desirable outcomes and transparent decision-making, including access to information and novel technologies for planning, design and implementation; and
- (i) any related matters.¹

1.2 The committee was initially required to report by 25 June 2015. However, on 24 June 2015, the Senate granted an extension of time to report until 19 August 2015. On 10 August 2015, the Senate agreed to a further extension of time to report until 14 October 2015. On 13 October 2015, the Senate agreed to extend the reporting date further to 2 December 2015.

1 *Journals of the Senate*, 2013–15, no. 83 (16 March 2015), pp. 2283–84.

Conduct of the inquiry

1.3 The committee advertised the inquiry on its website and in *The Australian* newspaper. The committee also wrote to relevant organisations and individuals inviting written submissions.

1.4 The committee received 64 submissions, which are listed at Appendix 1. The committee held public hearings for this inquiry in Melbourne on 18 May 2015 and in Adelaide on 26 August 2015. A list of witnesses who appeared at the hearings may be found at Appendix 2.

1.5 The committee thanks all of the organisations, individuals and government departments and agencies that contributed to the inquiry.

Structure of the report

1.6 This report comprises six chapters. The matters covered in the remaining chapters of the report are outlined below:

- Chapter 2 provides an overview of the key issues related to stormwater by discussing the volumes of stormwater that Australian cities generate, the environmental damage that runoff can cause, and how urban stormwater has traditionally been managed through the use of extensive drainage systems. The evidence received by the committee that argued stormwater is an under-utilised resource is also introduced.
- Chapter 3 discusses uses for stormwater and areas where improved data, guidelines and training may help support improved outcomes.
- Chapter 4 considers the evidence received about the stormwater management roles performed by water utilities, local governments and state governments.
- Chapter 5 considers the role of the Australian Government in matters related to stormwater.
- The committee's findings and recommendations are contained in Chapter 6.

Note on references

1.7 References in this report to the Hansard of the committee's 18 May 2015 public hearing are to the official version of the transcript. References to the Hansard of the 26 August 2015 public hearing are to the proof version of the transcript. Page numbers may vary between the proof and the official Hansard transcript.