

Question on notice no. 361

Portfolio question number: 299

2019-20 Supplementary budget estimates

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee, Infrastructure,
Transport, Cities and Regional Development Portfolio**

Senator Murray Watt: asked the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Cities and Regional Development on 25 October 2019—

Senator WATT: I have a few questions about the National Water Grid Authority. This was obviously the subject of an election commitment from the government. Among other things, they committed to establish the national water grid, a statutory authority responsible for the strategic planning and project management of water, policy and water infrastructure across the nation. Is that new independent statutory authority established yet?

Dr Bacon: Yes. It's not actually an independent statutory authority. The Australian government established the National Water Grid Authority as a secondary Australian government body. It's established within the department of infrastructure.

Senator WATT: So it's not a statutory authority?

Dr Bacon: It's not a statutory authority, no. It's a secondary Australian government body established within the department.

Senator WATT: Minister, why haven't you delivered on the commitment to create a statutory authority to do this?

Senator Canavan: I'll have to take on notice the reasons for the particular designation provided to this body. I'm not familiar with the details, unless the deputy secretary could add something.

Senator WATT: My understanding of the Deputy Prime Minister's comments was that establishing it as an independent statutory authority would take the politics out of water, but it hasn't been set up that way after all.

Senator Canavan: I'll have to take that on notice. I'm not familiar with those precise comments you're referring to or the details.

Answer —

The National Water Grid Authority has been established as a *Secondary Australian Government Body – non-statutory function with separate branding* within the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Cities and Regional Development. This enabled the Authority to commence its work at the earliest possible time to bring together world best science to identify and plan the next generation of water infrastructure to support the growth of regional Australia and build resilience to drought.