

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

Question No: 119
Hearing: Additional Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 4
Programme: Commonwealth Environmental Water Office (CEWO)
Topic: CEWH funding
Hansard Page: N/A
Question Date: 22 February 2016
Question Type: Written

Senator Simms asked:

Has the CEWH conducted any modelling to determine what impact this change would have on water flows and the environment of the MDB?

Answer:

No. The Commonwealth Environmental Water Office has not conducted modelling to determine what impact proposed amendments to the Water Act would have on water flows and the environment of the MDB.

The amendments include several safeguards to ensure that the Sustainable Diversion Limits of the Basin Plan are still met, including that:

- only proceeds from the sale of temporary water (allocations) can be used for environmental activities, not the permanent water rights. Proceeds from the sale of any permanent rights to receive water each year (entitlements) must be used for water purchases. This avoids a permanent rebalancing of the amount of water set aside for the environment under the Basin Plan;
- only proceeds from allocation sales in catchments that are shown to have complied with their sustainable diversion limit can be used for environmental activities;
- environmental activities must be reasonably expected to improve the effectiveness of Commonwealth environmental water and the environmental benefits must be greater than – not just equal to – the benefits of keeping the allocations.