

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

Question No: 120
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:

Changes in the Water Amendment Bill currently before Parliament will give the CEWH the power to use trade revenue for environmental activities. Has the CEWH determined how a project will be classified as an 'environmental activity'?

Answer:

Any 'environmental activities' supported by the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder must be consistent with the role and functions of the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder, which are defined and constrained by the *Water Act 2007* and Chapter 8 of the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

While the Water Amendment Bill 2015 does not explicitly define environmental activities, the proposed new subsection 106(3)(c) describes an environmental activity as one which "...would improve the capacity of the Commonwealth environmental water holdings to be applied to meet the objectives of...the environmental watering plan".

'Environmental activities' for the purposes of the Bill must therefore be:

- (a) directly linked to and improve the use of Commonwealth environmental water; and
- (b) support the objectives of the environmental watering plan, which is Chapter 8 of the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

The Bill also clarifies that 'environmental activities' do not include statutory fees and charges for holding and delivering water.

The Water Amendment Bill, and specifically this aspect of the Bill, have been referred to the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee for inquiry.