

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

**Question No:** 300  
**Hearing:** Additional Estimates  
**Outcome:** Outcome 4  
**Programme:** Commonwealth Environmental Water Office  
**Topic:** Red Gum forest thinning  
**Hansard Page:** 42  
**Question Date:** 04 March 2016  
**Question Type:** Spoken

**Senator Rice asked:**

**Senator RICE:** By thinning out the red gum forest, you were changing the amount of water that is essentially being soaked up by the red gums, which means there is more water to maintain inundation levels in the Moira grasslands for longer. What is the period of time that that process would be expected to occur over?

**Mr Papps:** I am not sure. I would have to take that on notice. If you are talking about the recovery of an ecological community—and we, and the Victorian Environmental Water Holder and the Living Murray, have been manipulating the water regime in those forests for a number of years now—it is certainly very clear that, first of all, you need long periods of inundation for the Moira grass community to recover, and, like any ecological community that has got close to a tipping point, the recovery itself is going to take probably a number of years.

**Answer:**

The ecological thinning trial is being managed by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. It will investigate the use of ecological thinning of river red gums to improve the long-term resilience of this ecosystem in a changing climate through a rigorous ecological monitoring program to investigate, monitor and understand the impacts of the trial on these forests and their associated flora and fauna, including the impact on Moira grass.

The NSW Office of Environment and Heritage has stated that sufficient water provision remains the key ecological driver determining the flood-dependent forest's health after generations of livestock grazing, timber harvesting and river-flow regulation.

The research component of the trial will run over five years.