

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

Question No: 229
Hearing: Budget Estimates
Outcome: Agency
Programme: Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA)
Topic: MDBA - Basin Salinity Management Program
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Question Type: Spoken

Senator Urquhart asked:

Senator Urquhart: When is the next 15-year program due to start on the Basin Salinity Management program, and how is work progressing on its development?

Dr Dickson: I will get someone to report on where we are up to at this stage.

Mr McLeod: The next 15-year program for salinity management is being styled as BSM2030, which reflects the period out to 2030. We are currently in a development phase of that program and over the course of the coming year we hope to kick that off and set up arrangements for the period through to 2030.

This is the third iteration of the salinity management. The first ones were the Salinity and Drainage Strategy 1998-2001 and the Basin Salinity Management Strategy 2001-2015. In moving into this new phase a general review of salinity arrangements was initiated about two years ago in relation to the changes that occurred associated with the basin plan coming about, which was not envisaged at the time that the BSMS was set up in 2001, and we are looking at moderating the efforts associated with implementing the salinity management to actually take account of those new things and also look at the new risk, which is both the benefits of the dilution effect of the environmental water and also any salt metallisation that might occur as a result of those environmental watering events. All of that will be coordinated in an overall comprehensive framework.

Senator URQUHART: You mentioned that you were kicking it off. Did you say later this year?

Mr McLeod: Yes. I would have to take on notice the exact timing.

Senator URQUHART: Could you get back to me with the time frames.

Mr McLeod: Yes.

Answer:

The next 15-year salinity management strategy for the Basin (BSM2030) is scheduled to be presented to Ministerial Council in November 2015 for the approval of all Basin governments. The new strategy would then be expected to take effect at the beginning of 2016 (subject to Ministerial Council agreeing to the strategy).