

## **WATER**

### **Question on Notice 1**

**Mr D O'BRIEN:** Thank you, Chair. Minister, can I ask a question to Ms Vaughan, who is just walking your way. I wonder if you could provide me with, as of 1 July 2020, how many customers across each water authority were on payment plans, and likewise for 1 July 2019?

A response to this question was provided to PAEC at the conclusion of the hearing.

## Question on Notice 2

Mr HIBBINS: Yes, okay, thanks. Look, I will conclude there, but can we just take on notice just a breakdown of the funding (for 'Improving the health of Victoria's waterways and catchments in the face of escalating impacts of climate change') if you could provide that to the committee on notice?

The proposed breakdown of funding over the four years for this program is outlined below.

Program	\$ M
<b>Water statutory functions</b> – this includes permitting activities and floodplain advice activities of CMAs under the <i>Water Act 1989</i> .	37.000
<b>Waterway on-ground works</b> – this includes riparian management activities delivered by CMAs in partnership with landholders such as fencing, revegetation and weed control. It also includes implementation of regional waterway strategies and Flagship Waterway projects.	40.000
<b>Demonstrating waterway outcomes</b> – this includes monitoring, evaluation and research activities that provide evidence about the condition of Victoria's waterways and the effectiveness of management interventions. Provides critical information to meet reporting obligations, including for the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.	12.000
<b>Environmental water reserve officers, shared benefits and community engagement</b> – this includes regional planning, management and engagement for the environmental water reserve in CMAs.	19.680
<b>Environmental water works and measures and water recovery</b> – this includes several, small-scale infrastructure projects delivered by CMAs that will help improve the outcomes achieved from environmental water delivery.	0.750
<b>Ramsar site management</b> – this includes site co-ordination, management activities and monitoring for Victoria's 12 Ramsar sites.	12.179
<b>Integrated catchment management</b> - this includes renewal of 10 regional catchment strategies and delivery of on-ground ICM projects by CMAs.	21.750
<b>Murray Programs, Investment and Reporting System, Anglesea River management</b> – this includes staff and operating costs for Murray Programs, improvements to project reporting and management of the Anglesea estuary.	7.800
<b>Murray-Darling Basin Plan obligations</b> – this includes staff in the northern CMAs, monitoring and other projects to meet Victoria's obligations for environmental watering under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.	7.624
<b>State-wide policy co-ordination and projects</b> – this includes DELWP staff and operational funds to deliver critical state-wide policy and projects, including the renewal of the Victorian Waterway Management Strategy and implementation of the new State Environment Protection Policy (Waters).	35.058
<b>Victorian Environmental Water Holder</b> – this includes the operations, fees and charges of the VEWH.	30.000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>223.841</b>

### Question on Notice 3

**Mr D O'BRIEN: Thank you. I mentioned the \$50 million the federal government has put up for the onfarm emergency water rebate scheme. Will the state be matching the contribution?**

The Commonwealth Government's On Farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme (the Scheme) was a program available to drought-affected primary producers and horticulture growers to buy and install on-farm water infrastructure, such as pipes, pumps, drilling new stock water bores and desilting dams to supply water to permanent plantings and livestock.

The Scheme was announced in 2018 and Victoria was allocated \$5 million for a two year program, managed by Agriculture Victoria, administered by Rural Finance, under the portfolio responsibilities of the Minister for Agriculture.

As a result of the Commonwealth Government reducing its funding allocation to Victoria, the Scheme closed in May 2019, earlier than scheduled. In response the Victorian Government provided \$0.8 million to meet the financial commitments made to applicants that had applied to the Scheme in good faith.

In October 2020, the Commonwealth Government announced an extension to the Scheme with \$50 million in new funding and introduced a co-funding expectation from jurisdictions.

The Commonwealth Government's new expectation that jurisdictions provide matching funding was made without consultation or prior notice. The Victorian Government is continuing to negotiate with the Commonwealth Government to find a mutually agreeable position on how we make this program available to Victorian farmers.

The Commonwealth Government can directly fund the Scheme as it was originally designed and delivered should it choose to support Victorian farmers immediately.

Since 2018 the Victorian Government has provided over \$81 million in targeted support for Victorian farmers and rural communities affected by drought and dry seasonal conditions

## Question on Notice 4

**Mr D O'BRIEN:** Through the questions we were all asking the minister was responding in detail reading from a document about capital projects in her portfolio, and given we have not got a state budget paper 4 on capital, I was wondering whether she would be happy to table that information for the committee.

Project	Project Status	Total project cost (\$m)	Expected completion year
Werribee Irrigation District	<b>Construction of stage three of the project was completed in September 2019.</b> Stage three included construction of 10.7km of pipeline and 45 outlets upgraded and/or blanked. The project was delivered in full up to stage three, however there remains an opportunity for further modernisation. The Commonwealth's National Water Infrastructure Development Fund – Capital Component has not allocated funding to Victoria for this project. The project has completed 3 of the 5 construction stages.	\$19.98	Dec-20
Bacchus Marsh Irrigation District	<b>Stage four works were completed in June 2020.</b> The total pipeline replaced throughout the project was approximately 8.5km. The Commonwealth's National Water Infrastructure Development Fund – Capital Component has not allocated funding to Victoria for this project. The project has completed 4 of the 5 construction stages.	\$9.90	Dec-20
East Grampians Rural Water Supply Project	<b>Planning and approvals have commenced. Constructed expected to commence early 2021 (subject to planning conditions).</b> The project will construct up to 1,600km of pipeline network to provide a secure domestic and stock water supply covering up to 330,000 hectares of unserviced land in the East Grampians region surrounding Ararat	\$85.20	Sep-22
Mitiamo Pipeline Project	<b>Planning and approvals work commenced in 2019.</b> The State has advanced \$200,000 to Goulburn Murray Water enabling commencement of planning and approval works. On 11 April 2019, the Federal Coalition announced an election commitment to co-fund the Mitiamo and District Reticulated Water Project. DELWP is awaiting the formal offer of funding.	\$29.00	2 years from when funding is secured
Lindenow Valley Water Security Scheme	<b>Project commenced May 2020 with applications open until 30 June 2021.</b> In May 2019, the Federal Coalition announced an election commitment of \$10 million towards the Lindenow Valley scheme. Rural Finance is delivering the program on behalf of the Victorian Government and has recently concluded the first tranche of assessment for grant applications. Under the first tranche, \$4.3 million in grants funding for water infrastructure projects has either been approved or received an in-principle approval.	\$20.00	Jun-23
Western Irrigation Network	<b>Project commenced in November 2020.</b> The project will establish an irrigation scheme in the Parwan/Balliang region supplied by recycled water from three nearby treatment plants. The project will initially supply 4.2GL of class C recycled water by 2024 and has the potential of supplying up to 18.3GL of recycled water by 2050.	\$116.30	Apr-25
Macalister Irrigation District Phase 2	<b>Funding agreement executed with early works underway.</b> The \$62.6 million MID Phase 2 project will complete the Macalister modernisation program over the next four years, as part of the MID 2030 Strategy.	\$62.60	Sep-24
GMW Connections Stage 1	<b>The Connections Project has completed works to achieve the 429 gigalitres of water savings – on time and within budget.</b> A small project team remains to ensure all works function as designed and are integrated into GMW. A full financial reconciliation and audit will be completed by Connections Project and DELWP in early 2021, with any unspent funds returned to the Victorian and/or the Australian governments.	\$1,051.99	Oct-20
GMW Connections Stage 2	All water savings from the Connections Project must be verified in line with the Water Savings Protocol and Technical Manual. The 2019-20 audit, to include works commissioned to 30 June 2020, has commenced and is expected in early 2021.	\$1,084.37	Oct-20

Project	Project Status	Total project cost (\$m)	Expected completion year
Macalister Irrigation District Phase 1B	<b>Project on track for completion in 2021.</b>	\$60.00	Jun-21
Sunraysia Modernisation Project 2	<b>Completed October 2019 on time and within budget.</b>	\$7.81	Oct-19
South West Loddon	<b>Project completed in March 2020.</b>	\$89.80	Mar-20
Coldstream Recycled-Water Pipeline (CROPS)	Building on the feasibility study completed for the project in 2017, in November 2018, the Commonwealth Government offered to co-fund up to \$250,000 to establish governance arrangements and finalise project design under the NWIDF – Feasibility Component.	\$0.50	Dec-20
Hinterland Recycled Water Feasibility Study	Feasibility study to assess the economy feasibility of diverting recycled water from the South Eastern Outfall to the hinterland region of the Mornington Peninsula. Countersignature for varied bilateral schedule was signed by the Minister for Water in September 2020.	\$0.69	Dec-21
12 Feasibility Studies	<b>Feasibility studies for 11 projects completed by 2018</b> - Agriculture and Job Growth West of Melbourne; Coldstream Recycled-Water Pipeline (CROPS); Dilwyn Aquifer Infrastructure; Lindenow Valley Water Security; Macalister Irrigation District 2030 - Phase 2 Development; Mitiamo Reticulated Water Supply; Moonambel Water Supply; South East Melbourne Regional Water Plan; Southern Victorian Irrigation Development; Sunraysia Modernisation Project: Stage 2; Yanakie Secure Water Supply Feasibility study for East Grampians West Wimmera project was completed in 2019.	\$8.30	Jun-19
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$2,646.43</b>	

## Question on Notice 5

**Mr LIMBRICK:** Thank you, Minister. In the short time I have got left—one of the things in your slide was ‘Improving recognition and management of water by traditional owners and Aboriginal Victorians’. What does this program actually entail and what is it trying to achieve?

**Ms NEVILLE:** Firstly, we have changed legislation so that all of our water authorities and CMAs have to engage with traditional owners around environmental watering et cetera. But we have also funded, in a range of the Aboriginal communities, water officers and policy officers so that they build their capacity. There are economic programs. I am happy to provide any more information you want on that.

Victorian Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians’ knowledge, expertise and participation have historically been excluded from water policy, decision-making and management, which has limited Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians’ ability to manage, access, use and own water for self-determined purposes. The historical legacy of government policy on water ownership by Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians’ has led to continued disconnection from Country and cultural uses of water, perpetuated socio-economic disadvantage, and missed a significant opportunity to more holistically and inclusively manage water resources.

Aboriginal Water reform initiatives in DELWP and our delivery partners aim to improve this situation by investing in projects, programs and resources to enable water-related outcomes for Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians’ for spiritual, customary, economic and social purposes.

A key enabler supporting Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians’ involvement in the water sector is the Aboriginal Water Program (AWP). The AWP aims to progress the actions set out in *Water for Victoria* Chapter Six, by providing funding under two key initiatives:

- Recognising Aboriginal values and uses to water through the roll-out of local projects to assist communities to better understand their values, uses and aspirations to water, employ Aboriginal Water Officers (AWO) and initiate an AWO Network. The projects aimed to explore cultural mapping, seasonal watering plans, water management plans, and research of cultural and environmental flows for the sustainable management of water and the health of Country.
- Aboriginal access to water for economic development through the roll-out of pilot and research projects which aimed to inform a ‘roadmap’ to help recognise where Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians’ can access water. The pilot projects aimed to test the feasibility of aquaculture, bush foods, native plants, water-based education, tourism and water access and trading for an economically independent future.

Through the 2020-21 State Budget, the Government will invest a further \$21 million to continue progress towards Traditional Owner access, management and ownership to water for self-determined purposes. The investment will enable up to 23 FTE AWO to secure employment for a further four years, and fund Traditional Owner-led projects to support Aboriginal communities’ involvement in the water sector.