



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Brendan Smyth MLA (Chair), Joy Burch MLA (Deputy Chair), Nicole Lawder MLA,
Jayson Hinder MLA

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Review of Auditor-General's Report No. 3 of 2015:
Restoration of the Lower Cotter Catchment

Responses to QToN at public hearing of 15 March 2016



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Inquiry into Auditor-General reports No. 3 of 2015: Restoration of the Lower Cotter Catchment
ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE
TUESDAY, 15 MARCH 2016



Asked by **MR SMYTH (Chair)**:

In relation to: Recommendation 6, water policy coordination – review (p. 4)

THE CHAIR: In regard to recommendation 6, water policy coordination, there is a review underway. When is that review likely to be finished?

Dr Lane: That review, for all intents and purposes, has been completed. Now we need to formalise the process of recognising that the water policy responsibility resides within EPD and has done so for some time. That requires changes to the legislation—nothing major. We are anticipating that may happen in the second half of this calendar year.

THE CHAIR: Is it possible for the committee to get a copy of the review?

Dr Lane: Yes, certainly.

MINISTER CORBELL: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:—

Section 64 states the functions of the EPA under the *Water Resources Act 2007*, and includes “to coordinate policies in relation to water resource management” and “where appropriate, promote an integrated approach to water resource management, environment protection and water catchment management”.

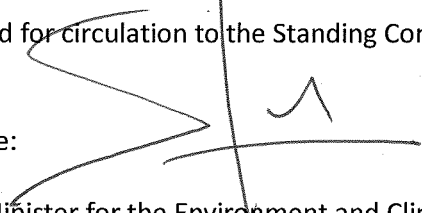
The Auditor-General's Report highlights the division of responsibilities across separate ACT Government directorates and states that there is a need to align functional arrangements in directorates with the Environment Protection Authority's central role and responsibilities in water policy and water management.

EPD Environment Branch has convened a working group with representation from the Conservator of Flora and Fauna, Environment Protection Policy, Catchment Management and Water Policy, and Construction, Environment and Workplace Protection (Access Canberra) to assess and recommend a preferred model in relation to the Environment Protection Authority's current role under the *Water Resources Act 2007*.

After considering a number of options, the preferred option for the short term is that the Conservator of Flora and Fauna be delegated the Environment Protection Authority's responsibilities under the *Water Resources Act 2007*. This interim measure will not require legislative change and will allow for water policy

functions to align with section 64 (functions of the Environment Protection Authority) of the *Water Resources Act 2007* within the EPD Environment Branch. For the longer term, we will explore legislative change in the form of an amendment to the Water Resources Act to recognise the new allocation of policy responsibilities. A report on the proposed changes is to be prepared and will be forwarded to the committee for information as soon as practicable.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Signature:  Date: 5.4.16

By the Minister for the Environment and Climate Change, Simon Corbell, MLA



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Asked by **MS LAWDER**:

In relation to: Exclusion of offset sites (p. 17)

MS LAWDER: Offset properties? Do you have any idea how many of those there are and what area they might cover?

Dr Lane: There are three blocks: 1471, 1675 and 1685, district of Tuggeranong.

MS LAWDER: Why would those three blocks be excluded as opposed to all the other offset blocks or any other—

Mr Corbell: I think they would be in private ownership.

Dr Lane: They would also be managed for particular species. There could be some different conditions around them.

MS LAWDER: Are you able to provide on notice whether it is because they are in private ownership, whether it is for species or both, or for some other reason?

Dr Lane: Yes.

MINISTER CORBELL: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:—

Under the approval conditions for the Murrumbidgee to Googong pipeline project (M2G), Icon Water was required to provide compensatory habitat as an offset to compensate for vegetation and habitat losses arising from the construction activities both in the ACT and NSW.

Block 1675 Tuggeranong, owned by Icon Water, has been set aside for conservation due to its high biodiversity value; including Box-Gum Woodland, listed under the provisions of the Commonwealth's *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, threatened flora and fauna species and threatened species habitat. This property is the subject of a comprehensive offset management plan with the Commonwealth, ACT and NSW Governments that details how the site is to be monitored and managed to protect and enhance its biodiversity values.

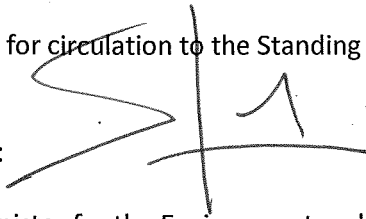
Including this site in the Management Agreement under the provisions of the *Nature Conservation Act 2014* is not appropriate as an agreement under this Act is to set out standards and conditions to minimise impact if it is thought that an agency's activities may conflict with the management objectives for the land.

Block 1471 has an Executive lease over it, held by the LDA, and has very few ecological values left apart from some large trees. The M2G pipeline runs through it and a portion of the block was used as a depot for the construction of the pipeline.

Block 1685 is leased to Icon Water and contains the pump station for the M2G.

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Asked by **MS LAWDER**:

Ms Lawder: I have a supplementary on that. Minister, you have previously mentioned \$5.1 million for fuel or fire management, including removal of the pine wildlings. Are you able to provide the committee with a breakdown of how that money will be spent?

Mr Corbell: It was largely appropriated, if I understand it correctly, to TAMS as the land manager, including responsibility for fire fuel management. But we can take that on notice and seek that information from them.

MINISTER CORBELL: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:—

The Table below outlines the estimated breakdown of expenditure of the appropriated \$5.177M being for fire fuel management works in the Lower Cotter Catchment. Note that estimates provided in years 2016-17 to 2018-19 are subject to further refinement as priorities and weather conditions may dictate.

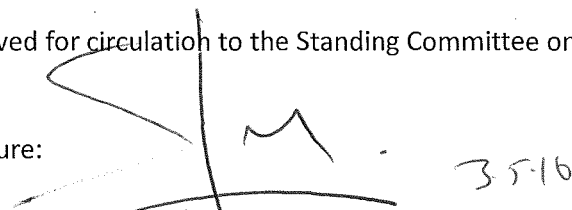


Summary of Budget Funding for fire fuel management in the Lower Cotter Catchment

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	Four Years
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Blue Range Treatment Trials	70	80	0	0	
Vegetation Management – use of roadside slasher on excavator known as “Trittering”	240	260	242	450	
Management Trails Maintenance	330	300	262	350	
Chemical Treatment – follow up of areas “Trittered” along roadside vegetation to reduce fire fuels	40	50	40	124	
Physical Removal – removal of wilding pines around areas such as Blue Range	80	400	300	500	
Prescribed Burning	39	139	160	150	
Total LCC Fuel Management inc Blue Range	799	1,229	1,004	1,574	4,606
Total LCC Fuel Management Staffing (SPOC x1)	137	141	145	148	571
TOTAL COTTER CATCHMENT SPENDING	936	1,370	1,149	1,722	5,177

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Signature:



Date:

By the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Simon Corbell, MLA