



**The Hon. Melinda Pavey MP**  
Minister for Water, Property and Housing

Thursday, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2021

Director – Budget Estimates Secretariat  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Director

Please find attached the Budget Estimates post-hearing responses in relation to the hearing on 1 March 2021 for the portfolios of Water, Property and Housing.

Please find enclosed:

- answers to questions on notice – Attachment 1A – Water and 1B - HAP
- answers to supplementary questions – Attachment 2A - Water and 2B - HAP
- transcript corrections – Attachment 3A – Water and 3B – HAP
- matters for clarification in transcript – 4A – Water Addendum (ii) and 4B - HAP

In relation to the addendum (ii), while not actual transcript errors, these are matters that require correction or clarification for the public record, and I ask that the Committee have the addendum (ii) added to the public record of proceedings.

A hard copy will be delivered to your office shortly.

Yours sincerely

**The Hon. Melinda Pavey MP**  
Minister for Water, Property and Housing

**Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Industry  
Water, Property and Housing Portfolio  
Budget Estimates Hearing Transcript  
Addendum**

- Under questioning from the Hon Mick Veitch and the Hon Penny Sharpe at pages 3-6 of the transcript, there are a number of incorrect references to the Department of Primary Industries – Water. The correct reference is the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment – Water.
- Following is an excerpt from page 15 of the transcript:

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** Well, what is DPI Water doing to get these people back to the table?

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY:** I think realising and acknowledging that the time frames and the project that was first put up is not going to be achieved is the most important thing we can do. Our agency and Anissa Levy, WaterNSW, have been in dialogue with those communities now for years and recently Anissa Levy in her new position—

To clarify, Anissa Levy is CEO of Water Infrastructure NSW, within the Water group of the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment. She is not part of WaterNSW, which is a separate State-owned Corporation.

- Following is a further excerpt from page 15 of the transcript:

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY:** Yes, and Yanco as well. But I also might point out, while I have an opportunity, out of the sustainable diversion limit [SDL] projects, which is required to save 605 gigalitres of water across the Murray-Darling Basin, we have achieved 12 of the 20 projects. It is not as if we have not been doing good work. Our proposition to the Commonwealth is that there are better projects that we could be doing that will save water and will have better outcomes for the environment. No-one surely can be happy with the level of carp still in our waterways. Improving off-take levels of dams, improving connectivity—

To clarify, NSW has achieved 12 of the 21 SDL projects it is involved in.

- Following is an excerpt from page 20 of the transcript:

**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN:** The evidence.

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY:** If the dam had been at 1,800 gigalitres in 2016, as what the community had always wanted that dam raised, we would not have got to 10 per cent water in Wyangala Dam, which was a real threat to communities in February of this year. That is a fact. If you get more water, it gives more security. I would have thought it is an important conversation and we are doing that through our Regional Water Strategies. We have climate change. We need to be able to capture water in the big events for the extended drought periods that are predicted.

To clarify, this should be February of last year.

- Following is an excerpt from page 85 of the transcript:

**Dr BENTLEY:** Can I correct one figure, Chair?

**The CHAIR:** You can correct one figure.

**Dr BENTLEY:** I said 451, I think it was, for that SDL.

**The Hon. LOU AMATO:** For Gwydir.

**The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK:** For Gwydir, yes.

**Dr BENTLEY:** I was quoting the wrong one because one is a water resource plan SDL and one is a water sharing plan SDL. The water resource plan SDL is 401—or 400.6—not 450-something, which is the number I gave you.

To clarify, the Basin Plan Sustainable Diversion Limit (SDL) for the Gwydir surface water SDL resource unit is 408 GL/year.

- Following is an excerpt from page 74 of the transcript:

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** So there has not been an application or you are not aware of an application coming to designate that project as critical State significant infrastructure?

**Mr BETTS:** I am not, Andrew?

**Mr GEORGE:** No, not in that forum.

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** Not in that forum?

**Mr GEORGE:** No.

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** So has it been discussed in other forums?

**Mr GEORGE:** It is certainly a discussion between WaterNSW and Infrastructure NSW from time to time.

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** Okay, but that will be a decision for WaterNSW or Infrastructure NSW to make such an application?

**Mr GEORGE:** Infrastructure NSW, correct.

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** Is it usual to the secretary for a project designation to change midway through the process of developing an EIS?

**Mr BETTS:** Midway through the process of developing an EIS it would be open for WaterNSW to make representations to the planning Minister if they wanted it to be designated as critical State significant infrastructure, yes.

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** What would have changed since the original application for it to now be deemed critical? Or that decision has not been taken yet?

**Mr GEORGE:** That decision has not been taken yet

For further clarification, WaterNSW sought to formally confirm the eligibility of the proposed Warragamba wall-raising project for Critical State Significant Infrastructure status in December 2016.

This request occurred when the organisation was first tasked with conducting the environment impact study assessments associated with the project, on behalf of the NSW Government.

The request has not been finalised. CSSI projects are subject to an approvals process that reflects their status as essential to the state for economic, environment or social reasons.

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD:** Okay, but that will be a decision for WaterNSW or Infrastructure NSW to make such an application?

**Mr GEORGE:** Infrastructure NSW, correct.

The correct answer to this is WaterNSW.

**Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Industry  
Water, Property and Housing Portfolio  
Budget Estimates Hearing Transcript**

**Transcript clarifications for Minister Pavey and Melanie Hawyes:**

- Following is an excerpt from page 42 of the transcript:

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY:** I am going to pass to Ms Hawyes. But it is also important that we take out of the system claims that would not be there if we had better relationships and trust amongst each other. That would substantially bring down the numbers. There is a better way of us managing this process. It is not just about putting more staff on, but we have put extra staff on—four, as I understand it. But that is not going to solve—an extra four is not going to bring it down from your 110 years. It might be 100 years.

To clarify, an additional 13 staff have been employed since last year to determine Aboriginal Land Claims.

- Following is an excerpt from page 43 of the transcript:

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY:** But let us celebrate; let us just acknowledge the 1,700 claims that we got out the door last year and some significant work we have done with the two ALAs that are working.

To clarify, in 2019/20, 1505 Aboriginal Land Claims were processed.

- Following is an excerpt from page 44 of the transcript:

**Ms HAWYES:** To be specific, to respond to your query about how many people are working on land claims, the number of full-time staff has more than doubled in the past year from eight to 19 at present.

To clarify, there are currently 21 staff processing Aboriginal Land Claims.

## **Transcript clarifications for Mick Cassel evidence:**

- Following is an excerpt from page 55 of the transcript:

**Mr CASSEL:** " There are a variety of mechanisms within those grants. Part of the \$150 million that we received for Airds Bradbury includes a NHIFC loan and a grant component"

To clarify, per the NSW budget, these stimulus funds are all grants.

- Following is an excerpt from page 55 of the transcript:

**Mr CASSEL:** "A National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation loan, so a Commonwealth Government loan"

To clarify, The National Finance and Investment Corporation Facility, a Commonwealth facility has nothing to do with NSW Government stimulus funding.

- Following is an excerpt from page 55 of the transcript:

**Mr CASSEL:** "Yes. So the \$150 million for Airds Bradbury"

To clarify, per the NSW budget, these stimulus funds are all grants.

- Following is an excerpt from page 55 of the transcript:

**Mr CASSEL:** "\$75 million of that is coming from the NHIFC, the Commonwealth provider"

To clarify, per the NSW budget, these stimulus funds are all grants.

- Following is an excerpt from page 55 of the transcript:

**Mr CASSEL:** "Yes"

To clarify, per the NSW budget, these stimulus funds are all grants.