



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

BILLS

Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2014-2015

Consideration in Detail

SPEECH

Wednesday, 18 June 2014

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

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Questioner	Responder
Speaker Hunt, Greg, MP	Question No.

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for the Environment) (17:59): I thank the member for Swan for a comprehensive question. All up the government's coastal rivers recovery plan is \$9.3 million. Of course, there is \$1 million that has been allocated for the Swan-Canning River recovery plan. I will come to that in more detail in just a second. In addition, particularly with the member for Boothby here, there is \$1 million for the River Torrens. He was a champion and a fighter for that. I also note that the member for Bass, who is here, was an inveterate campaigner for the \$3 million for the Tamar River recovery plan. His river was dirtier than yours! So three of the key components of the national coastal rivers recovery plan are represented around the table in the chamber this evening. There was also \$3.3 million for Tuggerah Lakes for recovery there as well as \$1 million over four years for the Yarra River recovery plan.

Turning to the Swan and Canning rivers, there are three components which are addressed in the \$1 million. Firstly and most significantly is weed removal, eradication and revegetation, as set out by the member. The hydrocotyle, as you have shown me, is a fundamental problem. Both rivers can be threatened by it. Each river has lagoon systems where the water is not running so quickly. I have with you inspected the site and, seen the challenge and it was precisely because of those site visits and the support of the community and the state that we determined that this was a genuine and necessary problem. I know it affects electorates of all persuasions. The Labor-held electorate of Perth will also benefit significantly from this program, as it should. At the end of the day it is about maintaining and improving the health of one of our fundamental urban riparian assets.

The second component of the Swan River recovery plan is community education. It is about ensuring that the sorts of shopping trolley issues and urban pollution issues to which the member for Swan refers are mitigated—that they are reduced. The lessons around the country are very clear: if you engage your schoolchildren early, if you engage your secondary school students, then you can have an impact on the community as a whole. We cannot guarantee 100 per cent community compliance, because that is the nature of who we are and what we are as a society, but we can make a dramatic difference.

The third of the changes is in relation to community action, and that is supporting particular community groups to engage in on-the-ground physical work. It could be replanting, it could be riparian recovery, it may be the development of habitat for threatened species in particular along the Swan and Canning rivers.

Only a few short hours ago I did sign-off on a brief allocating the funds to the Perth NRM. But after consultation with the member, the significant condition which I had placed on it is twofold. Firstly, the condition is that there will be zero dollars used by the Perth NRM for administration—100 per cent of the funds, \$1 million of the \$1 million allocated, must be used for cleaning up river in the three ways outlined. That is a direct consequence of the rightful demands of the member for Swan that every dollar goes to cleaning up the Swan and Canning system.

The second condition is that the allocations are notified to myself beforehand. That allows proper consultation and openly I say with the member here to ensure that he and other community representatives believe that all recipient bodies are appropriate bodies with full probity attached to them. We will, of course, do our probity checks but I wanted to make sure that there is a second line of defence. I thank the member. This program would not have occurred without the support of people such as the member for Bass, the member for Boothby and the member for Swan and this project would certainly not have occurred without the tireless and indefatigable advocacy of the member for Swan.