



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Federation Chamber**

**BILLS**

**National Water Commission  
Amendment Bill 2012**

**Second Reading**

**SPEECH**

**Thursday, 21 June 2012**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

**Date** Thursday, 21 June 2012  
**Page** 7570  
**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Burke, Tony, MP

**Source** House  
**Proof** No  
**Responder**  
**Question No.**

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**Mr BURKE** (Watson—Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities) (11:53): I want to thank all the contributors to the debate on the National Water Commission Amendment Bill 2012. The bill continues the National Water Commission as an independent statutory body for the life of the National Water Initiative. It will provide transparent assurance on the progress of all governments in meeting their commitments under the National Water Initiative and other important water reforms.

I note that on 13 April this year the Council of Australian Governments agreed to retain the commission, focusing it on the functions of audit, monitoring and assessment of water reform. I remind the House that the National Water Commission and the National Water Initiative are the commitments of all governments and an example of the benefits we can achieve by working together. I have found it odd in some of the contributions to the debate where people in one breath have supported the National Water Initiative and then have opposed almost all of the elements of it. It is an important part of the National Water Initiative that water entitlements became tradeable entitlements and yet we have had a number of contributions where people support having a tradeable entitlement on condition that it can be traded but it cannot be sold. I am not sure how the logic of a tradeable entitlement that you are not allowed to sell is meant to work, but such were some of the comments that we have had during the course of that debate. When enacted, the bill will have positioned the commission to focus on the most valuable elements of its role, give it continuity, and meet all commitments for reporting on water reform progress.

The Australia government remains firmly committed to national water reform, including the delivery and implementation of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. The government also remains firmly committed to the full and effective implementation of the National Water Initiative. I welcome the National Water Commission continuing as an expert and independent agency which brings a body of knowledge and experience to bear on addressing key challenges in the ongoing implementation of the COAG water reform agenda.

I again thank the members for their contribution and appreciate the bipartisan nature of the view of the legislation and commend the bill to the House.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Ordered that this bill be reported to the House without amendment.