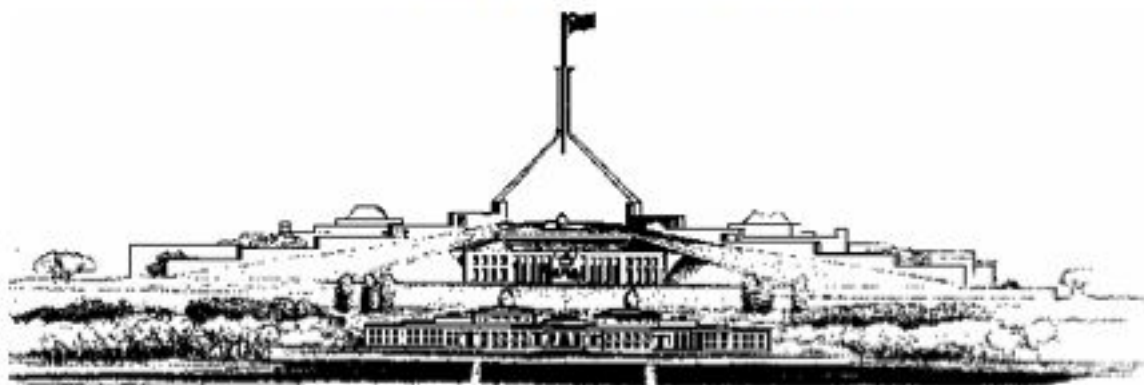




COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Defence: Water

QUESTION

Thursday, 4 June 2026

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

QUESTION

Date Thursday, 4 June 2026
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Questioner Farley, David MP
Speaker

Source House
Proof Yes
Responder Marles, Richard Donald MP
Question No.

Defence: Water

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Mr FARLEY (Farrer) (14:59): My question is to the Minister for Defence. Secure and reliable water resources are fundamental to Australia's food security and our national defence capability. Has the Department of Defence provided any formal input into the review of the Water Act 2007, the 2026 Murray-Darling Basin Plan review and contributed to the development of the Australian national food security strategy, and does the minister consider water security a core defence capability for this nation?

Mr MARLES (Corio—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence) (15:00): I thank the member for his inaugural question, and it is a very good question in terms of looking at those aspects of our nation which go to our national resilience, such as water security, seen through the lens of our national defence. The Defence Strategic Review that was released by the government in 2023 made clear that what we must do, in a way that we have really not done since the end of the Second World War, is look at the connection between our civil economy and our national security and look at ways in which those elements which go to our national resilience contribute to our national security.

The point that the honourable member is making is a good one in the sense that, in any given scenario or contingency—water security, food security—how our civil economy works in the context of that contingency is completely fundamental to whether or not we are able to make our way through that contingency. To go back to the Second World War, this was an idea which was deeply understood, but the Defence Strategic Review made it clear that we really need to be exercising those national muscles again in terms of thinking about the future. That does go to the question of thinking about water security in the context of our national security, as it does in relation to food security. It is about, in a sense, thinking about defence as a whole-of-government effort. Again, that is an idea which is repeated in the National Defence Strategy that we released a month ago. We continue to work with all the departments and all the agencies around our government to look at the way in which they contribute to national defence, and that includes the departments responsible for water security.