

Response to better management of environmental water consultation paper

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Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the NSW Department of Industries Better Management of Environmental Water consultation paper.

For residents of the Murray Darling Basin the rivers are intrinsic to our environment, our culture, economies, social life and health. Following serious allegations around water management in the Murray Darling Basin by Four Corners in July 2017, it is fair to say the wider public lost confidence in state government management of our rivers. The Matthews Report and the Murray Darling Basin Compliance Review have recommended sets of reforms that endeavour to re-establish this lost confidence.

Please find below responses to questions asked in the NSW DPI consultation paper BETTER MANAGEMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL WATER

The measures in this paper are focused on the unregulated systems of the Northern Basin – do you agree that this should be the main focus for the interim solutions package?

I strongly agree the main focus of this process should prioritise the protection of environmental water in the unregulated systems of the Northern Basin.

Do you agree with this mix of environmental outcomes? Are there others we should be considering?

- I strongly support the outcome of whole-of-river system connectivity. This should be a top priority.
- I strongly support Individual daily Extraction Limits (IDELs) to protect planned environmental water.
- I strongly object to a new property right to allow IDELs to be traded.
- Cease-to-pump rules are essential in unregulated water sharing plans to protect held environmental water.
- I strongly object to voluntary agreements being used to protect environmental water.

Do the measures in this paper adequately balance the needs of the environment with the needs of other water users?

Water in a connected system should be the highest priority in the management of the Murray-Darling, with extraction needs sitting below this.

What do you see as the likely barriers to better management of environmental water, and do the measures presented in this consultation paper help to address these?

I have identified the following barriers to management of environmental water:

- A lack of protection of environmental water across catchments.
- Government-endorsed changes to the Barwon-Darling Water Sharing Plan that allows significant extraction which has had significant detrimental effects on environments downstream.
- A lack by all Water Sharing Plans to recognise and prioritise the need for environmental water downstream of the Water Share Plan area.
- A lack of compliance of existing water rules and regulations.
- A perceived social licence by a select number of water users that their extraction is a priority over the environment and downstream users.
- A lack of transparency by NSW Government, including but not limited to compliance issues and the rules associated with each class of licence in each Water Sharing Plan.