



Niall Blair
Minister for Primary Industries
Minister for Regional Water
Minister for Trade and Industry

MEDIA STATEMENT

Wednesday, 26 July 2017

APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT REVIEW

Minister for Regional Water, Niall Blair has announced the appointment of Ken Matthews AO to conduct an independent investigation into the issues raised by the ABC's 4 Corners program on 24 July, 2017.

Mr Matthews is a former Commonwealth Department Head with a long and accomplished career in the Australian Public Service and has significant experience in water management issues. He served as the foundation Chair and Chief Executive Officer of the National Water Commission (NWC) and was responsible for working with the State and Territory governments to implement the National Water Initiative, an inter-governmental agreement to improve national water management.

The terms of reference for the review will cover all allegations raised in the broadcast that involve the responsibilities of DPI-Water and any of its employees.

I acknowledge the issues raised by the broadcast potentially impact on other basin states. I will be writing to my Commonwealth and State counterparts with the Terms of Reference and providing them with an opportunity to comment.

Mr Matthews will also be asked to make any additional recommendations that may arise from the investigation. This includes addressing any deficiencies in compliance and enforcement of water laws in NSW.

If the review identifies staff whose conduct has not been in keeping with Department policies or processes, this information will be provided for decision-making in any subsequent disciplinary processes. Referral of any potentially illegal or corrupt activities identified will be made to relevant authorities.

All staff in the NSW Department of Industry will be instructed to provide Mr Matthews with unrestricted access to all records and to participate in any interviews at his request.

Mr Matthews will provide an interim report by 31 August, which will include a date for his final report based on his interim assessment. The final report will be provided by 30 November, 2017.

The interim and final reports will be made public, however, any material that may be prejudicial to subsequent legal processes may need to be withheld until such time that they can be released.

The Secretary of the NSW Department of Industry has also referred these allegations to the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), which may choose to investigate further.

I reiterate NSW's commitment to the implementation of the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

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