
Bureau of Meteorology Submission to the Inquiry into water use efficiency in Australian agriculture

The Bureau of Meteorology welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry into water use efficiency in Australian agriculture.

Under the Commonwealth Water Act 2007 the Bureau has responsibility for gathering and managing Australia's water data, and for compiling and delivering comprehensive water information to the nation. The Bureau's role is to collate information and assess and report on the availability, condition and use of water resources in Australia. This information informs public policy, programs and practices for better management of the nation's water resources.

How existing expenditure provides value for money for the Commonwealth

Through a suite of water information products and services the Bureau of Meteorology provides insight on both past and future water availability and use.

For example, over the past seven years the National Water Account has reported on water sourced and supplied across key water-using regions, including available water, groundwater extraction, water use in irrigation, and water trading. The National Water Account sits alongside complementary products from other Commonwealth agencies to provide detailed analysis on water use.

Our daily-updated national landscape water balance and water storages services provide local and system-level information on water availability for agriculture. Similarly, our weekly-updated water markets dashboard informs customers on trading volumes and operation of the market, to achieve the goal of moving agricultural water towards its highest value use.

Finally, the Bureau's climate and streamflow forecasting services provide foresight into future water availability and are being used now by irrigation companies and other water managers to assist in planning water allocations and managing supplies.

These types of services are fundamental to any assessment of water use efficiency in agriculture and we are able to assist in future assessments, should they occur. In terms of value for money, in 2015 the Centre for International Economics assessed the annual benefits from the Bureau's water information products as being worth between \$67 million and \$287 million.

Contact Officer:

Dr Robert Argent
Branch Head, Water Information Services