

From: Phillip Glyde
Sent: Sunday, 18 February 2018 9:03 PM
To: .All Staff < >
Subject: Our duties as public servants

Hello all

As debate continues about the recently disallowed amendments over the weekend, you may have seen media coverage featuring two of our former staff members at the MDBA. As those of you who worked closely with either Mary-Anne or Bill would know, they have strong individual views about the Basin and our role at the MDBA.

Our job at the MDBA is to provide our professional views to the Authority's decision makers and allow the Authority to weigh and consider all the science and the evidence, and then balance the various needs of a complex system. Our individual views are often tested by other experts both within and outside the organisation and it is this collective of lines of advice that the Authority considers. This contestability and testing and weighing of advice is essential in making sure that decisions are taken on the best possible information we can find. We have done this for many years and will continue to do so – using the best available evidence to make decisions.

This means that at times, the way forward or the final decision may be different to what we as individuals think should occur. This balance is something that public servants everywhere grapple with—ultimately though I know you would agree that while our work is challenging and complex, it's also very rewarding. Collectively we are making a great contribution to the future of this country. I love working with people who are passionate about what we do but we also need to remember passion should not get in the way of our responsibilities as public servants.

It is frustrating that in the shallow glare of the media coverage that prominence has been given to the very individual views and criticisms of two former staff members rather than the breadth and totality of the published, peer reviewed research of all of us at the MDBA. These former officers do not speak on behalf of the Authority. Importantly they also do not represent the collective and considered views of the diligent and skilled members of staff at the MDBA.

We should all be proud of our great work on the northern Basin review and amendments, together with our accompanying proposals, endorsed by state and federal Ministers, to better protect environmental flows. I am proud of our work and am disappointed that in the recent criticisms of our amendment not one critic has proposed a solution to the problem. They have been very good at identifying the problems, as we did more than a year ago. They've been less successful in developing solutions that are capable of being introduced and being effective. The amendments to the Basin Plan and the accompanying toolkit commitments are the solution.

On a related matter, there were several allegations last year of **unauthorised disclosure of materials** and, again in past weeks, there are documents reported in the media that could only

have been released by officers from the CEWH or MDBA. We are currently investigating this and other related matters.

While there is no allegation that current staff are doing anything other than upholding public service principles and accepted practice, it is important that we build the systems and put processes in place to give our colleagues, our stakeholders and the government of the day assurance we are managing information appropriately.

When material is released it must be accurate, appropriate, authorised and defensible. There are established pathways for facilitating this, including in releasing information to the media. The MDBA has a media policy. The media team is the single point of contact for all media liaison and staff must not provide information directly to any journalist, media outlet or publication.

All staff, APS and non-APS alike, should reflect on their obligations under the [Public Service Act 1999](#), particularly the Directions on [Managing Information](#) under the [APS Values](#) and [Code of Conduct](#). Instances when these are not upheld can result in criminal matters, for example when material is disclosed without appropriate authorisation. It is a serious matter.

If you have concerns about the unauthorised release of, or access to, information you can contact the MDBA Public Interest Disclosure Officers, Vicki Woodburn or Annette Blyton. More information on Public Interest Disclosure can be found [here](#).

Regards

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From: Phillip Glyde

Sent: Thursday, 15 March 2018 5:47 PM

To: .All Staff < >

Subject: Unauthorised information disclosure [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]

Good afternoon all

A few weeks ago I sent an email sharing my views on the importance of protecting information. I was candid about the complexity of these things and the challenges they can present for us all.

Unfortunately, there has been an incident in the last couple of days which means I must again remind all staff of our policies around the unauthorised disclosure of information.

As all MDBA officers should be aware, the MDBA has a [media policy](#) that states that the media team is the single point of contact for journalists for the MDBA. Several SES officers are authorised to speak on behalf of the MDBA and we work hard to ensure that all contact with the media occurs first through the media team.

Where staff speak about our work to the media without authority, our policy states those actions can be considered under the MDBA misconduct policy.

It is important we are able to have open and honest conversations internally as many of the issues we work on are complex and we want to ensure that all of our differing professional perspectives are brought to bear so that we can provide accurate, authoritative and considered advice to the community. This kind of discussion is integral to our role and to the evolution of thinking on water management issues. It's also important we are transparent, and to be very clear, I value transparency and recognise that part of our role is to share information and to build collaborative relationships.

But, and this is an important qualification, **there are limits on the extent to which it is appropriate to share information and to disclose it without authorisation.**

We operate in a legal framework which requires that we respect the information we have access to and that we treat it appropriately. If we can't do that we risk losing the confidence of the basin governments and ministers, stakeholders and basin communities we serve. There are conduits for communication with third parties and media outlets. These limits have to be respected.

So, I re-iterate the advice I gave in February – releasing information without authority, and other than through accepted channels, can have very serious implications for the agency, for our ability to drive outcomes and, on a personal level, for each of us.

When material is released it must be accurate, appropriate, authorised and defensible. There are established pathways for facilitating this, including in releasing information to the media.

All staff, APS and non-APS alike, should reflect on their obligations under the [Public Service Act 1999](#), particularly the Directions on [Managing Information](#) under the [APS Values](#) and [Code of Conduct](#). Instances when these are not upheld can result in disciplinary action, for example when material is disclosed without appropriate authorisation.

If you have concerns about the unauthorised release of, or access to, information you can contact the MDBA Public Interest Disclosure Officers, Vicki Woodburn or Annette Blyton. More information on Public Interest Disclosure can be found [here](#).

Regards

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In the spirit of strengthening partnerships with Aboriginal people the MDBA acknowledges the cultural authority of the Traditional Owners in the Murray–Darling Basin