

Submission to the Senate Inquiry into the integrity of the water market in the Murray–Darling Basin

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The governance of the MDB water market must be completely open and transparent so that all parties, including any member of the public, can know how water is being allocated and extracted and for what purpose and at what costs.

There needs to be an independent watchdog body for people to make complaints to and to audit the system to guard against the corruption that has been alleged. There needs to be greater scientific rigour in water allocations, given that fresh water is the lifeblood of the Australian environment, agriculture and communities.

Under climate change projections, surface water is expected to become scarcer, through changes in rainfall seasonality, distribution and intensity. We need to be establishing rigorous and fair systems of water management now that can adapt to future uncertainty. We need to be seriously evaluating the feasibility of different crops under climate projections – cotton is a thirsty crop unsuited to a drying climate. Food security is of greater importance than cotton.

We must eliminate corruption and mismanagement of water now if we are to be able to manage water effectively in the future.