



Bureau of Meteorology Submission to the Senate Select Committee on the Multi-Jurisdictional Management and Execution of the Murray Darling Basin Plan

The Bureau of Meteorology (Bureau) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Committee.

The Bureau of Meteorology

The Bureau of Meteorology is Australia's national weather, climate and water information agency. It operates under the authority of the *Meteorology Act 1955* and the *Water Act 2007*, which together identify a range of functions that underpin delivery of information, advice, forecasts, warnings and associated services to meet Australia's needs.

The Bureau is an Executive Agency under the *Public Service Act 1999*, and a non-corporate Commonwealth entity under the PGPA Act. The Bureau operates under the Environment and Energy Portfolio and reports to the Minister for the Environment generally, and to the Minister for Water Resources, Drought, Rural Finance, Natural Disaster and Emergency Management on water matters.

The Bureau's role in water management is described in response to Terms of Reference 1.

Responses to Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference 1:

1. Responsibilities in relation to the management and execution of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan consistent with the objects of the Water Act 2007, in particular:

- a. Commonwealth responsibilities,*
- b. state and territory responsibilities, and*
- c. areas of uncertainty or potential conflict in respect of responsibilities;*

- Under the Commonwealth Water Act 2007 (Part 7) the Bureau has responsibility for gathering and managing Australia's water data, and for compiling and delivering comprehensive water information to the nation. In discharging this responsibility, the Bureau collates and analyses water data to deliver reports on the availability (e.g. storage volume and trends), condition (suitability for a range of uses) and use (e.g. agriculture, mining, domestic) of water resources in Australia. This creates a publicly available, consistent and national coverage of water resources, that is used to understand historical water use, the current availability of water and, when combined with climate and demand analyses, the likely future state of water security. This informs public policy, programs and practices for better management of the nation's water resources, including those relating to the Basin Plan.
- The Bureau assists the Murray Darling Basin Authority and the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder to execute the Murray Darling Basin Plan by providing data and information pertinent to the supply of and demand for water in the Basin, including:
 1. recent climate conditions,
 2. temperature and rainfall trends,
 3. climate driver and El Niño/Southern Oscillation (ENSO) predictions,



4. seasonal climate and rainfall outlooks,
 5. specific data relating to heatwaves, fire danger, soil moisture conditions and significant climatic events (e.g. cyclones),
 6. water storage levels, and
 7. water allocation and entitlement trade.
- The Bureau has no formal role under Parts 2, 9, 10 or 11 of the Water Act 2007.
 - The Bureau has no formal role in operational management of water resources but does support water managers with a range of operational tools, particularly in relation to flood management.
 - As a *regulator* under the Water Act, the Bureau works closely with states and territories to manage effective mechanisms for the ongoing supply of water data. Under the Government's Regulator Performance Framework, the Bureau regularly assesses and reports its performance, with the 2017-18 report indicating that the Bureau is either following *Good Practice (GP)* or is *Well Placed (WP)* against all six Key Performance Indicators, viz.:
 1. Regulators do not unnecessarily impede the efficient operation of regulated entities (*WP*).
 2. Communication with regulated entities is clear, targeted and effective (*WP*).
 3. Actions undertaken by regulators are proportionate to the regulatory risk being managed (*GP*).
 4. Compliance and monitoring approaches are streamlined and coordinated (*GP*).
 5. Regulators are open and transparent in their dealings with regulated entities (*GP*).
 6. Regulators actively contribute to the continuous improvement of regulatory frameworks (*WP*).
 - The Bureau's national water information role promotes *openness and transparency* through data collation and standardisation across all Basin states and territories. Centralised and consistent analyses, value-added products and services, and comprehensive water data are made readily accessible to the public.
 - The Bureau publishes the National Industry Guidelines for hydrometric monitoring on behalf of a national Water Monitoring Standardisation Technical Committee, providing a consistent set of water information standards for the country.
 - The Bureau publishes Australian Water Accounting Standards, which provide guidance and explanatory material to assist in preparing, presenting and assuring general purpose water accounting reports.



Terms of Reference 2:

2. The effects, positive or negative or otherwise, of the different approaches of the states and territories to water resource management in the Murray Darling Basin including, but not limited to:

- a. legislation, regulations and rules,*
 - b. management and administration, including differences in management organisations,*
 - c. measuring, monitoring and compliance,*
 - d. enforcement, and*
 - e. openness and transparency;*
- As outlined under Terms of Reference 1, all states and territories provide the Bureau data on water availability, water flow, water use and water trade, which is made publicly available in a consistent manner.
 - The Bureau leads national coordination on water information through a Jurisdictional Reference Group on Water Information. This group provides a forum for agencies to identify their water information priorities, and to consider strategies for continual improvement in the flow of data between states, territories, the Bureau and other water information users. Members have found value in the information sharing and networking offered by this forum, as well as using the forum as an effective mechanism for comparing and coordinating investment in monitoring networks, data systems and water information reporting.

Terms of Reference 3:

3. Complications in respect of basin-wide or cross jurisdiction oversight, including the oversight roles and jurisdictional limitations of:

- i. state, territory and federal parliaments,*
 - ii. state, territory and federal courts, and*
 - iii. state, territory and federally-instituted inquiries and Royal Commissions...*
- This matter is beyond the remit of the Bureau's responsibilities.