



Australian Government
Interim Inspector-General of
Murray–Darling Basin Water Resources

Our ref: D20/313704

Dr Sean Turner
Committee Secretary
The Senate Select Committee on the Multi-Jurisdictional Management and Execution of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan
P O Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir

Further to the evidence I provided to the Committee at a public hearing in Canberra on Tuesday 12 May 2020, I provide the following additional information in accordance with the undertaking I gave to the Committee during my attendance.

Inquiry - Impact of lower inflows on state shares under the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement.

Northern Basin inflows

The Inquiry report contains a reference to impacts of northern Basin inflows on state shares (pg. 13):

“Over the historical record, inflows from the lower Darling have only contributed an average of about 8% of water available in the river Murray system each year”.

The data was provided by the Murray-Darling Basin Authority and reflects the contribution to the Murray from the Darling after allowing for losses/operation of Menindee Lakes. The data is comprised of modelled ‘current conditions’ inflows for the period 1895 to 2000 from the Basin Plan’s Basin Diversions Limit (BDL). Data from 2001 is based upon actual observations to the end of December 2019. Data from January to June 2020 is an estimate – i.e. a repeat of inflows from this time last year.

Stakeholder feedback

Due to the current restrictions in place from Covid-19 it is not possible for me to physically return to the communities as was originally intended. Accordingly, I will be undertaking a series of interactive Webinars on Thursday 21 May 2020 to discuss the Inquiry’s findings and recommendations with stakeholders. The Webinar allows for questions and comments to be made and asked by attendees in real time.

Water for fodder independent review

A key component of the agreement reached between the Australian and South Australian Governments was that a gateway review of Round 1 (40GL) of the Water for Fodder program would be undertaken to inform whether Round 2 (60GL) was able to proceed, either as intended or in a modified form.

The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment and the South Australian Department for Environment and Water agreed the terms of reference for the review. Consistent with the Project Agreement, the review has four lines of inquiry:

- a. water availability
- b. risk exposure of water dependent agricultural sectors across the Basin
- c. the appropriateness of current eligibility requirements
- d. possible improvements to the administration of the program.

The first two lines of inquiry have been investigated by an independent consultant (Marsden Jacobs Associates). The last two lines of inquiry have been explored by the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, informed by a public survey and targeted consultations.

The review reports have recently been finalised and provided to the Hon. Keith Pitt MP, Minister for Resources, Water and Northern Australia, for his consideration.

Yours sincerely

M J Keelty AO
Interim Inspector-General of Murray-Darling Basin Water Resources

13 May 2020