

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

2.39 The committee recommends that the Murray-Darling Basin Authority develop a concise and non-technical explanation of the hydrological modelling and assumptions used to develop the 2750 GL/y return of surface water to the environment, to be made publicly available.

Recommendation 2

2.58 The committee recommends that the MDBA specifically include the predicted range of impacts of climate change on water runoff when implementing the relevant risk management strategies under chapter 4 of the Basin Plan.

Recommendation 3

2.59 Consistent with Recommendation 20, the committee recommends that the government develop a clear research strategy on the future impacts of climate change on water runoff in the Basin. The strategy should also include a process for integrating the results of the research into the adaptive management process under the Basin Plan.

Recommendation 4

2.70 The committee recommends that the MDBA model a range of possible future intercept scenarios and publish the results so that each state can better plan for the impacts of the interception on its overall consumptive water allocation.

Recommendation 5

2.71 The committee recommends that, in undertaking its adaptive management approach to the Basin Plan, the Murray Darling Basin Authority clearly considers, assesses and incorporates all elements that could impact environmental watering requirements. This includes climate change, interception activities, coal seam gas mining, surface-groundwater connectivity and possible negative effects such as over watering caused by increased river flows. This information should be clearly set out in non-technical language and be made publicly available in a timely manner.

Recommendation 6

3.48 The committee recommends that before 2016 the MDBA undertake a thorough review of the groundwater aspects of the Basin Plan including:

- the methodology and the assumptions underpinning the groundwater BDLs and SDLs; and
- the connectivity of all groundwater and surface water resources to ensure that the modelling used in the Basin Plan is scientifically sound.

Recommendation 7

3.49 The committee also recommends that in conducting this review the MDBA should consult with a range of scientific experts. To ensure reliability, the final review findings should be peer reviewed by the CSIRO. To ensure transparency, the results of the review should be published by the MDBA.

Recommendation 8

4.21 The committee recommends the MDBA conduct further research into how effective the works and measures programs are for delivering environmental outcomes and the cost effectiveness of such projects in comparison to other forms of water recovery. This research should also include the socio-economic impacts to irrigation communities of increased levels of 'buyback'.

Recommendation 9

4.22 The committee recommends that the MDBA and SEWPaC provide ongoing public updates to Basin stakeholders on progress in securing water savings from environmental works and measures.

Recommendation 10

4.47 The committee recommends that greater detail on the socio-economic costs and benefits of any proposed constraints removal be presented to affected communities and the public in general. Such information should be publicly updated in a timely manner when changes occur or new information is obtained by the MDBA and SEWPaC.

Recommendation 11

4.48 The committee recommends that further consultation regarding constraints management and the additional 450 GL/y should remain a high priority for the MDBA and SEWPaC. To ensure consultation is adequately undertaken, the committee recommends that the MDBA and SEWPaC develop and publish a strategy that identifies and provides solutions for previous shortcomings (see chapter seven) in the government's consultation process for developing the Basin Plan.

Recommendation 12

5.28 The committee recommends that the government develop a water trading information and support program aimed at helping possible "distressed sellers" understand their financial options and risks relating to water trading.

Recommendation 13

5.40 The committee recommends that the government undertakes explicit auditing and reporting of the extent and impact of sleeper and dozer licences on the Basin Plan.

Recommendation 14

5.41 The committee recommends this audit be publicly released and that updated audit information is incorporated into the MDBA's reporting on the Basin Plan at regular intervals.

Recommendation 15

6.26 The committee recommends that the MDBA commission an independent review of the possible effects of using a range of assumptions of water entitlements types (e.g. high and low reliability) in the hydrological and socio-economic modelling of the Basin Plan. In the case where the results for certain water entitlement assumptions show that the objectives of the plan will be compromised, the MDBA should develop a policy which will ensure that this arrangement of water entitlements will not be realised.

Recommendation 16

6.49 The committee recommends that the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) review the Nimmie-Caira proposal. To the extent possible and in collaboration with the NSW Audit Office if necessary, the review should amongst other things examine the process undertaken by relevant parties for determining the value of all aspects of the Nimmie-Caira proposal. The review should also examine any factors that may impact on the value for money for the government and the tax-payer of the proposal should it proceed. The ANAO should report on this review prior to the approval of the Nimmie-Caira proposal by the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities.

Recommendation 17

7.40 The committee recommends that the MDBA update the socio-economic modelling of the local impacts of the Basin Plan. There should be a strong focus on the communities likely to be most affected by the Basin Plan and strategies should be developed to address the impacts. All such information should be publicly released and presented in a form that is accessible to stakeholders, local

community members, and parliamentarians. This modelling should also include tabular or graphical data depicting the location and volumes of buyback on an irrigation district basis.

Recommendation 18

7.54 The committee recommends that the government develop a formal process for long-term and integrated engagement with key stakeholders on the implementation of the final Basin Plan.

Recommendation 19

7.69 The committee recommends that the MDBA provide a clear explanation of how 'localism' is to be implemented under the Basin Plan.

Recommendation 20

8.8 The committee recommends that the government develop and publish a detailed policy for agricultural productivity, environmental and water resource R&D in the Murray-Darling Basin. This policy should reflect a greater priority in this area and incorporate the specific research areas identified in recommendations throughout this report.

Recommendation 21

8.18 That the Government commission the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences to undertake a cost-benefit analysis of potential water-efficient crops (including non-paddy rice) in the Murray-Darling Basin.

Recommendation 22

8.40 The committee recommends that the government commission research into innovative agricultural soil use and farming practices that will improve agricultural productivity and water efficiency in the Murray-Darling Basin.

Recommendation 23

8.49 The committee recommends that the government prioritise R&D into water infrastructure to meet the needs of farming communities, agricultural production, and the environmental health of the Murray-Darling Basin.