

MDBA welcomes Minister's Statement

The MDBA welcomed the Minister's Statement yesterday on the interpretation of the Water Act as it applies to social and economic factors, and the release of the Australian Government Solicitor's advice that accompanied the Minister's statement.

The Water Act is quite complex. The Authority has, throughout the development of the Guide, sought and relied on policy guidance by the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities and close consultation with the Australian Government Solicitor for legal interpretation. The Guide itself was reviewed by the Australian Government Solicitor before it was released.

The Chair of the Authority, Michael Taylor AO, confirmed that the Authority is closely studying the AGS advice released by the Minister and will clarify with the AGS any divergence between that advice and the position previously advised. "To the extent that this latest advice suggests that the Authority has greater leeway in relation to social and economic considerations than previously advised, we welcome the advice and will certainly take that into account in our further work on the proposed Basin Plan," Mr Taylor said.

As the Minister has pointed out, the purpose of the Guide is to elicit feedback to ensure that all relevant information is taken into account in finalising the proposed Basin Plan. Clarification of the parameters within which the Authority is required by the Act to prepare the plan is an important part of that process.

The Authority has previously announced that it has commissioned further work on social and economic impacts.

ENDS

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