



Australian Government

Commonwealth Environmental Water Office

Ref:

Phillip Glyde
Chief Executive
Murray Darling Basin Authority

Dear Phillip,

The Basin Plan establishes the State's water resource plans as the key mechanism for enabling environmental watering to occur. Based on the information being made available to my Office I am becoming increasingly anxious that these plans will undermine rather than provide for my statutory function, to manage the environmental water portfolio for contributing to the objectives of the Basin Plan. This heightened level of concern is only reinforced by NSW commentary, and the absence of engagement with my Office by South Australia and Victoria on their plans.

I am seeking assurance from your agency that the State's water resource plans will receive an independent and rigorous assessment against the requirements of the Basin Plan, and plans that do not meet these requirements will not be accredited, provisionally or otherwise, and irrespective of implementation timeframes.

Transparency of MDBA's assessment of water resource plans and associated modelling tools is critical to not only assuring myself but also other stakeholders across the basin. A crisis of confidence is clearly evident across the basin requiring those responsible for regulation to demonstrate their statutory function in practice. Community interest groups have demonstrated that they are sufficiently motivated and well informed to instigate measures of public accountability where government officials are unable.

To provide me with some confidence in the water resource plans, I ask that evidence of MDBA's independent assessment of the State's plans and models are made available to my Office as a statement of assurance. I will not be able to support a Commonwealth position on the accreditation of water resource plans without this evidence to inform my position. Ideally, a public statement of assurance by the MDBA may serve to begin rebuilding public confidence in the regulatory process for Basin Plan implementation.

Yours sincerely

David Papps
Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder
November 2017

