
Water Act Review Secretariat
Water Reform Division
Department of the Environment
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4/7/2014

I strongly support Commonwealth Water Act 2007 in the establishment procedures aimed at the sustainable use of water in the Murray Darling Basin. I think the following points are of particular importance for maintaining or strengthening the Water Act in the Review process.

The independent functions of the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder (CEWH) and the Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) are critical to the implementation of the Basin Plan and must be transparently retained and strengthened.

The recent appearance of political pressure for the sale of water highlights the need for the public to be able to have complete confidence in the independence of the CHEW. The decision to sell water should be made only on the basis of improved environmental outcomes. The Act should clearly state that the CEWH cannot use the proceeds of water trade to pay for works, fees, delivery charges, operating costs, and environmental restoration projects.

The consideration of social and economic impacts of the Basin Plan were built into the model to develop the environmentally sustainable level of take (ESLT). These issues have been adequately addressed and cannot be used as a further rationale for reducing ESLT.

Federal and State governments have capped water buy-backs and are not treating the adjustment mechanism for the Sustainable Diversion Limit (SDL) in an open or equitable manner. Further, the Victorian government has demonstrated no interest in the removal of constraints to environmental flows. The overall impression is that the Basin Plan, or at least the intention of the Plan, is under attack. The Review should clearly show how the SDL will be achieved and specify the time frame.

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