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MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

Murray Darling Association welcomes interim report into NSW water management and compliance

The Murray Darling Association has welcomed the findings of an independent review into water management and compliance in New South Wales.

The review headed up by Ken Matthews AO was ordered by the NSW Government in the wake of the Four Corners report 'Pumped', which made allegations of widespread non-compliance with NSW water law, particularly in the Barwon-Darling system.

MDA National President David Thurley said the findings and recommendations delivered by Mr Matthews were common sense and practical and had the full support of the MDA.

"The MDA is a firm supporter of the Basin Plan and is committed to consistent compliance and enforcement arrangements," he said.

"The report outlines a way forward for water compliance in the Murray-Darling Basin that could go a long way toward restoring public confidence in the plan.

"The MDA also backs Mr Matthews' support for concurrent inquiries – including an ICAC investigation confirmed on August 24 - to thoroughly and strongly review all the allegations made and to look at the culture of the relevant government departments."

The report recommends the implementation of a Water Management Compliance Improvement Package, which would include the creation of a NSW Natural Resources Access Regulator to take over water compliance and enforcement functions from WaterNSW and DPI Water.

The report states that any future water compliance system needed to be more transparent, more independent and "considerably more effective than the current system".

Cr Thurley said these recommendations, along with the report's position that as far as possible there needed to be common water compliance arrangements across the Basin, had the full backing of the MDA.

"Our members have always supported a fair and equitable approach to compliance and would welcome consistency across the Basin," he said.

MDA Chief Executive Officer Emma Bradbury said the report was an essential first step in restoring public confidence in the agencies tasked with the implementation of the Basin Plan.

“That can only be done by adhering to the highest standards of integrity and, in the words of Mr Matthews, by reinstating the best traditions of Australian public administration,” she said.

[End]

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