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Mr Peter Harris AO
Review_igwc@dcceew.gov.au

Submission to the Independent Review of the Inspector-General of Water Compliance

Dear Mr Harris,

The Murray Darling Association (MDA) has prepared the following submission to the Independent Review of the Inspector-General of Water Compliance (Inspector-General).

The Murray Darling Association (MDA) is a membership-based peak representative organisation representing local government and the communities we serve across the Murray-Darling Basin since 1944, acknowledging the importance of local governments across the Basin, and the valuable contribution they can make in the formulation of decisions and policy.

Built on a strong foundation of good governance, the MDA works with and for member councils in collaboration with state-based local government associations, regional organisations of councils, joint organisations, and other local government affiliations to provide its members with the means, and opportunity, to actively participate in informing water, and other Basin resource, policy.

The MDA notes that the Inspector-General's functions and powers (as detailed in the Water Act 2007) can be summarised as:

- a) enforcing compliance with the Water Act 2007, the Basin Plan and water resource plans
- b) monitoring and independent oversight of Commonwealth and Basin State agencies performance of obligations in the Basin
- c) engaging with Basin communities on the management of Basin water resources.

The MDA also acknowledges that the Inspector-General does this by:

- investigating and enforcing non-compliance with sustainable diversion limits and assurance of Basin state compliance and enforcement frameworks, through audits and investigations
- supporting the development and implementation of standards and methods to improve the accuracy of water measurement to increase the transparency of water take across the Basin
- enforcing compliance with the Basin Plan water trading rules
- monitoring and reporting on the requirements of the Basin Plan and water resource plans related to the protection of planned environmental water.



The MDA and its members appreciate the Inspector-General's ongoing efforts to engage with the Murray-Darling Basin Communities during the lead-up to the Murray-Darling Basin Plan Review.

The members of the MDA have expressed the importance of ongoing and transparent engagement with the Basin communities. This includes a need for transparency in the development, progress, implementation, and impact of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan (the Plan).

Transparency and Cooperation was raised as a key area of concern and improvement at the Murray Darling Association's 2023 AGM, where the association's members commended the Federal, and State Governments to routinely include local councils, as elected representatives of local communities and stewards of local social, economic, and environmental health and wellbeing, in dialogue and planning related to the implementation of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan in their areas, including government dialogue with third parties, and that this engagement be timely, transparent, authentic, and meaningful.

While the role of the Inspector-General is independent of Federal or State Governments by design, including local councils in such dialogue and planning undertaken by the Inspector-General, and the Office of the Inspector-General of Water Compliance would ensure that local councils are included from the get-go in discussions about Basin Plan projects in their areas, including discussions between state of federal governments and third parties, such as irrigation companies, and that these discussions are undertaken in a spirit of co-operation, collaboration, openness, and full transparency.

Please don't hesitate to contact myself or our National President, Mayor Craig Davies should you wish to discuss the Murray Darling Association's submission, or require further information.

Yours faithfully,



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