



# NSW Water Reform Action Plan

## Consultation overview

March 2018

**Water is one of the most important natural assets in New South Wales. The community, business and the environment all rely on water to survive and prosper.**

In December 2017, the NSW Government released the Water Reform Action Plan in response to the Independent investigation into NSW water management and compliance, conducted by Ken Matthews, AO (the Matthews Report) and the Murray–Darling Basin Water Compliance Review.

The plan will deliver on the state's responsibility to ensure we have an equitable and transparent approach to the management of water for current and future generations.

As part of the development process for the water reforms being introduced, the NSW Government has released consultation papers for community input in three key areas.



### Water take measurement and metering

The NSW Government has introduced a water-sharing framework to ensure water is shared sustainably and equitably between the environment and water users, including urban and rural communities, agriculture and other industries.

To effectively implement these water sharing rules, it is important that water take is accurately and reliably measured. Accordingly, the NSW Government is seeking to implement a robust water take measurement and metering framework.

The consultation paper seeks feedback on particular aspects of this framework—who should be required to have meters, what kind of meters should be used, how reporting should be conducted and who assumes ownership of the meters—as well as the ways in which the framework might be rolled out.

### Transparency measures

The NSW Government has committed to improving transparency in how we share, allocate and manage water. The purpose of increasing transparency is to give all stakeholders confidence that water is being used in accordance with adopted water-sharing laws, plans and licences. Confidence is a prerequisite for sustainable communities, jobs and the environment.

The NSW Government is putting forward several initiatives to improve the transparency of water management in NSW including:

- creating a public register of water information that could cover water entitlements, water licences and water work approvals
- improving the clarity of when water take is permitted
- publishing compliance and enforcement activities undertaken by the Natural Resources Access Regulator.

The consultation paper seeks feedback about how these measures can best be developed to meet the information needs of industry and the wider community, and increase public confidence that water users are complying with the rules.

## Better management of environmental water

The Water Reform Action Plan commits to improving how we share, allocate and manage water, including the management of environmental water. Both the Matthews Report and the Murray–Darling Basin Water Compliance Review declared the need for greater protection of environmental water, particularly in the unregulated river systems of the Northern Basin, which the Matthews Report identified as an area requiring urgent attention.

The consultation paper seeks feedback on the following potential options for improving the management of environmental water:

- imposing restrictions when upstream held environmental water is released
- changing access rules for flows through the Barwon–Darling
- using Individual Daily Extraction Limits to better manage flow sharing
- implementing active sharing of flows on an event basis
- using downstream environmental needs as a trigger to manage upstream access.

Your input will help to ensure that decisions about measures for better managing environmental water are well informed and carefully consider potential impacts on water users in terms of environmental, social and economic outcomes. Consultation on better managing environmental water will continue as part of the development of Water Resource Plans and as options are further considered and implemented.



### Next steps

Your feedback will help shape the legislation to be introduced into Parliament, and the development of these policies. There will also be further consultation on the regulations that will implement the reforms.

## Have your say

The community is encouraged to provide feedback. These responses will be due by 11.59 pm on 15 April 2018 and can be submitted in a number of ways, including:

Online: [www.haveyoursay.nsw.gov.au](http://www.haveyoursay.nsw.gov.au)

Email: [water.reform@industry.nsw.gov.au](mailto:water.reform@industry.nsw.gov.au)

Website: [www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water-reform/consultation](http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water-reform/consultation)

Post: **Water Renewal Task Force, Department of Industry, GPO Box 5477, Sydney NSW 2001**



**NSW Department of Industry**



[industry.nsw.gov.au/water-reform](http://industry.nsw.gov.au/water-reform)



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