

Ref: EC21-000196

Ms Amanda Jones and Ms Ria Pryce
Chief Strategy Officer and Director
NSW Water Strategy
NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
Via email: nsw.waterstrategy@dpie.nsw.gov.au

Dear Ms Jones and Ms Pryce

I am writing regarding the NSW Government's draft NSW Water Strategy (the Strategy).

The Murray–Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) welcomes the Strategy and the contribution it could make to the long-term, sustainable management of the Basin's water resources.

We have reviewed the Strategy in detail, and can see how it is being used to address key challenges and opportunities for water management, in particular:

- **Drought resilience and climate adaptation** – The Strategy sets a clear pathway for how NSW will adapt its management framework to manage the impacts of climate change, which are already being observed across the Basin.
The extreme drought conditions experienced over the past three years have pushed water planning arrangements in the Basin to their limits. Updating of planning and allocation frameworks to manage water more effectively in extreme dry conditions as part of the Strategy is appropriate. The NSW Government consideration of both consumptive and environmental water users during this process is supported by the MDBA.
The proposal also notes the need to better align interstate climate risk methodology and notes that a climate tool will assist in future drought planning and improve community confidence through consistent information sharing across jurisdictions. The MDBA is interested in collaborating with NSW and other jurisdictions in this area.
- **Transparency and information sharing** – The draft strategy's increased focus on building community confidence through provision of better information is also useful and aligns to findings of the MDBA's 2020 Basin Plan Evaluation. Our experience in the Basin has indicated that stakeholders are increasingly seeking information tailored to them and their region, to assist with making better business decisions.

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We encourage the NSW Government to focus on providing quality information to meet user needs and assist them in navigating the complex water management system. The long-term water strategies will be an effective mechanism to share targeted information with communities. The MDBA is interested in working with NSW in engagement activities related to climate. We each have different but complementary roles and thus collaborating will be more influential and effective with stakeholder groups.

- **Science** – It is clear the Strategy focusses on evidence-based adaptive management of the water management system and is based on good science. This aligns with our approach, and we are interested in working with NSW and other Basin governments on better integrating advances in science at the Basin scale.

There is an opportunity for the Basin Science Platform Knowledge Broker to help in this area over the next twelve months.

In addition, the MDBA in collaboration with the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment, and the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder, are working on a range of related science initiatives through the \$20 million Murray-Darling Water and Environment Research Program. This has research focused on climate adaptation.

The MDBA welcomes the opportunity to work directly with NSW on this area over the coming years.

We note that once NSW water resource plans are accredited and operational, reviews to the water allocation framework or long-term water strategies resulting from the Strategy may trigger the need to amend those water resource plans. This will be necessary to ensure NSW water sharing arrangements in the Basin remain consistent with Commonwealth law.

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We thank the NSW Government for providing the opportunity to comment on the Strategy, and look forward to ongoing collaboration as we continue our shared objectives to improve long-term sustainability and resilience of the Basin's water resources.

Yours sincerely

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