



28 May 2018

Mr Brett Walker SC  
Royal Commissioner  
Murray-Darling Basin Royal Commission  
GPO Box 1445  
ADELAIDE SA 5001

Dear Mr Walker,

**RE: SA Murray-Darling Basin NRM Board Submission to the Murray Darling Basin Royal Commission**

The SA Murray Darling Natural Resources Management Board (SA MDB NRM Board) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Murray Darling Basin Royal Commission.

The SA MDB NRM Board believes it is of the utmost importance that the Commonwealth and all Basin Plan States continue to work together to ensure a healthy, working River Murray. Communities in the SA Murray Darling Basin region rely on a healthy, working River Murray for their livelihoods and lifestyles, and the communities' connection to the River Murray landscape run deep.

The agreement reached between Basin Plan States and the Commonwealth in 2012 has the full support of the SA MDB NRM Board. The SA MDB NRM Board is committed to fulfilling its role in contributing to the implementation of the Basin Plan – on time and in full. The SA MDB NRM Board will be contributing to South Australia's obligations under the Basin Plan for the delivery of Water Resource Plans by updating water allocation plans to ensure compliance with the Basin Plan.

To achieve the objectives of the Basin Plan it is essential that all Basin States and the Commonwealth contribute to environmental watering outcomes while balancing the needs of industries and communities. The Board has, for many years, supported local community groups to plan for the recovery of locally important wetlands. In recent years this effort has been further enhanced through collaboration with the Department for Environment and Water and the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder to deliver environmental water to priority sites along the River within South Australia. Further to this the SA MDB NRM Board supports the recovery of the additional 450 GL through efficiency measures.

The successful implementation of the Basin Plan will rely on open and transparent processes that involve the community in decision making. The Commonwealth and the Basin Plan States must actively commit to involving the community in all aspects of Basin Plan decision making. As an example the Board has actively collaborated with our community and Department of Environment on the development of water allocation plans. This active collaboration ensures broad ownership of the plans and that they are robust and innovative in meeting needs of the Basin community as well as that of our water reliant industries and the broader community.

The issue of compliance and enforcement with elements of the Basin Plan is an important one for everyone who relies on a healthy, working River Murray. It is essential that the Murray Darling Basin Authority has adequate and reasonable powers to ensure that all Basin Plan States are implementing the requirements of the Basin Plan. The Board also believes it is important that there is consistency in compliance across Basin states.

The Board recognises the importance of good monitoring and evaluation. The Basin Plan also requires good monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the Commonwealth and the Basin States are able to evaluate the achievement of outcomes. For example in water management in SA, the Board recognises the importance of good metering policies with all water used, except for stock and domestic, being metered. The Board supports a consistent approach to metering across the Basin.

The Board has a principle that penalties are and should be a deterrent. The Board would support a more consistent approach across Basin States as a deterrent for exceeding allocations or addressing the theft of water.

Yours sincerely,

Sharon Starick

**Presiding Member**

**South Australian Murray-Darling Basin Natural Resources Management Board**