



MEDIA RELEASE



Date: 13 May 2014 – For immediate release

Call for key functions to remain as National Water Commission abolished

Tonight's budget has confirmed that the National Water Commission (NWC) will be abolished, an agency that has provided fearless advice, monitoring and leadership on water management in Australia. Water is a crucial economic driver upon which Australia's future productivity and prosperity will be developed.

Water Services Association of Australia (WSAA) Executive Director, Adam Lovell, and Australian Water Association (AWA) Chief Executive, Jonathan McKeown, said the decision was disappointing given the NWC has achieved a great deal in providing national leadership and administering the National Water Initiative (NWI), Australia's blueprint for water reform.

"The NWC's role in industry reform leadership and national performance reporting has provided a more cohesive national approach to the way Australia manages, measures, plans for, prices and trades water. Australia is still the envy of the world in providing transparent and important information for customers, regulators and stakeholders to make informed opinion about water management."

"Abolishing the National Water Commission will weaken our ability to engage Australians on water management challenges through future droughts, floods and with population growth."

"We call on the Federal Government to ensure the key functions of the National Water Commission continue to be supported and funded, in particular the aspirations of the NWI and National Performance Report (NPR). The NPR provided transparent public reporting on the performance of urban utilities and rural water providers and the decision to abolish the NWC jeopardises the future of this independent voice," said Mr Lovell.

Although pleased to hear the Murray-Darling Basin Authority will remain, AWA expressed concern about future cuts to the Authority.

"Both the National Water Commission and Murray-Darling Basin Authority were established to provide independent advice and management. Abolishing the NWC and flagging future cuts to the Murray-Darling Basin Authority, in a nation where water scarcity needs to be well managed, will reduce Australia's ability to maximize the productive use of water.

"The NWI needs renewed commitment from both the private and public sectors. It is crucial that the wider community is fully engaged in using water sustainably in an effort to drive Australia's economic future. The development of new industries, in regional and rural areas in particular, will need the guiding principles of the National Water Initiative", said Mr McKeown.

Media inquiries

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AWA and WSAA also noted the incentives for capital recycling announced by the Treasurer in the budget and said that the potential success of Treasurer Hockey's capital recycling proposal was the direct customer benefits produced in the form of new infrastructure.

"The key issue facing Australia's water industry over the next five years is balancing the need for our water utilities and operators to earn enough to afford the maintenance and augmentation of infrastructure with the capacity for customers to pay", said Mr McKeown.

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