

AUSTRALIAN[®] WATER

ASSOCIATION

WATER INDUSTRY PICKS UP WHAT GOVERNMENT LETS GO

At the inaugural Australian Water Association National Water Policy Summit, over 120 representatives from the water, mining, energy and agribusiness sectors met to discuss the challenges for the sustainable management of water in Australia.

Following Summit discussions, the Australian Water Association will undertake the following actions:

- 1. Facilitate the development of an industry-led National Water Strategy accommodating cross-sector water users to be presented to State and Federal Ministers.**
- 2. Call on all State and Territory governments to make environmental, health and economic regulation of water consistent across all jurisdictions. In particular, the Summit called for measures to reduce the political interference in the decisions and roles of State regulators and water utilities to enable more independent and effective management of the water sector.**
- 3. Convene a Water Regulators Forum to be attended by the State and Territory water regulators to discuss implementing harmonised regulations at Australia's largest water conference, *Ozwater'15*, to be held in Adelaide in May 2015.**
- 4. Lead the development and implementation of a community campaign to evolve consumer perceptions about the main water issues including the value of water in the Australian economy.**

The Australian Water Association (AWA) Chief Executive, Jonathan McKeown, said the Summit provided the opportunity for industries across urban water, mining and agribusiness to discuss how to provide national leadership following the Government's decision to close the National Water Commission.

"Water remains a key national priority to drive Australia's future prosperity. The potential for the development of the Northern Australia and the expansion of agribusiness and the resources sector could all provide great benefits for Australia. The success of these initiatives will be determined by how well we manage our major asset of water.

"Data shows that there is a strong decline in the availability of water over the next 50 years and industries reliant on water, including utilities, are being challenged to be innovative to ensure Australia's ongoing water security both in an urban and rural context.

"With Australia's inherent climate variability, we are no longer just planning for the probable, but now need to plan for the possible. This will affect infrastructure and investment decisions in both the public and private sectors.

The Summit highlighted the need to overhaul Australia's regulation of water in all areas— economic, environmental and health.

"The current regulation of the water industry does not guarantee a financially sustainable model for the delivery of our water services. We need a clear and consistent approach to the regulation of water across all states and territories. This will encourage increased investment in the water sector to secure long term benefits for customers.

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“Given that our State Governments have limited financial resources, and competing demands, we need to look at increasing private sector investment. To achieve an increase in private or public investment Australia’s economic regulation of water needs to balance price and affordability for consumers, against the need to provide a reasonable return to the owners of water assets (be they public or private).

“Australia’s future economic development remains directly linked to our water industry and its impressive expertise. The food and beverage industry, agribusiness, power and energy, mining, and tourism all depend on water and its proper management to succeed.

“With water being a crucial economic driver behind Australia’s future productivity and prosperity Governments need to reprioritise water as a major economic driver. The water sector needs to work collaboratively with all Governments to better inform the community on issues and solutions to improve the way we manage water” said Mr McKeown.

Media Enquiries:

Amanda White

National Manager – Communications and Policy

0403884485