

Committee Secretary
Select Committee on the Multi-Jurisdictional Management and Execution of the
Murray Darling Basin Plan
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600



By email: murraydarlingplan.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary,

Inquiry into the Multi-Jurisdictional Management and Execution of the Murray Darling Basin Plan

The Australian Academy of Science welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Senate Select Committee's inquiry into the multi-jurisdictional management and execution of the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

In February 2019 the Academy provided its report *Investigation of the causes of mass fish kills in the Menindee Region NSW over the summer of 2018–2019* to the nation. The report provided a detailed, multi-disciplinary analysis of factors leading to the massive mortality events in fish near the township of Menindee. While the report considered the proximate cause of these events – chiefly low dissolved oxygen following weather-driven mixing of water that had become stratified in low flow conditions – the report also discussed the broader context of a river system with insufficient water, lowered ecological resilience and inadequate policy structures.

The report is attached to this letter and forms the Academy's submission.

The report made eight recommendations relating to the management of the Murray Darling River System. Those with most relevance to the Select Committee's inquiry were:

5. Improve the health of the Darling River, through adequate and effective planning, which is scientifically informed
6. Return to the intent of the 2012 Murray-Darling Basin Plan to avoid increasing risks of more fish kills and other environmental problems for the Darling River
7. Invest to fill high priority knowledge gaps as the MDBP continues to be implemented, and then reviewed in 2026.

The report goes into detail as to how these recommendations should be achieved, and how progress towards them should be measured. The ecological health of the river system and the value derived therefrom is deeply contingent on careful monitoring, planning and management.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this submission or the Academy's report, or to arrange for the Academy to present evidence at a hearing of the inquiry, please contact me

Yours sincerely

Christopher Anderson
Director of Policy
The Australian Academy of Science

Attachment: Investigation of the causes of mass fish kills in the Menindee Region NSW over the summer of 2018–2019 (Australian Academy of Science, 2019)