



## **Australian Government**

Australian Government response to the  
Standing Committee on Agriculture and Water  
Resources report:

Making every drop count

May 2024

## Response

### Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources conduct an internal review of water use efficiency (WUE) programs to address the following issues:

- minimising delays following submission of expressions of interest to securing agreement and approvals,
- assisting program delivery partners to determine administrative costs and consider mechanisms to reduce up-front costs borne by those delivering programs,
- reducing impediments for smaller irrigators to participate in programs,
- providing mechanisms for irrigators to apply for an extension to program timelines, given the impact of weather and other uncertainties,
- undertaking baseline measuring of regional ground or surface water systems at the commencement of each program, and then ongoing measuring to determine impacts of changed water practices resulting from WUE funded projects,
- ensuring that the assessment process includes consideration of the project life cycle contribution to the financial independence and longterm resilience of the irrigated agriculture sector, and does not skew market crop decisions or create reliance, and
- ensuring defined regular evaluation points to monitor and assess achievement against a long term objective of financial independence for the irrigated agricultural sector.

The Department should provide the results of this review to this Committee no later than 1 June 2018.

### Response

NOTED

The Government notes this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

### Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the Auditor-General consider conducting a performance audit of Australian Government funded water use efficiency programs to assess the design process, evaluation arrangements, and effective and efficient administration of these programs. The Committee recommends that the audit take place in 2018.

### Response

NOTED

The Government notes this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

### **Recommendation 3**

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government act expeditiously in response to the final report of the Productivity Commission's Review of the National Water Initiative (due to be provided to Government by 31 December 2017) and ensure that:

- the final report is promptly made available for public release,
- the recommendations are considered and an Australian Government response is made public by 31 March 2018, and
- recommendations requiring national agreement are considered by COAG at its first meeting of 2018.

### **Response**

NOTED

The Government notes this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

### **Recommendation 4**

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government establish and provide seed funding for a coordinating Research, Development and Extension (RD&E) body to work with the agriculture sector in order to:

- Accelerate the adoption of existing cutting-edge irrigation technologies, and
- Promote innovation and the development of new water efficiency technologies.

### **Response**

NOTED

The Government notes this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

### **Recommendation 5**

a. The Committee recommends that the Australian Government investigate mechanisms to address factors such as the rising cost of electricity and cost of alternative energies which may act as impediments to the adoption of water use efficiency technologies in irrigated agriculture.

b. The Committee suggests that this research be conducted by the Research, Development and Extension (RD&E) body set out in Recommendation 4.

### **Response**

NOTED

The Government notes this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

**Recommendation 6**

The Committee recommends that the Bureau of Meteorology make additions to its weather radar services to ensure up to date forecasting and coordinated information is available in all required irrigated areas.

**Response**

NOTED

The Government notes this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

**Recommendation 7**

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government establish an integrated taskforce to assist Regional Development Authorities to:

- develop targeted initiatives to assist regional communities which are impacted by the local irrigated agriculture sector transitioning to water use efficiencies, and
- ensure ongoing monitoring of the social and economic health of these communities.

**Response**

NOTED

The Government notes this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

**Recommendation 8**

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government require any water efficiency infrastructure funding or assistance provided to set out:

- the defined public good benefit,
- detailed plans for the full lifecycle costings of the infrastructure, including asset depreciation and replacement, and
- a detailed intention of how these lifecycle costings will be funded.

**Response**

NOTED

The Government notes this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.