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Standing Committee on Agriculture and Water Resources  
Inquiry into Water Use Efficiency

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Issue date: 20 December 2017

## Committee tables report for water use efficiency inquiry

On 20 December 2017, the House Agriculture and Water Resources Committee tabled its [report](#) *Making every drop count: Inquiry into water use efficiency programs in agriculture*.

The report makes eight recommendations, including:

- That the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources conduct an internal review of water use efficiency programs by 1 June 2018;
- 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;
- 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;
- 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.
- 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; and
- 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.

For its inquiry, the Committee travelled across Australia for 12 public hearings and six site inspections. The Committee received 50 written submissions from a range of government agencies,



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agricultural and irrigation representative groups, environmental groups, academics, and interested individuals.

Committee chair, Rick Wilson MP, thanked all of the submitters and witnesses who had provided evidence to the Committee, and said “Water use efficiency is a key issue for agriculture and for regional communities across the country, and it is vital that Government efficiency programs ensure that both irrigators and the environment get the water they need.”

Noting the complexity of water use policy, Mr Wilson said that, “The Australian Government and the Australian people need to have confidence in these programs, given their importance to the country and the sums of money involved. That’s why the Committee has recommended that the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources reviews all programs to ensure we are on track to achieve the long term goals.”

The Committee’s report is available on the Committee’s website at: [www.aph.gov.au/agriculture](http://www.aph.gov.au/agriculture).

### **Media enquiries:**

Mr Rick Wilson MP (O’Connor, WA), Chair of the Agriculture and Water Resources committee  
(08) 9842 2777 (Andrew Brosnan)

### **For background:**

Standing Committee on Agriculture and Water Resources  
(02) 6277 4500, [agriculture.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:agriculture.reps@aph.gov.au), [www.aph.gov.au/wue](http://www.aph.gov.au/wue)