

## **Additional comments by Government Senators**

1.1 The Government members of the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee (committee) acknowledge the very real need for communities across the Murray Darling Basin to have confidence that the rules that govern the use of water are complied with. The implementation of reviews undertaken into compliance and enforcement at the state level and by the Commonwealth has seen a range of actions taken over the past 12 months to 18 months.

1.2 In June the Murray Darling Basin Ministerial Council approved the Basin Compliance Compact. The Compact acknowledges that state and territory governments remain responsible for monitoring and enforcing water use and take. The Compact sets out a range of state and territory and Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) commitments to improve the measurement of water take, strengthen compliance and enforcement arrangements, improve the protection of environmental flows and secure the timely completion of water resource plans.

1.3 In respect to recommendations 1-3 of the committee's report relating to the separation of the MDBA into a Murray Darling Basin Corporation and a Basin Plan Regulator, the Government Senators consider these recommendations to be premature. The Productivity Commission is yet to deliver its Final Report into the Murray-Darling Basin Plan and since the release of its Draft Report has held extensive consultations with Basin communities and Basin stakeholders.

1.4 The Government Senators are concerned that there are a range of risks in pursuing a separation of the functions of the MDBA at this time. These include risks to the implementation and delivery of the Basin Plan itself by 30 June 2019. Any separation would also require the approval of all jurisdictions and significant renegotiation of both the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement and the *Water Act 2007*.

**Senator Barry O'Sullivan**  
**Deputy Chair**

**Senator Slade Brockman**  
**Senator for Western Australia**

