



Productivity Commission  
GPO Box 1428  
Canberra City ACT 2601, Australia

Date: 24<sup>th</sup> March 2021

**Re: Submission to Productivity Commission's 2020 draft report on National Water Reform**

Dear Commissioners,

WWF-Australia welcomes the opportunity to provide the following comments and recommendations regarding the Commission's 2020 draft report on National Water Reform.

**1. Draft report findings and recommendations**

WWF-Australia supports the findings and recommendations in the draft report. In particular, we strongly support greater recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's interest in water resource management, including a framework to ensure that major water infrastructure proposals are economically viable and ecologically sustainable, inclusion of measures to address the impacts of climate change on water management and service provision and incorporating the resource sector in a renewed National Water Initiative (NWI).

**2. Recommendations**

To further enhance the governance and effectiveness of a renewed NWI, we strongly recommend that:

- An independent statutory body similar to the former National Water Commission is established to oversee the development and compliance with a renewed NWI,
- A new goal: *'In committing to this agreement, the parties recognise First Nations' peoples' reverence and responsibility for rivers and groundwater systems, and their enduring rights to manage and access water resources'* is included in the renewed NWI,
- The impact of climate change on how water is shared between the environment and consumptive users is regularly reviewed. If the review reveals a disproportionate impact, then the consequences of the impact can be mitigated in a timely manner,
- A renewed NWI must have an increased focus on returning over-allocated surface and underground water systems to an Ecologically Sustainable Level of Take,

- The renewed NWI becomes a statutory instrument similar to the Murray Darling Basin Plan,
- Funding from the National Water Infrastructure Development Fund (NWIDF) and other similar funding programs can be used by state and territory governments for water efficiency programs/projects and to achieve other objectives and outcomes of a renewed NWI
- Funds granted from the NWIDF and other similar funding programs to state and territory governments is subject to their compliance with the renewed NWI objectives,
- Along with government officials, membership of the National Water Reform Committee is broadened to include representatives from environment NGOs, primary producer peak bodies, aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups, academia and other non-government stakeholders

### **3. Conclusion**

As we believe they will enable Australia's water resources to be much better managed, we urge you to incorporate the above-mentioned recommendations in your final report.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further information or clarification regarding the matters raised in this submission.

Yours sincerely,

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Water and Catchment Liaison Officer  
WWF-Australia