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National Water Reform inquiry
Productivity Commission
GPO Box 1428
Canberra City ACT 2601

Dear Commissioners

National Water Reform inquiry Draft Report

Goulburn Murray Water (GMW) is grateful for the opportunity to provide comment on the National Water Reform Draft Report. GMW, located in northern Victoria, is Australia's largest rural water authority and it has been an active and leading participant in water reform since it was established in 1994.

GMW supports the broad findings of the Draft Report, including re-committing to and refining the National Water Initiative to ensure it meets contemporary requirements, including appropriate inclusion and better integration environmental, recreational and Traditional Owner involvement in water resource management.

Climate change and environmental water recovery have increased the scarcity of water while at the same time demand for water, from a drying climate, continues to grow. This, along with competition from new crops in greenfield locations made possible by the water market, is placing significant adjustment pressure on GMW's customers.

GMW's customers have been strong supporters of national water reform. However, at the same time, there is increasing recognition that not all customers have been able to fully benefit from the reforms. This has occurred in two ways. For some it is because elements of the NWI have not been fully implemented for their particular customer group. The Victorian Government's Water for Victoria contains a range of actions that will respond to this.

For others it is, paradoxically, because some of the successes of the NWI have led to uneven social and economic impacts. While numerous studies have pointed to the overall benefits of the NWI, there are many individuals who feel that not only have they not shared in these benefits, they have been adversely affected.

For the NWI to have the on-going support of irrigation communities more emphasis must be placed on ensuring that all community members share in the benefits, either directly or through other complementary government initiatives. Accordingly, GMW particularly welcomes the Draft Report's recognition that there is a need to expand and better target structural adjustment assistance.

Yours sincerely


ACTING MANAGING DIRECTOR

