



Hon Lisa Neville MP

Minister for Police and Emergency Services  
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Commissioner Jane Doolan  
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Dear Commissioner

## PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION'S NATIONAL WATER REFORM INQUIRY

Thank you for the opportunity and the extended time to comment on the Productivity Commission's *National Water Reform Inquiry Issues Paper*. While the Inquiry is a requirement of the *Water Act 2007* (Cth), it's also important advice to governments to ensure the objectives and outcomes of the *Intergovernmental Agreement on a National Water Initiative 2004* (NWI) are being delivered.

Victoria has met its commitments under the NWI and continues to act in accordance with its principles. We have continued reform through *Water for Victoria*, which is the long-term direction for managing Victoria's precious water resources and builds on the NWI and earlier reforms with contemporary actions.

*Water for Victoria* sets out actions to address the challenges of climate change, protecting waterways and catchment health, safeguarding water for agriculture, delivering resilient and liveable cities and towns, recognizing recreational values, and ensuring a robust water entitlement framework. Actions range from flagship waterway projects that are protecting and restoring waterway health, to supporting farmers' resilience with new infrastructure and skills, and building understanding of Traditional Owner and Aboriginal ecological knowledge in water management.

As the Productivity Commission found in its last assessment there is a need to revise and enhance the NWI. It's important that any recommendations in your current assessment consider contemporary policy settings and actions, such as those set out in *Water for Victoria* to ensure we continue to manage water in a manner that takes account of changing community expectations along with new and emerging challenges. This includes:

- making better use of alternative water resources – like recycled water and stormwater – to reduce the impact on our rivers and environment;
- recognising that water plays many roles in our communities, and we must seek to make the most of our water, including for agriculture, the environment, Traditional Owners and Aboriginal peoples and recreation; and
- recognising that water has cultural importance for Traditional Owners and Aboriginal peoples, and we must provide opportunities for greater Aboriginal participation in water planning and management.

A submission responding to each information request in your Issues Paper is attached to assist your team in preparing their report. I look forward to considering the final report and recommendations to governments when tabled in 2021.

If you have further questions, please contact, Jessica Freame, Director, Intergovernmental, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

Yours sincerely

**Hon Lisa Neville MP**  
**Minister for Water**

04 / 10 / 2020

Encl: *Victorian Government submission to Productivity Commission's National Water Reform Issues Paper (2020)*