



25 March 2021

National Water Reform 2020
Productivity Commission
Locked Bag 2, Collins St East
Melbourne VIC 8003

Lodged at: <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/current/water-reform-2020/make-submission#lodge>

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: National Water Reform - Productivity Commission Inquiry 2020/2021 – Draft Report Submission

Leeton Shire Council welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission to the Draft Report published by the Productivity Commission as part of its Inquiry into National Water Reform.

In its previous submission to the Issues Paper to this inquiry, Leeton Shire Council encouraged the NWI to prioritise actions that delivered:

- Policies that optimise environmental, social and economic outcomes for regional communities.
- Measures of success that go beyond the narrow farm gate price and incorporate regional and national economic measures that are sustainable in the long term.
- A regional policy framework for the use of available water, land and regional infrastructure to deliver an integrated and coordinated approach.
- Mechanisms to identify and manage key issues identified by stakeholders.

Accordingly, with regard to the Draft Report,

- Leeton Shire Council strongly welcomes the revised overarching objective in Draft NWI Renewal Advice 3.2: Modernised Objectives on page 44 that includes optimising economic, environmental, social and cultural outcomes and notes this is referenced again in Draft NWI Renewal Advice 3.3: Modernised Objectives on page 45.

This shift from only recognising the value of water at the farm gate is critically important and we thank the Productivity Commission for recognising that economic success needs to be measured on a whole of community / whole of region basis.

We do however consider that *point 5 on page 45 is somewhat unclear and suggest that it could (at the very least) be strengthened by inclusion of the word "overall" after "highest value use"*

- Leeton Shire Council also welcomes the wording in Draft NWI Renewal Advice 3.4: Modernised Objectives in point 5 on page 48 that recognises the importance of community engagement. Engagement needs to be authentic and timely.

- Leeton Shire Council is very pleased that the Draft NWI Renewal Advice 3.3: Modernised Objectives in point 2a on page 45 identifies that a risk based approach to water planning is warranted. However, we consider that the critical link (and associated risk) between land-use planning and water planning not sufficiently overt in the Draft Report. We urge the Productivity Commission to more strongly recognise the nexus between land use planning and water planning. Treating them as mutually exclusive at the policy level serves only to increase risk and reduce the nation's potential to make every drop count.

We look forward to hearing the outcome of this Inquiry and thank you again for the opportunity to provide a submission.

Yours sincerely

Jackie Kruger
General Manager