



Professor Jane Doolan  
National Water Reform Inquiry  
Productivity Commission  
GPO Box 1428  
Canberra City ACT 2601

Dear Professor Doolan

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the National Water Reform Public Inquiry.

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) has responsibility for the *Australian Drinking Water Guidelines* (ADWG, 2011). These guidelines are based on the best available science, and provide a framework for the good management of drinking water supplies. NHMRC has also published the *Guidelines for Managing Risks in Recreational Water* (*Recreational Water, 2008*) and the *Community Water Planner*, an online tool to help assess and manage the risks in remote Australian community water supplies, including Indigenous communities.

NHMRC's guidelines provide nationally consistent standards to maintain public health, with the ADWG underpinning state and territory regulations on drinking water quality. NHMRC's water guidelines also contribute to the National Water Quality Management Strategy, managed by the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (DAWR).

All NHMRC guidelines are approved by its Council whose membership includes each state and territory Chief Medical Officer, which ensures the national applicability of its advice. NHMRC also works closely with the DAWR, the Department of Health, the Environmental Health Standing Committee, jurisdictional health departments and water regulators, and industry groups to manage this work.

Although water quality and public health are not a focus of the National Water Initiative, the provision of safe drinking water through the application of the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines is a pillar of Australian public health. Consideration of health issues ought to be given attention as a part of economic calculations and infrastructure planning. While I have no doubt that the Productivity Commission is well aware of this, the topic of health received only a minor reference in the National Water Reform (March 2017) Issues Paper. I would like to see water quality and health receive more prominence in the final paper in a drive towards greater efficiency.

NHMRC would welcome the opportunity to provide information on its work on water quality, and to participate further in this inquiry as it progresses.

If you have any questions, please contact Samantha Robertson, Executive Director, Evidence Advice and Governance Branch,

Yours sincerely

Professor Anne Kelso AO

Chief Executive Officer

8 May 2017