

SUBMISSION

Interim Inspector-General Inquiry into Management of Murray-Darling Basin Water Resources

16 January 2020



MURRAY IRRIGATION'S RESPONSE TO THE FOUR KEY AREAS OF THE INQUIRY

1. Inflows and Supply into the Murray-Darling Basin:

These have changed significantly when compared to modelling assumptions that underpin both the Basin Plan and the Murray-Darling Basin (MDB) Agreement. This is true in terms of total inflow volumes, and how this translates into available supply overtime. Updated advice is needed urgently on the following, all of which have a direct bearing on the distribution of state water shares: rainfall, inflows and evaporation rates across southern Queensland and northern NSW; Darling River inflows and available water supplies in Menindee Lakes; patterns of rainfall distribution over the Snowy Scheme; and the volume of tributary inflows in NSW compared to Victoria.

2. Delivery of Water:

Patterns of water delivery have changed significantly, with an emphasis on securing a new and ever-growing demand at the South Australian border. Meeting this demand has materially increased the volume of conveyance water needed across the southern MDB. This is a volume that must be met equally by NSW and Victoria, before state shares are distributed. General Security licence holders in MIL's footprint now receive allocations that are less than their legal share because of this historical NSW obligation to meet 50 percent of conveyance needs, irrespective of where in the southern MDB the water delivery demand is located.

3. Water Sharing:

The fairness and security of state shares needs urgent review in light of the changed inflow, supply and delivery demands that have emerged. For example, substantial volumes now cross the SA border annually; however, this water isn't subject to the same operational scrutiny that NSW and Victoria are exposed to. Also relevant, in 2019-2020, NSW will most likely receive a smaller volume of water than SA and Victoria. This is despite NSW being required to make the greatest financial contribution to annual budgets under the MDB Agreement, a proportional assumption that has been carried forward into the Basin Plan.

4. Opportunities for Enhancement:

MIL has a range of assets in its footprint that could be used to effectively and efficiently support whole-of-system river operations and deliver targeted environmental outcomes. Our location in the southern MDB is strategically advantageous to the sustainable delivery of both regional and broader, system-wide outcomes. Existing and enhanced infrastructure in our footprint could certainly be utilised to alleviate a number of the supply and delivery issues we've identified in our submission. MIL's executive is currently working with a range of stakeholders to develop potential options that would benefit both our customers and prospective external partners.