



The Hon. Melinda Pavey MP
Minister for Water, Property and Housing



Ms Helen Minnican
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
Parliament House, Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000


Dear Ms Minnican

I write to you regarding the petition that was tabled on 5 February 2020 by Ms Helen Dalton MP calling for a Federal Royal Commission into the Murray-Darling Basin Plan and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority and the establishment of a public National Water Register to increase the transparency of water ownership across the Basin.

This petition which was an initiative of the SpeakUp4Water campaign was signed by 11,000 people. I would like to acknowledge each and every one of the people who signed the petition and the hardship that is being faced by our regional communities due to the worst drought that has ever affected this state.

This petition was debated in Parliament on 27 February 2020 and consistent with what I said at that time, I will not stand in the way of those 11,000 people calling for a Federal Royal Commission into the Murray-Darling Basin Plan and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority, or the establishment of a National Water Register.

As these matters are national matters, I commit to these 11,000 people that I will work with the Deputy Premier to ensure that we can advocate for these people through the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council and that their voices are heard by the Commonwealth Government.

These matters are important to the NSW Government as well as to the community.

There have been a number of reviews that have already been undertaken into the Murray-Darling Basin Plan which have covered impacts within both NSW and at a Basin-wide scale. These reviews have supported the continuation of the Basin Plan but have acknowledged that there are areas for improvement.

Whilst NSW has considered the recommendations arising from these reviews and continues to implement these in a way that balances social, economic, environmental and cultural outcomes, there are 11,000 people who have made it clear that we need to do more.

A Federal Royal Commission would cross borders, cross jurisdictions and give a clearer picture of the whole Basin Plan. It will provide the opportunity for further insight into how the Basin Plan can be made better for the people of NSW.

The NSW Government already demonstrates transparency in water licencing, allocation and trade. We have a publicly searchable NSW Water Register and Water Access Licence Register which provides information about every water licence in NSW. We also have a free online trade dashboard that provides up to date and detailed information on water trading including water allocation, volume of water being traded and price paid.

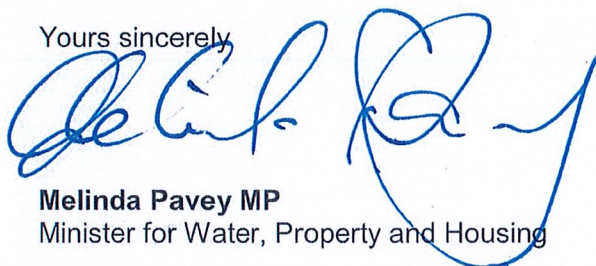
A public National Water Register would need to ensure that information made publicly available addresses potential privacy issues, misuse of information, compromised commercial interests and manipulation of the market.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) is currently undertaking an Inquiry into markets for tradable water rights in the Murray-Darling Basin. As part of this Inquiry, the ACCC will be asked to recommend options to enhance markets for tradable water rights, including options to enhance their operations, transparency, regulation, competitiveness and efficiency.

The ACCC's Inquiry will consult with a wide range of water market participants and other persons involved in water markets in the Murray-Darling Basin and I will be looking to this inquiry to provide recommendations on a national register to provide consistency across the States.

This petition is another forum by which the concerns of our regional communities have been voiced about elements of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan which are not working. I take these concerns seriously and promise to not only continue listening to these concerns, but to continue advocating for a better Murray-Darling Basin Plan that will deliver improved and fairer outcomes for the people of NSW.

Yours sincerely



Melinda Pavey MP
Minister for Water, Property and Housing

CC. The Hon Helen Dalton MP, Member for Murray