

## Murray–Darling Basin water ministers meet in Sydney

7 February 2014

The Murray–Darling Basin Ministerial Council held an extraordinary meeting in Sydney today to review progress on work initiated at the council's November 2013 meeting.

The Ministerial Council consists of the chair, the Hon. Simon Birmingham (Commonwealth), the Hon. Katrina Hodgkinson (New South Wales), the Hon. Peter Walsh MP (Victoria), the Hon. Andrew Cripps (Queensland), the Hon. Ian Hunter (South Australia) and Mr Simon Corbell MLA (Australian Capital Territory).

Ministers acknowledged that the management of the joint programs must be a collaborative effort and that all jurisdictions will continue to work together to ensure their continuing sustainability of the joint venture.

Ministers agreed to a package of reforms to strengthen governance arrangements that underpin the continuing cooperation between jurisdictions, and the management of joint assets, water resources and programs by the Murray–Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) for the participating governments.

These reforms strengthen the clarity and certainty regarding the respective responsibilities of the Ministerial Council, the Basin Officials Committee and the MDBA, and how they will interact with one another into the future. In strengthening Ministerial Council oversight of joint programs, agreed reforms include a Ministerial Statement of Intent and Service Level Agreement between the council and the MDBA, supported by a package of amendments to be made to the Murray–Darling Agreement that give further effect to the new reforms.

Ministers received an update on the two Murray–Darling Basin joint program reviews currently underway. The first is examining cost and efficiency of the River Murray Operations, which includes river management and asset maintenance work by the MDBA and the New South Wales, South Australia and Victorian state constructing authorities, this review is expected to be completed over the next 12 months.

Ministers also agreed that a second review looking into the basin governments' cost sharing arrangements will be fast-tracked, with terms of reference agreed, and is now expected to be completed in April.

Ends

For further information, contact MDBA media: (02) 6279 0141