



Australian Government

Commonwealth Environmental Water Office

**To: Dr Rhondda Dickson
Chief Executive
Murray-Darling Basin Authority**

**From: Mr David Papps
Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder
Australian Government**

**Statement of Assurance for Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder
(CEWH) for 2013–14**

In order to maximise transparency and to provide assurance to other parties and the community that the obligations of the Basin Plan are being implemented appropriately *and in line with agreed arrangements under the Basin Plan 2012 Implementation Agreement*, I have, in my role as the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder, completed a self-assessment of performance against my obligations under the *Basin Plan 2012* and section 34 of the *Water Act 2007 (Cth)*, including (where applicable) identifying progress towards full implementation of the Basin Plan Implementation Agreement and the identification of measures being, or to be, applied to rectify identified non or partial compliance.

I certify that to best of my knowledge, for the 2013–14 water accounting period the information provided in the self-assessment attached to this statement accurately reflects the extent to which I, as the CEWH, was compliant with my obligations under the *Basin Plan 2012*.

Where non-compliance or partial compliance has been detected, I have identified the measures I have implemented, are implementing or plan to implement and any impediments that are outside my control which may impact on compliance with particular provisions of the Basin Plan and section 34 of the *Water Act 2007 (Cth)*.

Mr David Papps, Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder

DAVID PAPPS David Papps 29/10/14
Name Signature Date

Table 1: Self-assessment checklist for the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder (CEWH) (2013-14)

Basin Plan Implementation Agreement Tasks	Timing	Standards and processes for delivering tasks	Compliance Status (Yes, No, Partial) (see note 1)	<p style="text-align: center;">Commentary (refer note 2)</p> <p>(Summary of Note 2: For ‘full compliance’, may provide a good example or comment; for ‘no’ or ‘partial compliance’, must explain the situation, actions taken or planned to ensure compliance at a specified future date, and describe any third party impediments that hindered compliance)</p>
Task 33: Performing functions and exercising powers consistently with the environmental watering plan (sections 8.03, 8.33 - 8.41, 8.44 of the Basin Plan).				
<p>Task 33.1: Perform functions and exercise powers in a way that is consistent with the Basin Plan environmental watering plan.</p>	<p>From commencement of the Plan.</p>	<p>The CEWH will review its operations so as to ensure its functions and powers are exercised in a way that is consistent with the environmental watering plan.</p> <p>This includes acting consistently with the principles to be applied in environmental watering.</p> <p>The CEWH will publish an outcomes framework for environmental watering, which will be reviewed from time to time, that outlines how the expected outcomes from environmental water use will contribute to the achievement of, and be consistent with, the objectives of the environmental watering plan.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The CEWH has published a framework and set of criteria that outlines how Commonwealth environmental water use decisions are made, including how this is undertaken consistently with the principles to be applied in environmental watering identified in the environmental watering plan.</p> <p>The CEWH’s outcomes framework for environmental watering is available at:</p> <p>http://environment.gov.au/water/cewo/publications/environmental-water-outcomes-framework</p> <p>See Schedule 12 report, items 6 and 10.</p>
<p>Task 33.3: Have regard to the Basin annual environmental watering priorities when performing functions and exercising powers.</p>	<p>From the publication of the first Basin annual Environmental watering priorities. (28 June 2013)</p>	<p>The CEWH will have regard to the Basin annual environmental watering priorities at the time that decisions are made to use Commonwealth environmental water. Consistent with the principles to be applied in environmental watering, other factors that will be considered in decisions to make Commonwealth environmental water available for use may include expected benefits, costs, risks (including to third parties), and monitoring and accounting arrangements to support adaptive management.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The primary mechanism through which the CEWH has regard to the priorities is through the <i>Criteria for Assessing Options for Commonwealth Environmental Water Use</i>, which is applied for all Commonwealth environmental watering decisions. Criterion 2.1 requires consideration of ‘<i>the extent to which the watering action will contribute to the achievement of Basin annual environmental watering priorities</i>’, and justification must be provided if a watering action is proposed that will not contribute to a priority.</p> <p>See Schedule 12 report, indicator 10.3 for details.</p>

Basin Plan Implementation Agreement Tasks	Timing	Standards and processes for delivering tasks	Compliance Status (Yes, No, Partial) (see note 1)	Commentary (refer note 2) (Summary of Note 2: For 'full compliance', may provide a good example or comment; for 'no' or 'partial compliance', must explain the situation, actions taken or planned to ensure compliance at a specified future date, and describe any third party impediments that hindered compliance)
Task 33.4: Give information relating to expected holdings of held environmental water.	From commencement of the Plan.	The CEWH will provide information to the MDBA about expected holdings of held Commonwealth environmental water, including quantities, reliability, security class, licence type, limitations, and other characteristics. The CEWH will report on the Commonwealth environmental holdings each month on its website.	Yes	The CEWH reports on the Commonwealth environmental holdings each month on its website at http://environment.gov.au/water/cewo/about/water_holdings See Schedule 12 report, indicator 10.1 for details.
Task 33.5: Report when the Basin annual environmental watering priorities are not followed.	By 31 October 2014 and annually thereafter.	The CEWH will provide the MDBA with a statement of reasons as to why environmental watering has not been undertaken in accordance with the Basin annual environmental watering priorities for the relevant water year. The level of detail of these statements will vary depending on the reasons for which any environmental watering was not undertaken in accordance with the Basin annual environmental watering priorities. The MDBA may publish the statement of reasons on its website.	Yes	Commonwealth environmental water contributed to 7 of the 10 Basin annual environmental watering priorities for 2013–14. See Section 8.44 Statement of Reasons at Table 2 for full details.
Task 34: Targets for managing water flows (section 9.14 of the Basin Plan).				
Task 34.1: Have regard to targets on dissolved oxygen, recreational water quality and levels of salinity when making decisions about the use of environmental water.	From commencement of the Plan.	The CEWH will have regard to the targets as part of the risk assessment for each decision to make Commonwealth environmental water available for use.	Yes	For every Commonwealth watering action in 2013–14 a risk assessment was undertaken, 'including with regard to the Basin Plan's water quality and salinity targets for managing water flows'. The risk assessments were guided by the Risk Management Guidance for the Use of Commonwealth Environmental Water, which specifically identifies the potential risks of Commonwealth environmental watering resulting in the water quality and salinity

Basin Plan Implementation Agreement Tasks	Timing	Standards and processes for delivering tasks	Compliance Status (Yes, No, Partial) (see note 1)	Commentary (refer note 2) (Summary of Note 2: For 'full compliance', may provide a good example or comment; for 'no' or 'partial compliance', must explain the situation, actions taken or planned to ensure compliance at a specified future date, and describe any third party impediments that hindered compliance)
				targets being exceeded, and provides guidance on mitigation strategies. See Schedule 12 report, indicator 14.4
Task 36: Overview of monitoring and evaluation approach.				
Task 36.1: Perform its functions and exercise its powers in a way that is consistent with, and in manner that gives effects to, the principles to be applied in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the Plan.	July 2013 - June 2014.	<p>The CEWH will publish and if necessary update from time to time, a framework that outlines its approach to monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement, in a way that is consistent with the principles to be applied in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the Plan.</p> <p>The CEWH will engage with the MDBA and Basin States on its approach to monitoring evaluation, reporting and improvement.</p>	Yes	<p>The CEWH's approach to monitoring and evaluation and its consistency with the Basin Plan is documented in the Commonwealth Environmental Water Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement Framework (available from http://www.environment.gov.au/aggregation/commonwealth-environmental-water-office)</p> <p>The CEWH engaged with the MDBA and Basin States on its development of a long-term intervention monitoring programme, including its framework and the development of site plans.</p>
Task 37: Reporting requirements (Refers compliance status with sections 13.14 and 13.15 of the Basin Plan).				
Task 37.1: Produce a report on each of the CEWH Category B matter listed in Schedule 12	By 31 October 2014	2013-14 reporting year: The CEWH will provide reports based on its existing data.	Yes	The CEWH's Schedule 12 report was provided to the MDBA by 31 October 2014.

Notes for CEWH SoA compliance

Note 1 – Where, in the opinion of the CEWH, an obligation is fully met the answer is 'Yes'. Where, in the opinion of the CEWH, an obligation has not been met to any degree the answer is 'No'. Where, in the opinion of the CEWH, an obligation has not been fully met but has been met to some degree the answer is 'Partial'.

Note 2 - Commentary is not required where the Compliance status is **'Yes'**; however, the CEWH may provide commentary in these circumstances if desired. Where the 'Compliance status' is **'No'** or **'Partial'**, the CEWH is asked to provide commentary on the details of the situation, the actions it has taken or plans to take that will ensure compliance at a future date and the date that compliance is expected to be achieved. The reporter should also describe any third party impediments out of their control which impact on their ability to comply with the obligation.

Note 3 - Statements of Assurance are voluntary reports to the community provided to the MDBA by agreement, to enhance the transparency of the implementation of the Basin Plan and further promote voluntary compliance. There is no statutory requirement on a the CEWH to produce a Statement of Assurance and Statements of Assurance do not underpin enforcement action that the MDBA may elect to take from time to time. To ensure the ongoing integrity of the assurance process, the MDBA may undertake random audits of Statements of Assurance, either as specific audits or as elements of other audits. Audits will be undertaken in accordance with the MDBA's Audit Policy.

Table 2: Statement of achievements in accordance with the Basin Annual Environmental Watering Priorities (BAEWP) for 2013-14 (Refer IA Task 33.5)

Section 8.33 of the Basin Plan (2012) Principle 1 states: Environmental watering is to be undertaken having regard to the Basin annual environmental watering priorities, Note: There may be reasons why it is not possible in particular circumstances to undertake watering in accordance with the priorities. Section 8.44 then applies.

Section 8.44 of the Basin Plan (2012) requires that: If a person undertakes environmental watering other than in accordance with the Basin annual environmental watering priorities, that person must give to the Authority a statement of reasons why environmental watering has not been undertaken in accordance with the Basin annual environmental watering priorities (8.44(1)). The person must give the statement to the Authority as soon as practicable, but in any event within 4 months after the end of the water accounting period in which the environmental watering was undertaken (8.44(2)).

	Basin annual environmental watering (BAEWP) priorities for 2013–14	Please tick (x), where watering was achieved in accordance with the BAEWP	Statement of achievements in accordance with BAEWP
1	<p>Northern Basin Wetlands: Improve the resilience of colonial waterbird populations by supporting breeding events and improving breeding habitat in the Northern Basin wetlands.</p>		<p>Supporting breeding events</p> <p>Decision: Contingency volumes of Commonwealth environmental water were set aside in the Gwydir and Lachlan to support colonial bird breeding events.</p> <p>Volume of Commonwealth environmental water delivered: 0 GL due to no breeding events.</p> <p>Supporting waterbird habitat</p> <p>Decision: Up to 94 GL of Commonwealth environmental water was made available for use in the Lower Balonne in 2013-14, subject to trigger flows. On average around 16% of water from Commonwealth holdings in the Lower Balonne (as at end June 2014) will eventually flow into the Narran Lakes following a water harvesting event.</p> <p>Volume of Commonwealth environmental water delivered: 22 GL throughout the Lower Balonne system in a flow event in April 2014. Due to high transmission losses in this event, only a small portion of this would have reached Narran Lakes. In addition, environmental water use in the Gwydir system (32 GL), Macquarie Marshes (10 GL) and Lower Lachlan wetlands (23 GL) was used to support waterbird breeding habitat (see below). The total volume of Commonwealth environmental water delivered to the Northern Basin wetlands was 87 GL.</p>

	Basin annual environmental watering (BAEWP) priorities for 2013–14	Please tick (x), where watering was achieved in accordance with the BAEWP	Statement of achievements in accordance with BAEWP
2	<p>Gwydir Wetlands: Improve the condition and maintain the extent of wetland vegetation communities in the Gwydir Wetlands (including Ramsar sites) by restoring hydrological connectivity and a flow regime that meets ecological requirements.</p>		<p>Decision: Up to 60 GL of Commonwealth environmental water was made available for use in four complementary actions in the Gwydir system, including up to 20 GL in the Gwydir Wetlands.</p> <p>Volume of Commonwealth environmental water delivered: Consistent with the MDBA's Guiding philosophy for Basin Annual Environmental Watering Priorities 2013-14 to <i>maximise environmental benefits by delivering environmental water in response to natural cues</i> Commonwealth environmental water was not delivered to the Gwydir Wetlands as no natural flow events occurred. The Gwydir Wetlands naturally experience a wetting and drying cycle. The ecological requirements for the wetlands were met by allowing the wetlands to experience a drying event in the 2013-14 watering year. Other important wetlands within the Gwydir system received Commonwealth environmental water; 32 GL was delivered to the Mallowa Wetlands, Mehi River and Carole Creek.</p>
3	<p>Macquarie Marshes: Improve ecosystem resilience amongst wetland vegetation communities in the Macquarie Marshes including Ramsar listed sites.</p>	X	<p>Decision: Up to 10 GL of Commonwealth environmental water was made available to maintain the ecological health and resilience of the Macquarie Marshes.</p> <p>Volume of Commonwealth environmental water delivered: 10 GL, in conjunction with additional NSW environmental water.</p>
4	<p>Barwon–Darling River System: Improve habitat and provide opportunities for migration and reproduction of native fish in the Barwon–Darling River system by increasing flow variability and hydrological connectivity.</p>	X	<p>Decision: Up to 24 GL of Commonwealth environmental water was made available to support a more naturally variable flow regime in the Barwon–Darling.</p> <p>Volume of Commonwealth environmental water delivered: 13 GL.</p>
5	<p>Lower Lachlan Wetlands: Improve ecosystem resilience amongst wetland vegetation communities in the lower Lachlan wetlands.</p>	X	<p>Decision: Up to 75 GL of Commonwealth environmental water was made available to the Lower Lachlan system in Autumn–Winter 2013.</p> <p>Volume of Commonwealth environmental water delivered: 74 GL (delivered April to July 2013 of which 23 GL was delivered in 2013-14), in conjunction with additional NSW environmental water.</p>

	Basin annual environmental watering (BAEWP) priorities for 2013–14	Please tick (x), where watering was achieved in accordance with the BAEWP	Statement of achievements in accordance with BAEWP
6	<p>Mid-Murrumbidgee Wetlands: Improve the condition of wetland vegetation communities in the mid-Murrumbidgee wetlands through a winter or spring fresh.</p>		<p>Decision: Up to 150 GL of Commonwealth environmental water was made available for a wetlands reconnection event to protect and maintain the ecological health and resilience of the Mid-Murrumbidgee Wetlands</p> <p>Volume of Commonwealth environmental water delivered: Due to constraints and the lack of an appropriate trigger flow, it was not possible to proceed with the planned use. Environmental water use in the catchment was therefore redirected towards outcomes on the Lowbidgee Floodplain.</p>
7	<p>Lower Goulburn River: Improve habitat and provide opportunities for migration and reproduction of native fish in the lower Goulburn River through reinstating a variable flow regime which includes a large 'in-channel' spring/summer fresh.</p>	X	<p>Decision: Up to 215 GL of Commonwealth environmental water was made available for in-stream base flows and freshes within the Goulburn River.</p> <p>Volume of Commonwealth environmental water delivered: 215 GL. The Victorian Environmental Water Holder and The Living Murray also contributed additional water to this event.</p>
8	<p>Mid-Murray River: Improve habitat and provide opportunities for migration and reproduction of native fish in the mid-Murray River, including the Edward–Wakool and other smaller anabranches, distributary creeks and low-lying wetlands throughout the region.</p>	X	<p>Decision: Up to 45 GL of Commonwealth environmental water was made available to contribute in-stream flows to the Edward-Wakool River System, including ephemeral creeks, to support the condition and reproduction of native fish.</p> <p>Volume of Commonwealth environmental water delivered: 17 GL</p> <p>Decision: Up to 35 GL of Commonwealth environmental water return flows were made available to contribute in-stream flows to Gunbower Creek to support movement, condition and reproduction of native fish.</p> <p>Volume of Commonwealth environmental water delivered: 19 GL</p>

	Basin annual environmental watering (BAEWP) priorities for 2013–14	Please tick (x), where watering was achieved in accordance with the BAEWP	Statement of achievements in accordance with BAEWP
9	<p>Lower Murray River System: Improve vegetation condition in wetlands and floodplains and provide cues for native fish recruitment and movement in the lower Murray River system by enhancing in-stream flow variability.</p>	X	<p>Decision: Up to 47 GL of Commonwealth environmental water was made available in the Great Darling Anabranch within the Lower Darling River System.</p> <p>Volume of Commonwealth environmental water delivered: 47 GL, in conjunction with additional NSW environmental water.</p>
10	<p>Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth: Facilitate <i>Ruppia</i> recovery by ensuring appropriate flows into the Coorong; and maintain the connection between the Lower Lakes to improve the water quality in Lake Albert.</p>	X	<p>Decision: Up to 35 GL was made available for a range of watering actions in the Lower Murray to support wetlands and their vegetation, including to raise water levels at the Locks 8 and 9 weir pools; to support ecosystem recovery at a number of Victorian Mallee and South Australian wetlands; and to support black box woodland vegetation at Hattah lakes.</p> <p>Volume of Commonwealth environmental water delivered: 8.7 GL. A number of delivery partners were involved with each of the individual watering events. Delays in the commencement of watering actions resulted in reduced volumes being delivered at some sites in 2013-14. Some actions, such as at Hattah Lakes, has continued into 2014-15.</p> <p>Decision: Up to 300 GL of Commonwealth environmental water was made available to support a broad range of outcomes within the Murray River channel, low-level floodplain wetlands, Coorong and Lower Lakes.</p> <p>Over 207 GL of Commonwealth environmental water was made available specifically for supporting vegetation and biota in the Coorong and Lower Lakes. Return flows from northern Victoria were also traded to South Australia to support environmental outcomes in the Lower River Murray channel, Coorong and Lower Lakes.</p> <p>Volume of Commonwealth environmental water delivered: 639 GL to the River Murray in NSW, Vic and SA (including 235 GL of return flows from upstream watering actions). Water from The Living Murray was delivered in addition to these volumes.</p>

Disclaimer

The publication of the CEWH's Statement of Assurance on the MDBA's website does not in any way indicate or imply that the MDBA agrees in part or whole with the statement. Nor does it mean that the MDBA has found the CEWH State to be fully compliant with their obligations under the Basin Plan. The statement does not in any way act to reduce or alter the authority of the MDBA to enforce the Basin Plan where deemed appropriate.