

**Basin Plan
Water Resource Plan Requirements
Position Statement 12A
Best available information**

POLICY ISSUE	How will the MDBA determine if the best available information has been used?
REFERENCES	Basin Plan s10.49

MDBA POSITION STATEMENT
<p>Assessment of whether the water resource plan is based on the best available information will focus on the significant sources of information identified and described in accordance with Basin Plan s10.49(2). The significant sources of information listed should include any source that materially influenced the way the water resource plan meets a particular requirement.</p> <p>The MDBA acknowledges that Basin States have detailed knowledge about the water resources they manage, and therefore are well positioned to identify and use the best available information in their water resource plans.</p> <p>The MDBA will request explicit analysis of why a source of information is the best available information from a Basin State only where we identify an alternative source of information that is material to the way a water resource plan requirement is met. Alternative sources of information need to be reasonably available to the Basin State, taking into account water resource plan development timeframes.</p> <p>Note that for some specific water resource plan requirements (including SDL method, cultural information and others) other WRP Position Statements are also relevant to assessing whether the plan is based on the best available information.</p>

Rationale

A water resource plan (WRP) must be based on the best available information (10.49(1)). It must also identify and describe the significant sources of information on which the WRP is based (10.49(2)).

Information which doesn't directly underpin a requirement in Chapter 10 will still be required to be the best available if it allows for a requirement to be met. For example, using a national or international risk assessment standard will not specifically address a particular Chapter 10 requirement, but will allow the risk requirements, including in Part 9, to be adequately addressed.

For information that materially influences the ability of a WRP to meet the WRP requirements, determining whether the information is the best available can be facilitated by categorising the information type. In general information will be one of the following types:

MDBA Reference	D15/34614	<i>Accessed:</i>
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POSITION STATEMENT 12A – Best available information

- Government - Acts, regulation, policies etc.;
- Scientific (excluding modelling);
- Modelling (refer to Position Statement 3C); and
- Cultural (refer to Position Statement 14A).

Government documents can be assessed for whether they are the best available information based on their relevance and hierarchy.

Scientific information requires a higher degree of judgement to ascertain whether it is the best available information. Again, judgement of best available information will rely on the existence of other relevant and valid information sources. Considerations include whether the information:

- Is fit for purpose;
- Has been peer reviewed;
- Is a national or international standard;
- Has been subject to external audit;
- Has been endorsed by a professional association or generally accepted in the relevant field; and
- Is the most relevant and/or up-to-date information.

The MDBA will discuss with a Basin State any uncertainty about whether information used is the best available. Supporting evidence submitted with a WRP should also justify any choice between two or more valid sources of information.

MDBA recognises the degree of judgement required for identifying the best available information, and will focus on early and regular communication and negotiation when assisting Basin States on this matter.

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