

Media Release



The Hon Lisa Neville MP
Minister for Police
Minister for Water

Thursday 10, August 2017

CALLS FOR INDEPENDENT PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO BASIN PLAN

Victorian Water Minister Lisa Neville has called for an independent Public Inquiry, and an earlier Ministerial Council with all Basin Ministers, to address the serious allegations of water misappropriation in New South Wales.

The allegations made on the 4 Corners program are deeply concerning and urgent action is needed to restore public confidence in the integrity of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

With key decisions to be made by the end of the year, a special Ministerial Council meeting must be convened as soon as practicable in the coming weeks to address and resolve these matters.

The independent Public Inquiry would have the ability to compel witnesses to give evidence, with recommendations considered by the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council, and then put before COAG.

This will be the best process to understand any broader implications for downstream communities, irrigators and the environment, including in Victoria and South Australia.

Ms Neville was responding to the release of the terms of reference for an investigation by the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA).

The MDBA investigation – as proposed by Prime Minister Turnbull and Deputy Prime Minister Joyce – will not be sufficient in scope to restore public confidence and should be abandoned in favour of an independent Public Inquiry with more comprehensive powers.

The Public Inquiry must examine the role of both the NSW government and the MDBA and undertake a strategic Basin-wide investigation into compliance and enforcement and make recommendations for addressing any local and systemic issues.

Victoria does not want the Inquiry to stop the projects underway to deliver up to 650 gigalitres of offsets needed to implement the Basin Plan.

Quotes to be attributed to the Minister for Water Lisa Neville

“An independent Public Inquiry into the allegations made on 4 Corners is urgently needed if we are to restore public confidence and trust in the Basin Plan.”

“It is not appropriate for the Murray Darling Basin Authority to investigate these allegations because its role needs to be independently scrutinised if public trust is to be restored.”

“The community needs to know the truth behind allegations that water allocated for the environment, towns, and downstream irrigators instead went to a few big irrigators.”