



## Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

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Mr Brent Williams  
Acting Executive Director  
Office of Compliance  
Murray-Darling Basin Authority  
10 Corbett Court  
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Dear Mr Williams

### **2019 ACHIEVEMENTS – STRONGER PENALTIES AND GREATER TRANSPARENCY**

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Murray-Darling Basin Compliance Compact (the Compact) Assurance Report, which confirmed that Victoria has made significant progress in completing its commitments in the Compact in 2019.

Victoria is committed to implementing the Compact and to maintaining our strong compliance record. The Compact arose in the context of serious allegations of non-compliance and water theft in the northern part of the Murray-Darling Basin in July 2017. Victoria already had a strong compliance and enforcement regime when the Compact was signed. This was evidenced by the lack of similar allegations in Victoria and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority's (MDBA) 2017 review of compliance, which found that Victoria has widespread, modern metering.

Our participation in the Compact reflects our strong belief that a cross-jurisdictional approach to compliance and enforcement is needed because, as we have already seen, non-compliance in one part of the Basin can have Basin-wide implications. We also participate because of our ongoing commitment to best practice and risk-based regulation.

The MDBA's 2017 review identified two areas for improvement for Victoria, penalties and transparency. These were addressed in 2019 through:

- Victoria's Parliament passing the *Water and Catchments Legislation Amendment Act 2019* in August, which created tougher penalties and better enforcement measures to act against offences of the *Water Act 1989*, including water theft.
- The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) has improved water information transparency by:
  - upgrading DELWP's compliance web pages and publishing Compact actions as we complete them;
  - making it easier to find information about the water market, including a new Water Market Watch mobile app; and
  - launching a new online platform that provides an interactive visualisation of Victoria's water accounts.

The Minister for Water has also recently announced measures to boost transparency in Victoria's water markets balanced with an appropriate level of protection for irrigators' commercial privacy.

We look forward to continuing to work with the MDBA and other Basin states to strengthen the transparency and consistency of compliance and enforcement frameworks across the Basin.

If you have further questions, please contact Bruce Greenop, Senior Policy Officer, Compliance, DELWP on 03 9637 9511 or via email [bruce.greenop@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:bruce.greenop@delwp.vic.gov.au).

Yours sincerely



**Helen Vaughan**  
Deputy Secretary  
Water and Catchments

13/12/19