

24D137

10 December 2024



Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham  
Senator for South Australia  
Parliament House  
Canberra, ACT 2600  
By Email: [senator.birmingham@aph.gov.au](mailto:senator.birmingham@aph.gov.au)

Dear Senator Birmingham,

**Re: Concerns Regarding the Draft National Water Agreement**

The South Australian Dairyfarmers' Association (SADA) wishes to highlight critical issues with the draft National Water Agreement (NWA), which have come to light during the recent consultation period during which more than 300 changes to the existing National Water Initiative have been identified. The inclusion of concepts regarding cultural water and allocations, with limited detail leave many people struggling to understand.

Water policy is a matter of significant importance to South Australia, and I urge you to advocate for improvements that will secure fair, sustainable, and effective outcomes for all stakeholders.

SADA in concert with a range of other groups including the National Farmers Federation has raised several concerns that resonate strongly with farmers, rural communities, and water users in South Australia:

1. **Lack of Stakeholder Representation:** The draft agreement appears to insufficiently include the perspectives of the agricultural sector, a key stakeholder in water management. Farmers are the backbone of regional economies, and their involvement is critical to ensuring water policies are practical and equitable.
2. **Sustainability and Productivity Balance:** South Australian dairy farmers are committed to farming sustainably. While environmental water use is vital, the draft NWA does not adequately address how to balance this with agricultural productivity. A more integrated approach is needed to ensure that water allocations can sustain both the environment and the food and fiber production upon which our communities rely.
3. **Clarity on Implementation and Accountability:** The agreement lacks sufficient detail about how commitments will be implemented and monitored across jurisdictions. Robust accountability mechanisms are essential to ensuring that reforms are carried out effectively and fairly.



4. **Recognition of Regional Diversity:** South Australia's unique water challenges, including reliance on the Murray-Darling Basin, necessitate tailored approaches. National policies must account for the diverse needs of states and territories to ensure no region is disproportionately disadvantaged.

I urge you to advocate for a revised National Water Agreement that:

- Strengthens the inclusion of agricultural and regional stakeholders in decision-making processes.
- Explicitly acknowledges the critical balance between environmental sustainability and agricultural productivity.
- Introduces clear implementation strategies, measurable targets, and accountability mechanisms.
- Recognizes and accommodates the specific needs of South Australia's water users and ecosystems.

South Australia's communities, environment, and industries depend on the thoughtful and fair management of our precious water resources. By addressing these issues, we can ensure that water reform delivers sustainable and equitable outcomes for future generations.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I look forward to seeing your continued advocacy for South Australia in this vital policy area.

Yours sincerely

Robert Brokenshire  
President