

TBL Assessment

Directorate: Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development

Title of the Submission: Water Resources Amendment Bill - Policy Approval

Summary of Impacts

The proposal seeks to amend the *Water Resources Act 2007* to better identify the ACT's water resource plan and to demonstrate how the ACT is complying with a net sustainable diversion limit for water use under the Basin Plan, an instrument of the *Water Act 2007* (Cwlth). The two amendments are proposed to reflect how the ACT is complying with requirements under the Basin Plan.

- The proposal will largely result in positive social and environmental outcomes to ensuring a healthy well-managed water management system for the ACT and hence its place in the southern Basin of the Murray-Darling Basin system.
- The economic impact is expected to be neutral particularly with respect to the ACT Budget.
- There are no known implementation risks associated with this proposal.

Key to impacts: Red – negative, Amber neutral and Green Positive.

Social

Access to social networks & community activities

- The conservation of water resources as reflected through the ACT water resource plan should ensure sufficient water resources for the community and also an improvement in general community amenity for the ACT's waterways and streams.
- The amendment concerning the water resource plan will also enable stakeholders and the community in general to better under the legislative framework to the ACT's water resource plan.

Human rights

- Nil impact

Indigenous and Multicultural

- Indirectly the amendment will benefit the Indigenous community because the ACT's water resource plan has an important component concerning Aboriginal objectives, values and desired outcomes with respect to water planning and management.

Economic - Nil

Environmental

Biodiversity

- The implementation of the ACT water resource is expected to enhance the biodiversity of the ACT's ecosystems especially by recognising their value and the means to protect environmental assets.

Environmental quality

The proposed amendments will have in general strong environmental benefits and positive social impacts particularly with respect to ensuring a healthy well-managed water management system for the ACT and hence its place in the southern Basin of the Murray-Darling Basin system.

The ACT has a range of requirements under the Basin Plan, a Commonwealth Government legislative instrument. All jurisdictions across the Murray-Darling Basin are required to prepare and submit a number of plans and also demonstrate how

they manage their water resources and comply with set water use limits and provide for the health of the environment. The goals of the Basin Plan are to significantly improve the environmental health of the Murray-Darling Basin. This includes the improvement of a range of environmental assets and aquatic freshwater fish life.

The ACT is a signatory to the National Partnership Agreement for implementing water reform in the Murray-Darling Basin.

Basin States are required to prepare water resource plans for their main river systems in the Basin to demonstrate how they are meeting the requirements under the Basin Plan to improve the management and environment health of their river systems. The ACT through its water resource plan is demonstrating how it is meeting its commitment to improve the environmental health of the Murrumbidgee River system within the ACT and how there will be sufficient water resources for the future needs of the community and also to meet environmental requirements. The water resource plan will set out how the ACT will manage its water use up to the sustainable diversion limits set in the Basin Plan, that is, 42.7 Gigalitres for surface water and 3.16 Gigalitres for groundwater.

It should be noted that since the Millennium Drought the ACT's water use is well below the above net sustainable diversion limit. If the future demand for water access entitlements exceeds the volume available water buyers can acquire a water entitlement from the ACT for water use in the ACT.