

2 February 2024

RE: Submission to the Productivity Commission's National Water Reform

To Whom It May Concern;

I am writing to you on behalf of Desert Knowledge Australia (DKA) and the Goyder Institute for Water Research to highlight our intention to submit a report to the National Water Reform 2024 review.

DKA is a statutory corporation of the Northern Territory, established in 2003 to support research, education and partnerships to deliver better outcomes for people living in arid and desert communities.

Desert Knowledge Australia www.dka.com.au

The Goyder Institute for Water Research, established in 2010, is a collaborative partnership between the South Australian Government through the Department for Environment and Water, CSIRO, Flinders University, the University of Adelaide and the University of South Australia. The Institute facilitates governments, industries, First Nations, communities and leading researchers to collaboratively identify, develop and adopt innovative solutions for complex water management challenges to ensure a sustainable future.

Goyder Institute <https://goyderinstitute.org/>

In June 2023, DKA and the Goyder Institute jointly delivered a collaborative forum at the Desert Knowledge Precinct in Mparntwe (Alice Springs). The *Working Together for Better Drinking Water for the Bush Forum* was funded by the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) and supported by a Steering Committee that included representatives from National Water Grid, Northern and Central Land Councils, Northern Territory Government, Goyder Institute and Desert Knowledge Australia.

The Forum brought together First Nations community members from the Northern Territory and South Australia whose communities have been affected by poor water quality and security; as well as representatives from Federal and state and territory government, state and territory water utilities, and other service providers (e.g. health and housing) of communities, homelands and outstations. The delegates collectively and equitably discussed the problems of drinking water provision and to better understand the social and environmental considerations that are required to improve the quality and availability of water in the bush. Enabling actions to address the challenges were identified, leading to a collective prioritisation of 12 key focus items for actions:

1. National principles on safe drinking water
2. Prioritising health
3. Local First Nations water authority with First Nations voices
4. Community Education
5. Guidance on appropriate technology

6. Community water rangers
7. Joined up planning approach to water
8. National standards for water security
9. Data dashboard
10. National commitment to action (national action plan)
11. Community workforce
12. Community of Practice

The final report will be released in the coming weeks and DKA and the Goyder Institute will provide this to the Productivity Commission as soon as it is available.

Online communications from National Water Grid Authority and Goyder Institute are available here:

- <https://www.nationalwatergrid.gov.au/about/news/working-together-better-water-bush>
- <https://www.nationalwatergrid.gov.au/about/news/first-nations-gifts-need-for-action-better-water-for-bush>
- <https://goyderinstitute.org/drinking-water-forum-addresses-water-security-challenges-in-remote-communities/>
- <https://goyderinstitute.org/messages-from-the-working-together-for-better-drinking-water-in-the-bush-forum-warmly-received-by-federal-minister-plibersek/>

DKA and the Goyder Institute request that the Productivity Commission accept the *Working together for better drinking water in the bush* as a submission to the review when it is released in coming weeks and confirm that the report can be emailed to water.reform.2024@pc.gov.au when it has been approved for release.

Kind regards

Jimmy Cocking
CEO Desert Knowledge Australia

Dr Alec Rolston
Director, Goyder Institute for Water Research

Citation for the report will be:

Cromar, N and Ross, K (2023) Working together for better drinking water in the bush: A report summarising the outcomes of a forum held in Mparntwe (Alice Springs) 27-29 June 2023. Goyder Institute for Water Research Technical Report Series No. 23/02