

This Statement of Intent is provided in response to the Inspector-General of Water Compliance (Inspector-General) Ministerial Statement of Expectations (“MSoE”) issued by The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP on 11 September 2024. The MSoE sets out the Government’s policy objectives and strategic priorities and provides opportunities for the Inspector-General to adopt best practice regulation.

The role of the Inspector-General

The Inspector-General of Water Compliance’s regulatory functions are set out in the Water Act 2007 (Water Act). The independent Inspector-General broadly has the roles of:

- monitoring and overseeing the performance of functions and exercise of powers by agencies of the Commonwealth;
- monitoring and overseeing relevant Commonwealth, and Basin State and territory government agencies’ performance in the management of Basin water resources;
- enforcing compliance with Commonwealth laws that regulate the management of Basin water resources and the provision of water markets information; and
- engaging with the Australian community on the management of Basin water resources.

Independence

The significant responsibility and trust placed by the parliament in the independent statutory role of Inspector-General is recognised and the Inspector-General will approach this with care and diligence.

The Inspector-General recognises the important role of the Australian Parliament and intends to provide the parliament with the appropriate level of information to allow transparent accountability of the Inspector-General role as part of the Westminster system and traditions.

Conflicts of interest are an area where public trust and confidence are at risk and must be actively managed. This includes structural risks to the system, as well as agency and individual risks in the system. Where possible, the Inspector-General seeks to eliminate conflicts of interest in the independent performance of functions.

Values, Vision & Strategy

The Inspector-General has established integrity, accountability and transparency as the core values for the Inspector-General and staff supporting this role to adhere to. These are also the values the Inspector-General is committed to pursuing as an achievable aspiration in other water management agencies across the Murray-Darling Basin.

These values sit alongside the core values for the Commonwealth public sector which apply to staff supporting the role of Inspector-General. Together, these values support a positive regulatory posture and culture.

Through the values, it is the Inspector-General’s intent to undertake its functions in the national interest and pursue the truth in the public interest. The Inspector-General’s vision is for water management and use within the Murray-Darling Basin to be lawful, transparent, and accountable, and the Australian public to be confident in the integrity of Basin Plan delivery.

The Inspector-General will:

- ensure it’s lawful: ensure Basin water managers and users meet their obligations under the Water Act 2007 and the Basin Plan;
- ensure it’s visible: provide the Australian community with visibility over the integrity of Basin water management;
- do it better: raise performance, drive improvements in standards of Basin Plan delivery; and
- make it better: use knowledge, evidence and insights to input into the ongoing reform of water regulation.

The Inspector-General intends to:

- use audit, investigation, enforcement and other powers in accordance with IGWC’s published Regulatory Policy if there is credible information that laws have been broken; and
- use inquiry powers to drive improvement if integrity, performance, or Basin Plan implementation are at significant risk.

A Commonwealth integrity agency

As a designated integrity agency under the National Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2022, the Inspector-General is focused on preventing corruption and misconduct within the scope of legislated functions.

As a member of the Integrity Agencies Group, the Inspector-General is committed to collaboration, co-operation and action as part of the Australian Public Sector integrity system.

Relationships with stakeholders and other regulators

Communities and the environment are at the heart of the Basin Plan. The Inspector-General takes a proactive and ongoing approach to engagement across all stakeholders, including parliaments, government agencies, water users, environmental advocates, First Nations peoples, academia, and members of the wider Murray Darling Basin community.

The Inspector-General maintains important, appropriate and collaborative regulatory relationships with the Australian Consumer & Competition Commission (ACCC), the Bureau of Meteorology (the Bureau), the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA), Basin State regulators, and the Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment & Water (DCCEEW).

The Inspector-General will maintain a Memorandum of Understanding with the MDBA.

As an oversight body, the Inspector-General is monitoring regulatory performance across other agencies in the Murray-Darling Basin. The Inspector-General has agreed to a principles-based approach detailed in a Memorandum of Understanding with five state water regulators. This includes convening the Regulatory Leaders Forum and sharing knowledge with other jurisdictions.

Regulatory relationships are constantly balanced with the Inspector-General's oversight role.

A principles-based approach

The Inspector-General notes the Government's regulatory reform agenda and has implemented best practice principles of the Regulator Performance Resource Management Guide (RMG 128), including:

- continuous improvement and trust building;
- risk based and data driven decision-making; and
- collaborative engagement.

These are key components of the Inspector-General's Regulatory Policy which sets out the roles and responsibilities of the Inspector-General as well as providing guidance on how and when the Inspector-General will use statutory powers.

The Inspector-General aspires to exemplary compliance, including planning and reporting obligations in the Water Act and the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2023 (PGPA Act).

Review

This Statement of Intent will be reviewed and updated to reflect any changes made to the Ministerial Statement of Expectations, or every two years, or at any time as determined by the Inspector-General



The Hon Troy Grant
Inspector General of Water Compliance

5 March 2025

The Inspector-General's regulatory performance and best practice

The Inspector-General is applying a stewardship approach consistent with the principles and practices outlined in the Australian Government's Regulatory Policy, Practice and Performance Framework.

The Inspector-General is engaged with the Australasian Environmental Law Enforcement and Regulators neTwork (AELERT), and other communities of practice to continuously build and strengthen capability and regulatory best practice.

The Inspector-General is completing regular self-assessments using the Modern Regulator Improvement Tool (MRIT), including independent assurance and review, and making the results publicly available online. The MRIT measures organisational maturity and is a measure of continuous improvement over time.

The Inspector-General will:

- consider the matters covered in the Minister's Statement of Expectations in the development of annual work plans in accordance with sections 215E and, to the extent relevant, 215G of the Water Act;
- report on matters set out in this Statement of Intent in annual reporting provided in accordance with section 215Y of the Water Act;
- report on IGWC financial matters in the DCCEEW annual report in accordance with the requirements of the PGPA Act;
- publish the Minister's Statement of Expectations and the Inspector-General's Statement of Intent on the IGWC website.

Interactions between Minister(s) and regulator

The Inspector-General is committed to providing the Australian Government Minister for Water, and the Water and Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council, with evidence-based and timely advice on significant issues and risks within jurisdiction.