



WEDNESDAY 30 2017

UPDATE ON MATTHEWS' REVIEW OF WATER ISSUES IN NSW

On 26 July 2017 the Minister for Regional Water, Niall Blair announced the appointment of Mr Ken Matthews AO to conduct an independent investigation into the issues raised by the ABC's Four Corners program on 24 July 2017.

It was announced that Mr Matthews would provide an interim report by 31 August and a final report by the end of November. It was also announced that while the report would be made public, material that may be prejudicial to subsequent legal processes may need to be withheld until such time that it can be released.

Since Mr Matthews commenced his investigation on 2 August he has engaged a team of four specialist investigators and four additional staff to assist. In four weeks he and his team have:

- met with 39 people;
- received 3150 individual documents;
- inspected sites in Northern NSW; and
- met with representatives from regional communities, community groups, local government, property owners/irrigators, former public servants, environmental groups and senior staff from the Murray Darling Basin Authority and various Commonwealth and State government agencies.

Mr Matthews has completed information gathering for the interim report, and the drafting of this is close to completion. However, the Department and Mr Matthews have agreed that one additional week is required before the report can be submitted to the Department and the Minister.

Mr Matthews said that:

"This will allow me and my team to review the final draft of my report to ensure that no materials or findings within it could interfere with subsequent investigations by the appropriate authorities, or be prejudicial to legal processes. These final checks will allow for the interim report to be released publicly."

Secretary of the Department of Industry, Mr Simon Smith said:

"These issues have raised a high level of public concern and we are ensuring that Ken and his team have the resources and independence needed to undertake this investigation in a rigorous and intensive manner. We recognise that delaying the interim report and its findings by one week could cause some concerns, but we believe it is a better outcome for the public if the extra time allows for maximum possible disclosure of the findings of the investigation."

The interim report will be completed and submitted by Friday 8 September and released the following week.

Media: Steven Blaney | 0487 349 548

Danielle Bradtke | 0429 305 950