

**THE HON TANYA PLIBERSEK MP**

MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND WATER

Ministerial Statement of Expectations to the Bureau of Meteorology**Issued by The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP on 17 January 2025**

This Statement outlines the Australian Government's expectations of the Bureau of Meteorology's (the Bureau) organisational performance as relates to its role and responsibilities as Australia's regulator for water data and information.

Overview

The Australian Government is committed to effective governance and performance of regulatory functions. The regulatory reform agenda aims to boost Australia's productivity and lower the cost of living by ensuring a fit-for-purpose regulatory environment. This is complemented by the 4 priorities of the APS reform agenda, for an APS that: embodies integrity, that puts people and business at the centre, that operates as a model employer, and that has the capability to do its job well.

The Government is determined to manage Australia's water better for the future – for communities, for agriculture, for industry, and for the environment that sustains us all. On the driest inhabited continent on earth, water is our most precious resource. I expect the Bureau to support us as we lead from the front in the face of climate change, delivering critical water infrastructure, fixing the water market, and protecting the health of the Murray–Darling Basin. To support this, my expectations are outlined in this statement across 3 main areas:

- Administration of regulatory functions.
- Whole-of-system regulatory stewardship.
- Support for regulatory reforms.

Administration of regulatory functions

The Bureau is Australia's national weather, climate and water agency and is established under the *Meteorology Act 1955*. While the Bureau has expertise and services that assist Australians to prepare for and respond to natural hazards including drought, floods, fires, storms, tsunami and tropical cyclones its regulatory functions are established and specified under the *Water Act 2007* (Water Act).

The scope of this statement relates to the Bureau's key functions under the Water Act to collect, hold, manage, interpret, and share Australia's water information to ensure government, industry, and the community have access to trusted and reliable information required for their decision making.

In performing its regulatory functions, the Bureau administers Part 7 of the *Water Regulations 2008*. This requires more than 200 organisations to provide water data they collect to the Bureau. The Bureau's products and services, derived from this data, provide crucial insights into Australia's current and future water resources. They significantly enhance efficiency, productivity and sustainability in managing and utilising Australia's water resources – particularly in the Murray–Darling Basin. They also support the Bureau's role in protecting communities during extreme weather events by enhancing available information

and advice about rainfall and river height measurements which support hydrological modelling for flood prediction and inform Bureau flood warnings.

As a statutory agency, the Bureau must act independently and objectively in the exercise of its legislative powers. I expect the Bureau to consider the Government's broader policy framework as it performs its role and responsibilities. In line with the principles of best practice regulation outlined in the Performance Resource Management Guide (RMG 128), I expect the Bureau to apply best practice as follows:

- **Continuous improvement and building trust:** adopt a whole-of-system perspective, continuously improving their performance, capability and culture to build trust and confidence in Australia's regulatory settings.
- **Risk-based and data-driven:** manage risks proportionately and maintain essential safeguards. They do this while minimising regulatory burden, and leveraging data and digital technology to support those they regulate to comply and grow.
- **Collaboration and engagement:** are transparent and responsive communicators, implementing regulations in a modern and collaborative way.

My expectations are further elaborated below.

Continuous improvement, building trust, collaboration and engagement

The Government expects all regulators to commit to continuous improvement in their processes, governance and capabilities, and identify and develop organisational values and a positive culture that supports best practice.

This expectation extends to broader organisational performance and values as these are essential to building trust in the administration of regulatory functions. I expect the Bureau to deliver organisational improvement and build trust by:

- Ensuring it attracts and retains the best and brightest people so that it can continue to fulfill its important national role.
- Ensuring that the Bureau meets its obligations under the Public Service Act and APS values.
- Working collaboratively across government in the delivery of its functions.
- Managing expenditure to ensure financial sustainability.
- Ensuring that expenditure is managed efficiently, effectively and economically in accordance with finance law (including but not limited to the PGPA) and the Commonwealth resource management framework.
- Engaging with stakeholders in a transparent, meaningful and timely way.
- Being responsive to feedback in the delivery of its functions.

Whole-of-system regulatory stewardship

A whole-of-system stewardship approach supports robust and efficient regulatory administration and drives reforms towards fit-for-purpose regulatory frameworks across Australia. I expect the Bureau to support a stewardship approach across the regulatory lifecycle, consistent with principles and practices outlined in Australian Government's Regulatory Policy, Practice and Performance Framework.

While respecting the independence of regulators, I expect the Bureau will maintain close relationships and work with other policymakers and regulators to deliver regulatory policy, practice, and performance. I also expect the Bureau to deliver regulatory systems that are fit-for-purpose, transparent and responsive to regulatory environments and shifting expectations from government and community.

Data, information, analyses and forecasts provided by the Bureau should be easily accessible and fit-for-purpose. Its products and services should be co-designed with policy makers, water managers, water users and communities to ensure they support effective decision-making and improve communities' understanding of Australia's water resources. As the Government works with industries and communities to provide a water secure future, I expect the Bureau to contribute world-leading expertise at the nexus of climate and water science.

It is my expectation that the Bureau contributes to the specific areas of focus outlined below:

- **Water Security:** The Bureau's work with federal, state and territory government agencies to improve reporting on the performance of town water supply agencies is crucial. I therefore expect the implementation of the National Performance Report Indicator Review recommendations to occur swiftly.
- **First Nations water:** As Australia's water information agency, I expect the Bureau to act in accordance with Closing the Gap Priority Reform 4 and partner with First Nations Peoples to ensure data is protected, accessed and managed in a meaningful way. First Nations peoples must be involved in decision making as it relates to access and use of the Bureau's water products and services. Additionally, I ask that the Bureau seek to continue to build on the success of the Cultural Information Pilot in highlighting the importance that Culture plays in water management and to recognise traditional weather, water and climate knowledge developed and passed down through countless generations of First Nations Peoples.
- **Water quality:** When it comes to safeguarding the quality of our water, getting easily accessible nationally consistent information means that government and industry can respond to issues appropriately when they arise. I encourage the Bureau to explore opportunities to work with Commonwealth and state water agencies and other key organisations to better understand how this data can be used to improve the management of water security in Australia.

Support for regulatory reforms

I expect the Bureau to continue supporting priority regulatory reforms, including in relation to water markets and data management reforms outlined below.

- **Water market reforms:** Water market participants and regulators in the Murray-Darling Basin require better data and information. As part of Government reforms to restore transparency, integrity, and confidence in water markets, I expect the Bureau to deliver:
 - a new Water Data Hub – a digital platform for national water data management, which also includes data that specifically identifies First Nations organisations owned water or temporary traded water being used for Cultural or economic purposes
 - a new Water Markets Website – providing water market participants with access to a central public platform for near-real time water market updates, and
 - a new water market data standard – a clear and fit-for-purpose framework that will underpin systems to deliver greater transparency and enforceability of the data being provided to the Bureau.

- **Data management:** The Bureau should prioritise national leadership in water data and standards and provide trusted products and services to the Australian community. I expect the Bureau to implement its Water Information Statement of Ambition to meet the water information challenges of the next decade. It is my expectation that this extends to the information captured under the Bureau's regulatory functions being used to improve forecasts and warnings provided to communities. Through modern, streamlined data and information services, clear national standards and a coordinated approach to water data the Bureau can enhance the use and value generated from the data collected.

Relationship with Minister

The Bureau plays an essential role in ensuring that the Government and I are well placed to respond promptly to any policy challenges and opportunities arising from the administration of its regulatory functions.

As the responsible Minister, I will ensure the Bureau is well informed of the Government's policy direction. In turn, I expect the Bureau to inform me in a timely and accurate manner of significant issues that relate to its role as a regulator and to respond speedily with advice and information when requested.

Transparency

I expect the Bureau to respond to my expectations with a Statement of Intent, which clearly articulates how the Bureau will strive to adopt the principles of best practice for Commonwealth agencies and demonstrate delivery against this Statement of Expectations. I expect that the Bureau to integrate this Statement of Expectations and responding Statement of Intent into its performance reporting processes as required under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*, its Corporate Plan and Annual Report.