



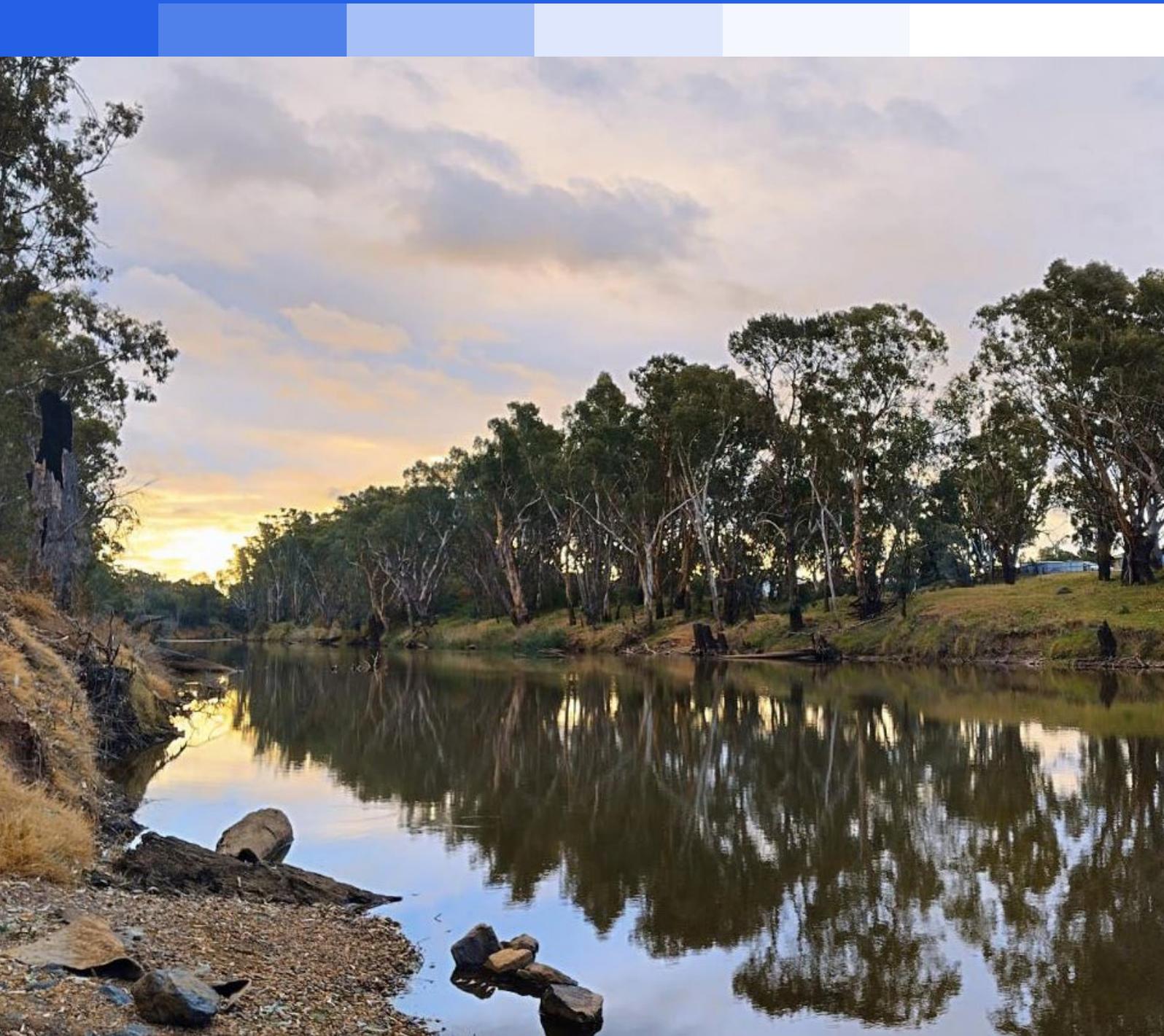
Australian Government  
Bureau of Meteorology



# Water Markets Data Standards

A summary of exposure draft  
consultation feedback

February 2026



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## Introduction

Effective water markets rely on high-quality data to support informed decisions and maintain public trust. The Bureau of Meteorology (Bureau) is developing the Water Markets Data Standards 2026 (WMDS) to ensure water markets information is accurate, consistent and available to all participants.

The Bureau released a draft of the WMDS for public feedback on 15 October 2025. The consultation was held alongside the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water's (DCCEEW) draft Water Amendment (Water Markets Information) Regulations 2026 (the Regulations).

Together these legislative instruments set out the requirements for the information that must be provided about water markets in the Murray–Darling Basin (Basin), who must provide it and how it must be provided.

Consultation summaries will be published on both exposure drafts. This report summarises feedback received on the WMDS exposure draft and the systems that support data provision and sharing: the water data hub and water markets website. It also outlines the Bureau's next steps. Publishing this report shows our ongoing commitment to an open and collaborative approach to developing the WMDS.

DCCEEW will publish its own report on feedback within its remit.

## Background

The Commonwealth water market reforms address the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's (ACCC) water market inquiry findings. The ACCC found that water markets in the Basin lack easy access to timely and consistent information, making it harder for participants to trade effectively and make confident, well informed decisions.

To address these issues, the Australian Government is implementing reforms to make the system more transparent and reliable. As part of the reforms, the *Water Amendment (Restoring Our Rivers) Act 2023* was introduced to strengthen the *Water Act 2007*.

This change established new functions across the Commonwealth government to deliver these reforms. DCCEEW is developing rules that govern how water markets operate.

The Inspector-General of Water Compliance (IGWC) and the ACCC will monitor water markets to keep trading fair. The Bureau is creating data standards and is building the system to collect and share water markets information.



## About the Water Markets Data Standards

The WMDS set out clear, consistent rules for collecting, recording and sharing water markets information across the Basin. The standards are designed to ensure water markets information can be easily understood, interpreted and compared across different regions and river systems.

Developed through extensive engagement, they only include data needed to ensure transparency, integrity and support enforcement.

### WMDS development

Standardising water markets data is complicated. Organisations use different levels of technology, have varying data recording practices and operate under different state-and territory-based rules.

Since 2023, the Bureau has worked with organisations across the Basin to better understand these challenges.

Extensive engagement has brought together a wide range of perspectives from Basin state agencies, irrigation infrastructure operators, water market intermediaries and Commonwealth entities.

This collaboration has been critical in shaping standards that are fit for purpose and practical.

## About the exposure draft consultation

The WMDS exposure draft consultation gave the public an opportunity to comment on the structure and content of the WMDS before it becomes law.

The exposure draft set out the proposed requirements for collecting, generating or recording and providing water markets information. It explained the required information and metadata, how the information must be structured and provided and included resources to help data providers understand data relationships and what data provision might look like in practice.

### Have your say

The exposure drafts of the WMDS, the Regulations and related guidance were made available on a *Have Your Say* website. The consultation collected feedback through a survey with set questions and an option to upload documents.

During the consultation period, from 15 October to 26 November 2025, 16 submissions were received. Industry organisations provided 8 submissions, including from irrigation infrastructure operators, water market intermediaries and industry bodies. Government organisations provided 8 submissions, including Basin state agencies.



## Key insights

Feedback received during the consultation period covered many aspects of the reforms, including strong concerns on timing and readiness for the planned start date of 1 July 2026. With this feedback in mind, the Australian Government has delayed the start of new water markets information obligations for data providers until 1 July 2027.

Analysis of stakeholder feedback on the WMDS identified 3 key areas of concern and interest, consistent with themes raised throughout the Bureau's stakeholder engagement: implementation of the WMDS, data systems and provision and data types. The analysis also identified a new key theme: data publication.

Within each key area of interest, several sub themes emerged, which are discussed in more detail.

## Implementation of the WMDS

Analysis of submissions showed broad support for the overall approach to the WMDS. However, stakeholders raised concerns about how the WMDS will work in practice. Both government and industry stakeholders noted challenges in implementing the requirements, including significant effort needed to collect new information.

### Application

Feedback indicated that responsibility for providing data is not always clear, especially where multiple organisations are involved in a trade or transfer. Stakeholders expressed concern that this lack of clarity could increase the chances of duplicate reporting or gaps.

### Clarity

Feedback showed that the language and descriptions used in the WMDS can be difficult to understand. Stakeholders noted that some key terms are hard to interpret, especially where the definitions are spread across different legislative documents, making them hard to find.

Stakeholders also raised concerns about understanding what obligations mean in practice. The terms used in the exposure drafts are not always the same as those used across Basin states and territories, which adds to this difficulty.

## Data systems and provision

Submissions showed that meeting the new data requirements will be challenging. Feedback highlighted significant operational pressures, including the need to upgrade manual processes, manage competing organisational priorities, cover system upgrade costs and address potential impacts on customers.

### Data security and privacy

Analysis of submissions identified privacy and security as top priorities. Stakeholders emphasised that keeping information safe is essential. They expressed reluctance to collect additional private information from customers and store it in their own systems as they perceive this to increase their risk exposure in relation to security breaches.

Stakeholders also called for clear and transparent processes explaining how personal information held within Bureau systems is protected and how data breaches will be managed by the Bureau.

### Technical support

Submissions continued to highlight that technical readiness is a significant challenge. Analysis of submissions found that data providers seek further support, including technical assistance and funding, to get their systems ready.

Stakeholders identified access to detailed technical information, such as schemas, templates, a metadata elements list that is easy to sort and search and test environments, as helpful for preparation.

### Error-correction

Submissions indicated that the proposed error-correction processes lack clarity. Stakeholders requested more guidance on what to do when mistakes occur and how corrections will work in practice.

## Data types (metadata elements)

Submissions showed a clear understanding that metadata elements in the WMDS are essential for accurate reporting and interoperability. However, analysis found concerns about the number required and the effort needed to collect them. Many submissions noted the metadata elements not currently collected, which create additional challenges. Stakeholders also questioned the purpose and value of some metadata elements included in the WMDS, noting that the benefits are not always clear.

### Unique identifiers

Feedback highlighted uncertainty around unique identifiers. Stakeholders requested further clarification on how they will be generated, used and managed.

### Controlled lists

Feedback supported the use of controlled lists to improve standardisation. However, submissions noted that controlled lists need to be aligned with state and territory terminology. Detailed feedback identified areas where the lists currently do not align.

Some submissions argued that controlled list values are not mutually exclusive. This raised concerns of uncertainty for users when choosing appropriate values.

Feedback noted that the controlled lists will need regular updates to stay consistent with state and territory terminology. Submissions called for a clear process to keep controlled lists up to date.

## Data publication

Submissions agreed with the need to publish data in support of transparency. However, some emphasised the importance of clearly communicating the meaning and context of published information, as well as the need for strong copyright and privacy protections.

### Presentation

Feedback highlighted that published data needs to be meaningful and easy to interpret. Submissions outlined that comparability across jurisdictions, consistent presentation and clear explanatory material are essential to help people understand and use the information correctly.

### Context

Submissions clearly stated that published information needs the right context and supporting detail to be useful. Stakeholders raised concerns that incomplete or misleading pre-trade data could undermine confidence or create opportunities for market manipulation. They noted that missing key information such as fees, commissions or the impact of trading rules, may confuse users and reduce the value of the data.

### Public vs private data

In addition to information on how personal information will be protected, submissions called for clearer guidance on what water markets data will be made publicly available and which data will only be disclosed to the IGWC and the ACCC.

### Data licensing and copyright

Analysis of submissions showed that clear copyright and data licensing arrangements are needed to explain how published data can be accessed, shared and reused. Feedback highlighted concerns that without clear licensing, data providers and users may be unsure about their legal obligations or may be hesitant to provide or use the data. This uncertainty could limit the value and transparency that publication aims to support.

## Next steps

We heard clearly through the exposure draft consultation that stakeholders need additional guidance to help them understand and meet the new requirements. While not all suggestions for change to the WMDS can be incorporated, all feedback will be carefully considered as we finalise the WMDS and continue development of the water data hub and the water markets website.

The sections below outline what you can expect to see going forward.

## WMDS structure

We will assign new identifiers to the metadata elements. The numbers used in the exposure draft were carried over from the identifiers used during the consultation process. Now that the requirements are firmed up these identifiers will be updated to make them easier to understand and use.

The metadata elements listed in Schedules 1, 2 and 3 will be reordered to improve clarity and help users identify the relevant requirements more easily.

There will also be some minor adjustments to several metadata element names, requirement conditions and controlled lists.

We are responding to feedback on the controlled lists. We are working with relevant organisations to ensure they more accurately and adequately reflect state and territory terminology.

## Guidance

We are developing further guidance to support the implementation of the WMDS and continue to update our current implementation material. We are also working directly with data providers to answer questions.

In response to the feedback provided during the exposure draft consultation process, we will develop guidance material to:

- clarify terminology by creating better linkages to key terms making them easier to find.
- explain obligations in practice, including how requirements align with state and territory terminology.
- outline how personal information is protected and how data breaches will be managed.
- clarify error correction processes, including what to do when mistakes occur and how corrections will be applied.
- better explain how unique identifiers will work, including how they are generated, used, and maintained.
- detail how controlled lists will be kept up to date, and how they will align with state and territory terminology.
- better highlight what data will be publicly released and what will be available only to IGWC and ACCC.
- provide clear copyright and data licensing information so users understand how published data can be accessed, shared, and reused.



## Water data hub and water markets website testing

We will make further technical materials available, including schemas, templates, sortable metadata lists and provide access to test environments for data provision. We will update these materials as needed to reflect changes and support implementation.

Before data provision requirements start, we will provide guidance and onboarding support to help data providers learn how to use the water data hub.

For data providers seeking an early view of the systems, the next round of water data hub user testing starts in March 2026. Interested data providers can register to take part by emailing [regulations@bom.gov.au](mailto:regulations@bom.gov.au).

Testing will give data providers the opportunity to trial the system and better understand how it works in practice.

## Additional support

We encourage all data providers to contact us whenever further assistance is needed. Please reach out to [regulations@bom.gov.au](mailto:regulations@bom.gov.au).

## Acknowledgements

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the exposure draft consultation. Your insights and feedback have played an important role in shaping the WMDS.

Our work on the WMDS, water data hub and water markets website also builds on the extensive engagement undertaken over the past few years. This engagement has helped us understand the needs and perspectives of all those impacted by the water market reforms.

We appreciate the time and effort stakeholders have invested throughout this process, and we acknowledge DCCEE, IGWC and ACCC as valued partners in supporting this work.

We look forward to continuing to work together to strengthen trust in water markets and deliver ongoing improvements.

## Resources

More information about the Bureau's development and implementation of the WMDS, water data hub and water markets website is available on our website: [Water market reforms](#).

Read summary reports on previous stakeholder engagement:

- [Consultation Summary of Findings](#) (Bureau, June 2023)
- [Overview of Stakeholder Engagement and Feedback](#) (Bureau, October 2024)

More information about the overall water market reforms is available on DCCEE's website: [Water market reform](#).

Other reports to the water market reforms can be found here:

- [Murray–Darling Basin water markets inquiry Final report](#) (ACCC, March 2021)
- [Water Market Reform: Final Roadmap](#) (DCCEE, October 2022)

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