



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **RGA supports the compliance principles from the Matthews Report**

The RGA supports an effective and enforced compliance regime for all water users. This is a key principle that underpins the integrity of the property right to water that was first envisaged by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in 1994 and reaffirmed through the National Water Initiative in 2004.

The Matthews Report has confirmed compliance deficiencies regarding the allegations aired on Four Corners although it is critical that the public understands that his report is not reflective of the regulated system, such as the Murray and Murrumbidgee valleys, where metering standards are world class.

"Our members know that they are subject to a highly accurate and effective real-time metering and compliance regime. That is the way it should be for all water users across Australia," RGA President Jeremy Morton said.

The RGA supports the recommendation to separate responsibility for compliance from policy and regulation, but questions the value of creating a NSW Natural Resources Access Regulator. Mr. Matthews has identified that transparency is an issue within the current regulatory framework so we question how adding another regulator will improve that deficiency.

"One of our members' greatest frustrations is the lack of transparency relating to water management. Principles of openness, honesty and accountability should be the objective rather than adding another regulator to the many already involved in water management such as ACCC, MDBA, ANAO, IPART, DPI Water, Water NSW, ICAC and local irrigation companies, more complexity and cost is not the solution." Mr. Morton said

Mr. Matthews's statement that "the overall standard of NSW compliance and enforcement work has been poor" is unfortunate, as it doesn't reconcile with the lived reality of irrigators in the Murray and Murrumbidgee valleys.

"Such a broad statement from a review with quite narrow terms of reference is something the RGA would like to better understand. The RGA is more than willing to provide feedback on the compliance reality for our members," Mr. Morton said.

The NSW Government must address the specific allegations as a matter of urgency. "Whilst these allegations remain unresolved the integrity of all irrigators across NSW is being unfairly diminished and that is absolutely unacceptable," Mr. Morton concluded.

**Ends**

**Media Contact: Courtney Dillon, Communications and Policy Officer – 0417 037 162  
Jeremy Morton, RGA President – 0429 873 230**