



# Building water resilience

## A Sustainable Water Institute for Australia

### Water-sensitive urban design | Efficiency | Recycling

Australia is the driest inhabited continent on Earth, making it the perfect place for water innovation. The Greens will establish a Sustainable Water Institute, providing critical research funds to improve urban water use, build our water resilience and protect our precious national resources.

Clean, adequate and affordable water is essential for a healthy society. Australia is the driest inhabited continent on Earth, and our water supplies are coming under increasing pressure from mining, development and climate change. It is critical that we shift to more sustainable water use practices. By reducing Australia's reliance on our precious environment, we will better protect our unique rivers and groundwater systems such as the Murray-Darling and Great Artesian Basins.

The Greens are committed to the Murray-Darling Basin Plan (MDBP). Australia is already seeing positive outcomes from the MDBP, including improved freshwater flows. These keep the Murray mouth open, and wetlands replenished, leading to healthier vegetation and increased numbers of waterbirds and fish. The MDBP has been an important step towards improved environmental outcomes for our water systems, but we must do more.

In 2015 a Senate inquiry reported that every year 3,000 billion litres of stormwater makes its way into our waterways and the sea. This equates to more water than what is used by all Australian cities combined.<sup>1</sup> The Greens will take action by investing in innovative research projects like harvesting stormwater, and will shift Australia away from inefficient practices.

## > SUSTAINABLE WATER INSTITUTE

From 2017 the Greens will establish a Sustainable Water Institute. This research hub, based in Adelaide, will administer \$25 million per year to improve urban water use and build water resilience. The Institute would advance research on:

- Water-sensitive urban design
- Sustainable agriculture
- Water recycling
- Water efficiency
- Stormwater harvesting.

By investing in world-leading research, we can take action to improve our water resilience and reduce our burden on the environment.

## > BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

The Sustainable Water Institute has been costed by the Parliamentary Budget Office at \$26.7 million per year.

## > WATER MATTERS – ALL OF THE TIME

Water is a crucial issue, but the Liberal and Labor parties only seem to care when it's scarce. Neither has prioritised our water resilience or water-sensitive urban design, particularly harvesting stormwater. The Australian Guidelines for Urban Stormwater Management are 16 years old, highlighting how little attention urban water resilience receives from both the Liberals and Labor.

Coupled with this lack of leadership, we are seeing poor investment choices being made. Recently the Liberals and Labor teamed up in Canberra to reduce water buybacks for the MDBP. Instead their focus was to invest in infrastructure, despite research demonstrating that water buybacks are the most cost-effective option.

State governments have also spent billions building energy-hungry desalination plants, which are risky to the marine environment. To rub salt into the wound, the plants have largely sat idle since they were built. Imagine what could be achieved if billions were instead invested into 21<sup>st</sup> century practices, where our energy and water needs were integrated rather than put in competition with each other.

## > BUILDING WATER RESILIENCE

In addition to supporting the implementation of the MDBP, the Greens will open the Sustainable Water Institute, providing a platform for research into world-class water use practices. By taking action, we can ensure a more water-resilient future for Australia.

<sup>1</sup> Inquiry Report: Stormwater Management in Australia, Environment and Communications References Committee, December 2015.