



## **ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENDERS OFFICE<sup>NT</sup>**

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### **You can lead a horse to water...**

The Environmental Defenders Office NT (**EDO**) has today provided the Government with its comments on the recently released Discussion Paper, 'Our Water Future'. The EDO has made nine recommendations to the Government which, if implemented, will vastly improve water planning in the Northern Territory.

First and foremost the EDO recommends that the Government go “back to the drawing board” on water planning and recommit itself to the Agreement on the National Water Initiative (**NWI**). “The current approach has failed. It failed in the Supreme Court and it has failed in the eyes of the community”, said David Morris, Principal Lawyer of the EDO.

This Discussion Paper provides the opportunity to take a new approach said Mr Morris, “it is time to write the last two years off as a bad experiment which has resulted in unsustainable and inequitable allocations of water outside of the nationally accepted framework”.

Mr Morris said implementing the EDO’s nine recommendations would result in a better vision for NT water planning. “The recommendations are really aimed at using legal mechanisms to build community trust and create a level playing field in NT water planning” said Mr Morris.

The EDO is pleased the Government has decided to have this discussion, but the elephant in the room is the almost absent discussion of the impacts of climate change. It’s trite to say that these impacts are going to have a significant impact on water resources and infrastructure in the future. The EDO recommends law reforms to require decision makers to consider the impacts of climate change (such as sea-level rise and major storm surge events) as we plan for the future of the Territory’s water resources

The EDO’s submission also promotes a shift in focus away from the current push for dams and other centralised water infrastructure projects in the North. Instead, the EDO recommends that the Government focus on mechanisms to manage demand and drive innovation.

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