The National Urban Water Partnership:
Summary of Outcomes from the 2013 National Urban Water Research and Development Forum

The second national round-table forum held in Canberra on Wednesday 31 July 2013 discussed future urban water challenges and ways to improve Australia’s processes for planning and delivering urban water research and development (R&D). Forum participants are seeking to increase sector efficiency, enhance national innovation and productivity and to maximise effective, practical on-ground outcomes.

Hosted by the National Water Commission and other member organisations and associations of a national Partnership Working Group (PWG), this second National Forum was attended by over fifty senior participants, representing the four ‘pillars’ that comprise the urban water R&D community:
- urban water utilities
- private sector water industry
- three levels of government
- researchers representing all Australian universities, the CRC for Water Sensitive Cities, and state and federal government water research planning and funding organisations.

Summary of Forum Outcomes
The Independent Chair of the PWG, Ken Matthews AO, presented a summary of the achievements of the work program since the inaugural National Forum in September 2012. This year’s National Forum agreed that the PWG’s work should continue. It endorsed nine strategic challenges facing the urban water sector, and for which R&D may offer some solutions. It requested that the PWG sharpen the focus of the next stage of its work to concentrate on projects to improve the processes by which Australia plans and delivers its urban water R&D. It also suggested there be a small number of high-yield voluntary collaborative R&D projects reviewed by the PWG to seek further ideas for process improvement.

Specifically, the Forum agreed the following:
1. As the national representative body of the four ‘pillars’ represented at the Forum, the Partnership Working Group (PWG) will continue to meet to facilitate the agreed work plan.
2. The PWG is to report again to a further National Forum in mid-2014.
3. The PWG’s work is to concentrate on:
   a. a number of concrete projects to improve Australia’s R&D processes including: enhanced urban water data discoverability; development of an urban water knowledge portal; sharing R&D program information; common principles for R&D evaluation; enhanced dialogue between industry and researchers; addressing IP barriers; test-bedding of new technology; future arrangements for sustaining national R&D investment; enhanced industry engagement; and greater international investment in Australia’s urban water R&D sector; and
   b. a small number of volunteered collaborative research and development projects undertaken by cross-sectoral working groups, conducted as national pilot demonstration projects to identify real barriers to improved collaboration.
4. The PWG is to seek specific tangible, concrete deliverables from all aspects of the work.
5. Sector and organisational representatives on the PWG are to ensure their respective member bodies and constituents are kept fully informed of progress against the 2013-14 work program, and bring feedback and suggestions to discuss at PWG meetings.

A detailed 2013 Forum Report containing all outcomes and the forward work program will be issued to all participants and represented organisations following the next meeting of the PWG currently scheduled for early September 2013.