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## Media Release

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### **Auditor-General's water report concerning, Sheed**

Independent Member for the Shepparton District Suzanna Sheed said she is concerned by many of the findings of the recently released *Procurement of Strategic Water Entitlements* report.

Commissioned by former Federal Water Minister David Littleproud and conducted by the Australian National Audit Office the report highlights several issues with the Commonwealth's buyback of water to meet environmental targets.

"Like many, I'm suffering a bit from Murray Darling Basin Plan report fatigue," Ms Sheed said.

"But this is an important document and points to numerous shortcomings in the water buyback process. I'm concerned the Auditor-General criticises the nature of these closed-tender deals and that commercial decisions were reportedly taking place in the Federal Water Minister's office.

"It points to yet another area where transparency is lacking in the water market."

The report listed further criticisms of buyback processes, according to Ms Sheed.

"Market rates weren't always paid. Poor information was provided by the department to decision makers," Ms Sheed said.

"Departmental staff were reportedly failing to apply proper policy. Since 2016 around 80 GL was taken out of the consumptive pool costing \$190 million and these findings cast doubt over how that all took place. We have seen so much poor behaviour, particularly in the Northern Basin, and this report only confirms that even the government's own department has fallen below the standards we could reasonably expect of it.

"We have yet another report pointing towards yet more problems with the Plan. What we don't have are enough state and federal governments willing to acknowledge these collective problems and find the political courage to do something drastic about them."

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