

# Media Release

**The Hon Lisa Neville MP**

Minister for the Coordination of Environment, Land, Water, and Planning – COVID-19  
Minister for Police and Emergency Services  
Minister for Water



Friday, 1 May 2020

## ZERO TOLERANCE OF UNAUTHORISED WATER TAKE IN VICTORIA

The Andrews Labor Government is delivering a level playing field for all water users in northern Victoria, with a renewed focus on compliance.

Minister for Water Lisa Neville has appointed Des Pearson as an independent advisor to gain a full understanding of any compliance issues and swiftly put an end to unauthorised water take.

Unauthorised take typically occurs when water users draw beyond what they have in their account – even if they have the intention of squaring it up later.

With high water prices in recent times, this has the potential to significantly impact other water users who are doing the right thing.

Mr Pearson will lead an independent review of systems and processes of Water Corporations with non-urban customers, ensuring adequate compliance measures are in place to meet the Ministers expectations of zero tolerance of unauthorised take.

This review will consider:

- policies, procedures and frameworks established to govern and manage compliance and enforcement
- monitoring and reporting processes, including use of data
- governance arrangements within and between the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) and Water Corporations
- mechanisms for DELWP and Water Corporations to identify emerging compliance risks, such as high-volume unauthorised take, including use of reporting

Mr Pearson brings extensive experience to the position, including former roles as Victorian Auditor General (2006 to 2012) and multiple Audit and Risk Board Committee appointments. He will report to the Minister for Water by the end of June.

This appointment supports the Labor Government's continued work put an end to water theft.

Last year the Government increased the maximum fine for intentional water theft and related offences if they cause substantial harm to \$198,000 for individuals and \$990,000 for companies.

### Quotes attributable to Minister for Water Lisa Neville

*"We have a zero tolerance approach to unauthorised water take - it's unacceptable and could negatively impact other irrigators who are doing the right thing."*

*"We have new technology that measures and controls water delivery and are making sure it's being used to eliminate unauthorised take wherever possible."*

*"Victoria is seen as a leader in compliance and water management – particularly in the context of revelations in the Murray Darling Basin over recent years – and I want us to continue to lead the way".*

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