

Mr Chair

Australia shares the commitment of many speakers today to ensuring that we continue to make progress in the important areas of water and sanitation consistent with the commitments established through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI).

Water policy reform has been a central preoccupation for Australia at both the national and state government level over the past several years. Very substantial efforts and funding have been committed to address a water availability gap as well as to improve the efficiency of water management and to tackle difficult policy choices.

Our National Water Initiative (NWI) involves the different levels of government working together to achieve:

- demand reduction strategies such as urban water conservation, recycling and investment in water saving infrastructure;
- augmentation strategies including desalination and infrastructure upgrades;
- tackling over-allocation of water including through buy-back of licences and the exit of some irrigators; and
- major improvements in water data collection and improved governance arrangements.

Making progress in these areas is not easy. But the pressure for reform is all the more urgent as we come to appreciate the likely further pressures on water availability through the impact of climate change in our region.

We appreciate that the challenge is even more daunting for small developing countries with limited capability. Resources and our development assistance priorities are increasingly being focused in the areas of water and sanitation.

We consider it is important to continue along the path established for the global community at CSD 13 and to sharpen our focus on practical measures to achieve our goals.

Rather than diverting resources to duplicate existing monitoring and reporting arrangements, we see more value in improving the communication of successful initiatives and sharing of experience of practical policy options for improved water management. This allows countries to look for solutions relevant to their particular circumstances.

We have made a good start with the CSD Matrix and Australia would be happy to work with others to improve the user friendliness of this tool.

Mr Chair, Australia, as the world's most arid continent, is necessarily focused on water management reforms and we wish to work with international partners to share our experience and help make progress towards our shared goals. We believe we have the right set of international policy goals and reporting arrangements. The challenge now is to work effectively together to make progress towards achieving them.