

Media Release
Murray Darling Association – September 5th 2009

“Water Innovation – challenging the drought”

The Murray Darling Association concluded it's 65th Annual Conference which was attended by over 150 delegates speakers and sponsors. A Post Conference tour of several water conservation and flood mitigation sites, all designed to aid in the water proofing of Adelaide's northern suburbs and supplementing food and fibre production water resources was held today.

The Theme of the conference **“Water Innovation – challenging the drought”** was addressed by several speakers including Minister for Water and Climate Change, Senator The Hon Penny Wong, who gave a passionate plea for the patient understanding of all stakeholders, as the Water for the Future programs evolved and that critics of the speed of the government's climate change programs, needed to understand the direct connection that climate change is having on our future water resource plans.

The Hon Jay Weatherill Minister for the Environment and Conservation SA, Ms Lynda Pollock – Director Stakeholder Engagement for The Murray Darling Basin Authority, Mr David Downie – General Manager Office of Water, Victoria, Dr. Peter Hayman, SA Research and Development Institute and Mayor Terry Hogan Chairman of the “Water4food” initiative, all delivered thought provoking subjects that allowed delegates to debate the strong need for a Federal government take-over sooner rather than later.

Following a recent Murray Darling Association initiative, a unit of students from the Craigmare High School gave their perception of what the current conditions were in the Lower Murray and what they perceived as some of the solutions.

Water Re-use options were addressed by a panel of experts, with Mr. Colin Pitman – City of Salisbury, Professor Simon Beecham – University of SA, Mr. Tony Sims – Willunga Basin Co. and Mr. Michael Barry – Local Government of SA, all covering the various aspects of “How we drought proof our city”. Mr. Ben Hall of City of Onkaparinga will present on “Water proofing the South” co-funded under the Federal “Water for the Future Program”

Newly appointed independent Senator for South Australia, Nick Xenophon addressed how he sees the urgency of current programs, as very critical steps to lifting future Water Security in the Murray Darling Basin, reinforcing the view that a strong Federal government management plan was necessary now.

Improving water security in the Murray Darling Basin is essential to past and future investments being made by the Federal government in its plan to ensure the success of the “Water for the Future” programs.

The current severe drought in the South Eastern Australia has put a great deal of pressure on basin communities and coupled with the CSIRO predictions of a future with at least a 25% drop in available water in the southern Murray Darling Basin that “doing more with less” is a critical factor facing critical human needs and food production, that currently supports the economy of the two million basin inhabitants.

There is an understanding that the Murray Darling Basin water resources are shrinking. Among the messages at the conclusion of the conference are;

The State and Federal Governments have a major challenge for those of us who use these resources and those who rely on water from the basin is to do more to use less. These issues need to be addressed with the inclusion of what sites adjacent to the basin can be thoroughly researched to allow for flood mitigation on those catchments to be sensibly diverted inland.

The Conference reinforced the need for the new Murray Darling Basin Authority to take a more concerted effort under its charter and that of the 2007/08 Water Act. The call for the MDBA to deal with the “whole of basin” water management programs, factoring in the socio-economic adjustments that all regions must be prepared to develop, in conjunction with their sustainability and conservation responsibilities.

For further details contact the General Manager, Mr Ray Najar on 0408 502 393 or our Adelaide office on 08 8226 4402.