



admin@mda.asn.au
www.mda.asn.au
T (03) 5480 3805
ABN: 64 636 490 493

463 High Street
P.O. Box 1268
Echuca, Vic 3564

MEDIA RELEASE

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Balancing neutrality, productivity and sustainability

DO you want to have your say on the 450-gigalitre water recovery target?

Are you satisfied with how the Murray-Darling Basin Plan defines socioeconomic neutrality?

Are you interested in understanding how some of Australia's biggest irrigators manage their water holdings?

These issues and many more will be discussed at the Murray Darling Association's 74th National Conference and Annual General Meeting, occurring at the Leeton Soldiers Club from Wednesday, August 29 to Friday, August 31.

Conversations on these matters will be led by industry leaders, decision makers and authorities who play a key role in Basin management.

University of Canberra Associate Professor, Dr Jacki Schirmer and CSIRO Principal Research Scientist, Dr Cathy Robinson will talk about the needs for understanding socio-economic impacts, the complexity of achieving good assessment, and the opportunities that can emerge from achieving an agreed definition of neutral, positive and negative socio-economic impacts in the context of Basin Plan implementation.

"Socio-economic impact assessment is hard, and one of the challenges is that views about what is a 'good' or 'bad' social outcomes often aren't defined before an assessment occurs," Dr Schirmer said.

"It is critical for a wide range of stakeholders to come together to agree on what it means to have neutral socio-economic impact for the implementation of the next stages of the Basin Plan."

Dr Schirmer and Dr Robinson's presentation will set the scene for audience members to contribute to an interactive session focusing on the 450-gigalitre water recovery target, hosted by Skillset Environment Senior Manager, Ashley Bland.

Delegates will also hear from Brendan Barry, Webster Ltd General Manager for Water, along with representatives from other major irrigation industries, such as cotton, rice and walnut production, regarding balancing agricultural productivity and sustainability.

Other highlights include a Civic Reception Night Glow on the Wednesday night at the Leeton Jockey Club and a Murrumbidgee Riverina Region study tour on the Friday, which will see delegates visit a number of industries and irrigation infrastructure assets.

Registrations for the event are open online at www.mda.asn.au or by contacting the association on (03) 5480 3805.

The Murray Darling Association's board members are:

Albury City Council	Cr David Thurley	0419 510 274
Moira Shire Council	Cr Peter Mansfield	0428 574 433
Murray River Council	Cr Alan Mathers	0427 209 806
Wentworth Shire Council	Mayor Melisa Hederics	0447 817 871
Renmark Paringa Council	Cr Peter Hunter	0447 177 341
Alexandrina Council	Cr Barry Featherston	0417 808 565
Town of Walkerville	Cr David Shetliffe	0414 631 442
Northern Areas Council	Mayor Denis Clark	0408 148 725
Leeton Shire Council	Mayor Paul Maytom	0447 293 829
Gunnedah Shire Council	Cr John Campbell	0408 421 065
Balonne Shire Council	Mayor Richard Marsh	0409 692 299

ENDS

For more information, contact Murray Darling Association Chief Executive Officer, Emma Bradbury on 0429 905 017 or Cr David Thurley on 0419 510 274.