



MEDIA RELEASE

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MDA response to 4Corners *Cash Splash*

The Murray Darling Association (MDA), Australia's peak body representing local government across the Murray Darling Basin, has released a statement following the airing of the 4 Corners program ***Cash Splash*** on July 8th. The story inquired into whether government investment in irrigation efficiency measures has delivered value to the taxpayer and supported the objectives of the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

Our communities across Murray-Darling Basin are dependent on healthy, connected river systems, sustainable land management practices and effective regulation of water use and extraction to sustain our regional economies and agricultural productivity into the future.

The Murray-Darling Basin Plan is designed to achieve those objectives through a range of irrigation and other water efficiency programs.

"We are currently six years into a 12-year program, in the midst of drought and rapid climate change," MDA Chairman Cr David Thurley said. "The Basin Plan is ambitious and may be a world-leading initiative. Significant progress has been made, but it can only deliver on its promises if all parties commit to first-rate processes, to the best available science, and if we all stay the course."

MDA Chairman of the Murrumbidgee Region, Mayor Paul Maytom added "The public must have confidence that all investments in irrigation efficiency infrastructure are properly scrutinised, and that programs are designed to achieve the outcomes they set out to.

"We need to have a far clearer understanding of where these investments go. Accountability of the water efficiency programs that are funded with public money is essential to build trust and confidence in the Plan."

In 2018, local government across the Basin called for a National Water Registry to provide greater transparency, confidence and certainty in water markets. The call for greater transparency has been echoed by other agencies including the Almond Board, the Australian Local Government Association National General Assembly and others.

The MDA has also called for local government to have a role in the institutional and governance arrangements informing Basin Plan processes.

"The bottom line is we need to restore faith in all dealings on behalf of every Australian taxpayer in rolling out the Basin Plan," Cr Jane MacAllister said today. "Local government is where impacts and concerns of all sectors of the community play out on a daily basis."

Speaking from Wentworth Shire, location of this year's devastating fish kills she added "It is imperative that local government partner in practical ways to ensure public confidence."

“When we all work together, the Plan can deliver what it was set up to achieve. We should not be afraid to learn how communities are benefitting or being impacted. This is not about demonising any sector or agency. It is about working together to get the processes and the policy setting right to secure our future.”

The MDA continues to call on all governments, agencies, industries and communities to work together to ensure the integrity of the Basin Plan is uncompromised and delivers a healthy working Basin for all.

Background:

<https://www.abc.net.au/4corners/cash-splash/11289412>

[MDA Submission to the review of the Murray-Darling Basin Joint governance arrangements 2018](#)

[MDA National Conference 2018 – Motion 9 – National Water Register](#)