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# MEDIA RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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## Call for clarity on future of Menindee Lakes

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A GROUP of Murray Darling Association member councils will seek a meeting with the New South Wales Premier to discuss the future of the Menindee Lakes.

The councils will also pursue detailed information from the Murray-Darling Basin Authority about the management of the lakes system.

The calls come after Region Four of the MDA held a meeting in Wentworth on August 14 and heard from MDBA acting chief economist Phillip Townsend.

Representatives from councils across the region, including Mildura, Wentworth and Broken Hill attended the meeting, which came in the wake of the Four Corners report that levelled allegations of non-compliance against some irrigators in the Barwon-Darling System.

Cr Darriea Turley, Mayor of Broken Hill City Council and Chair of Region 4, said her community was disturbed by the allegations.

“There are many unanswered allegations made in the Four Corners program, including who knew what when. These questions must be answered to ensure a fair and equitable playing field into the future,” she said.

The Region resolved to support the establishment of a high-level judicial inquiry into the allegations, and called on the New South Wales Government to re-instate the compliance unit that had been investigating water extraction issues.

The representatives also discussed the suite of Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism projects that could see the watery recovery target in the Basin reduced by 650 gigalitres.

One project proposes structural and operational changes at Menindee Lakes to provide water savings.

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*For conservation and sustainable development*

Region Four representatives quizzed Phillip Townsend about the project, and prompted a commitment that he provide more detail soon.

A motion was also carried at the meeting seeking details from the MDBA on how evaporation losses from the lakes were calculated and how the project would work.

“We’ve also moved a motion seeking a meeting with the New South Wales Premier and Water Minister and Opposition counterparts to discuss the management of the lakes and requesting that local government has input into the review of New South Wales Water Resource Plans,” Cr Turley said.

Reviews of the Basin’s 36 Water Resource Plans – which set out the rules for the allocation and extraction of water – are scheduled to be completed by mid-2019.

Murray Darling Association chief executive officer Emma Bradbury said it is important that the community is aware of what was being proposed for their local waterways, and has the opportunity to contribute local knowledge to deliver the best outcomes.

“The community wants to know what the proposed plan to manage Menindee is, so that they can make an informed contribution. We have asked the MDBA to put together a brief detailing the plan,” she said.

Ms Bradbury said it was pleasing to see Region Four councils so engaged and working together to ensure the implementation of the Basin Plan generated the greatest benefit for local and neighbouring regions.

“The meeting was very collaborative and productive and really reflected the capacity of the Murray Darling Association to be the voice of the local government across the Murray-Darling Basin,” she said.

[End]

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