



MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 1 August 2019

Connecting Catchments and Communities – Constraints Tension between demand and deliverability key topic

The Murray Darling Association (MDA), Australia's peak body representing local government across the Murray Darling Basin, held another Connecting Catchments and Communities workshop in Euston on Tuesday.

This time focusing on Constraints, the event was attended by community leaders from across the Basin. Technical experts including rural water broker Lewis Campbell, Almond Board of Australia CEO Ross Skinner and government agencies and departments all lined up to present a range of discrete perspectives on water demand, deliverability and sustainability.

The Murray Darling Basin Authority and the Commonwealth Environmental water Holder provided information on operational and ecological management strategies. A range of ecologists showed a system under critical pressure, while growth predictions presented by the almond industry and councils all combined to highlight the environmental, economic and social interconnectedness of our Basin regions.

Hearing from the ABA communities and investors are excited by the economic opportunities presented by the growth in permanent plants, relying solely on the market to supply water doesn't factor in the immense risks associated with total water availability and deliverability.

A key issue emerging from the discussion clearly illustrated that the crisis in the Darling River is placing immense pressure on the Murray River and its communities.

All stakeholders expressed concern that further fish kills are imminent and inevitable, and that better inter-government and inter-agency communication, collaboration and knowledge sharing is essential.

"The health of the Barwon-Darling "Barka" is fundamental to ensuring a healthy, connected, productive Basin. Many of the current deliverability issues along the Murray river are a direct result of the lack of connection between the eponymous rivers of the Basin," Cr Jane MacAllister said.

A councillor with Wentworth Shire Council and Chair of the Murray Darling Association Region 4, Cr MacAllister added "By acting urgently to unwind the elements of the Barwon Darling Water Sharing Plan, which we know have contributed to the dire conditions downstream and lack of connection, we may yet save remaining native fish species and communities in this uniquely important, longest and driest section of the Murray Darling Basin, for the benefit of us all."

Several community farmers and co-ops also attended the event. They acknowledged the challenges of water management, but said they should be able to trust in co-ordinated decision-making by governments – without having to become experts in water policy and management at community level.

“This was one of the most technically wide ranging, thought provoking, possibly even confronting events we have facilitated,” event facilitator and CEO Emma Bradbury said. “I am genuinely hopeful that this will be the beginning of a conversation in which we are able to bring together leaders in water management, in water trade at community level to address the challenges of our system constraints.”

The MDA is identifying next steps in order to ensure that these community discussions carry forward tangible and constructive actions and outcomes.

Connecting Catchments and Communities are a series of workshops run by the Murray Darling Association, aimed at enhancing water literacy and exchanging information between councils, communities and agencies across the Basin.

To register your interest in attending the next Connecting Catchments and Communities event, sign up to the MDA newsletter: <https://www.mda.asn.au>

Background:

[Connecting Catchments and Communities – Constraints Presentations](#)