



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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MDA response to draft report

The MDA welcomes the Productivity Commission Murray-Darling Basin Plan: Five-year assessment - Draft report released last week and presented at the MDA National Conference in Leeton.

Last Thursday 30th August the Productivity Commission released its Murray-Darling Basin Plan: Five-year assessment - Draft report.

The report was presented by Commissioner Dr Jane Doolan and Assistant Commissioner John Madden at the MDA National Conference in Leeton.

The report finds that significant progress has been made and there is evidence of environmental improvement, but that there is still a lot of hard work ahead in key areas and success is not guaranteed.

The MDA welcomes the Commission's call for Basin Governments to work together and provide strategic direction, and a 'stitch-in-time' approach to restore community confidence in water management in the Basin.

The draft report also calls for a 'back to basics' approach, says Murray Darling Association CEO Emma Bradbury.

"The Commission recommends that the best way to restore community confidence in water management in the Basin is to go back to the basics, ensuring there is clarity about roles and responsibilities, effective processes for collaboration and meaningful community engagement, with stakeholders informing the design of the processes used by Governments to engage with them to enable their issues and concerns to be understood and properly considered by decision makers," Ms Bradbury said. "This approach is reflective of the principles our member councils have consistently sought."

The MDA welcomes the Commission's call for the Australian Government in agreement with Basin States to develop a strategy to ensure recovery of the additional 450GL is effective, efficient and genuinely 'no regrets', designing a program to identify and minimise socioeconomic impacts.

"We also cautiously welcome the recommendations relating to the extension to timeframes for the development and approval of the 36 supply projects. Our members remain committed to the Basin Plan. However, we maintain that a greater level of consultation with local communities will assist Basin Governments to address risks, enhance local and regional benefits, and strengthen the overall value of the projects. The investment in supply projects is immense, and every effort must be made to ensure that projects deliver maximum value for our taxpayers and our communities by incorporating local knowledge and information.

"The Commission has recognised that meaningful engagement with communities and active collaboration is a key issue for the successful implementation of the Basin Plan."

"The report has also made recommendation for changes to the governance of the MDBA, recognising the challenges inherent in both supporting Basin Governments to implement the Plan, and ensuring compliance with the Plan.

"This is a detailed report and it will take time to consider all recommendations. The clarity and plain English used in the draft report belies the complexity and detail of the recommendations.

"The MDA will submit a detailed response to the recommendations in due course. However, this draft provides an insightful analysis of the issues facing Basin communities and Governments and recommends a range of practical and constructive measures to progress the effective and efficient implementation of the Basin Plan."

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
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.