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MEDIA RELEASE

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Murray-Darling Basin Plan essential to the health of the Coorong

COUNCILS across the Murray-Darling Basin are calling for the Senate to defeat a disallowance motion that threatens the implementation of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

Senators will debate a motion that would block an amendment to the Sustainable Diversion Limits for the Southern Basin recommended by the Murray-Darling Basin Authority.

Councils within the Southern Basin are concerned that if the amendments are disallowed, it would be a devastating blow to communities in the area, potentially setting environmental outcomes at the end of the system – located in South Australia – back decades.

“The Basin Plan is a living document, and must retain the flexibility needed to evolve to meet the needs of the entire Basin,” Coorong District Council mayor, Cr Neville Jaensch said.

“The Basin Plan is essential to the survival of the Coorong, and the health of the river system.”

“We are one Basin. If this amendment is disallowed, the Coorong will pay as high a price as our fellow councils and communities in the north.

The Murray Darling Association (MDA) - the peak body for local government in the Murray-Darling Basin since 1944 - is also urging Senators to not block the changes. There are 167 councils that sit within the Basin and whose communities rely upon water from within the catchment. The management of water is a matter that is of significant interest to local government.

Cr Barry Featherston, National Vice President of the MDA and a councillor with neighbouring Alexandrina Shire added “We all recognise there is room for improvement in the governance arrangements and the implementation processes underpinning the Plan, and a need to build trust in those arrangements.”

“We are working hard to ensure those changes occur, but this is a complex, world-leading piece of legislation, essential to the sustainability of the Basin.

“Now is not the time to walk away. That would be a devastating ‘own goal’ for those who think the amendments will diminish the environmental benefits of the Plan, and would see our communities exposed to further uncertainty, possibly for decades to come.”

The MDA invites Senators and their staff to contact members of the organisation's board for further information and to discuss any concerns they may have prior to debate on the disallowance motion.

"We are asking that your first consideration in voting on this matter is the long-term health and wellbeing of the Murray-Darling Basin and the communities we serve within it," Murray Darling Association National President, Cr David Thurley said.

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	0429 848 480
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. All Region Chairs are also available for comment, as is Mayor Neville Jaensch on 0409 900 249.