



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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For immediate release

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### Murray Darling Association to call for Basin Plan solidarity at National Conference

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The Murray Darling Association will use its National Conference to call for integrity, accountability and solidarity in the implementation of the Basin Plan.

The MDA – the national coalition of local government in the Basin – will hold its 73<sup>rd</sup> National Conference and AGM in Renmark from October 11 to 13.

Representatives from across the Basin will come together at the conference to discuss the common interests of Australia's third level of government – the level which is most directly engaged with the people it represents.

The conference will hear from prominent speakers on topics such as the National Carp Control Plan, Snowy 2.0, the MDBA's evaluation of the Basin Plan, emerging trends in agriculture, the role of the barrages, and environmental watering.

While not an intended focus of the conference, the allegations of non-compliance by some irrigators in the Northern Basin and an apparent lack of regulatory action will be central to discussions.

The spotlight has been on compliance since a Four Corners report earlier this year which featured MDA member and Brewarrina Mayor Cr Phillip O'Connor bringing to attention water extraction issues in his community.

Cr O'Connor – an irrigator himself and a staunch advocate of fair implementation of the Basin Plan – had already raised the issues with the relevant authorities.

MDA National President Cr David Thurley said that was just one example where a well-informed local government representative had been sidelined.

"Many of us in local government have felt ignored and worse, which has led to frustration, anger and ill-will toward the Plan," he said.

"Despite the advocacy efforts of the MDA, local government still hasn't been afforded a Basin-wide role in the implementation of the plan, and this has to change.

"Local government is missing but not because we chose to be."

Cr Thurley said the MDA remained staunch in its view that an independent judicial inquiry into the Basin Plan was essential to restore public confidence in the Plan, particularly in light of recent revelations that the Murray Darling Basin Authority may have been aware of issues raised in the Four Corners report but took no direct action.

The MDBA is now conducting a Basin-wide Compliance Review, but the appropriateness of this has been questioned given these revelations.

Cr Thurley said the MDA remained firmly in support of full implementation of the Basin Plan, but believed that would only be possible if it was done with greater integrity and accountability.

“The challenge is to build trust in the Basin Plan by elevating the role of local government to ensure local knowledge is actually put to use.”

**[END]**

*For more information, contact MDA CEO Emma Bradbury on 0429 905 017 or Cr David Thurley on 0419 510 274.*

*All Region Chairs are also available to discuss the conference.*

***Contact information for the Chairs of the Murray Darling Association***

Region	Name	Organisation	Mobile Phone	Email Address/ Chair
Region 1	Cr David Thurley	Albury City	0419 510 274	<a href="mailto:DThurley@alburycity.nsw.gov.au">DThurley@alburycity.nsw.gov.au</a>
Region 2	Cr Peter Mansfield	Moirra Shire Council	0428 574 433	<a href="mailto:pmansfield@moira.vic.gov.au">pmansfield@moira.vic.gov.au</a>
Region 3	Cr Leigh Byron	Balranald Shire Council	0428 201 301	<a href="mailto:mayor@balranald.nsw.gov.au">mayor@balranald.nsw.gov.au</a>
Region 4	Cr Darriea Turley	Broken Hill City Council	0429 848 480	<a href="mailto:Darriea.Turley@health.nsw.gov.au">Darriea.Turley@health.nsw.gov.au</a>
Region 5	Cr Peter Hunter	Renmark Paringa Council	0447 177 341	<a href="mailto:crhunter@renmarkparinga.sa.gov.au">crhunter@renmarkparinga.sa.gov.au</a>
Region 6	Cr Barry Featherston	Alexandrina Council	0417 808 565	<a href="mailto:barry.featherston@alexandrina.sa.gov.au">barry.featherston@alexandrina.sa.gov.au</a>
Region 7	Cr David Shetliffe	Town of Walkerville	0414 631 442	<a href="mailto:DShetliffe@walkerville.sa.gov.au">DShetliffe@walkerville.sa.gov.au</a>
Region 8	Cr Denis Clarke	Northern Areas Council	0408 148 725	<a href="mailto:shock56@bigpond.net.au">shock56@bigpond.net.au</a>
Region 9	Cr Paul Maytom	Leeton Shire Council	0447 293 829	<a href="mailto:paulm@leeton.nsw.gov.au">paulm@leeton.nsw.gov.au</a>
Region 12	Cr Richard Marsh	Balonne Shire Council	0409 692 299	<a href="mailto:richard.marsh@balonne.qld.gov.au">richard.marsh@balonne.qld.gov.au</a>