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MEDIA RELEASE

Local government commends bipartisanship on Basin Plan amendments

Local government's peak body in the Murray-Darling Basin has welcomed the support of the Victorian and New South Wales Governments for two crucial amendments to the Basin Plan.

The Murray Darling Association believes both the reduction to the Northern Basin Water Recovery Target from 390GL to 320GL, and the 605GL of Sustainable Diversion Limit adjustment projects, are essential for the success of the Basin Plan.

That position was echoed by the Victorian and New South Wales Governments in a commendable display of bipartisanship when Victorian Minister for Water Lisa Neville and NSW Minister for Regional Water Niall Blair met in Sydney today.

Both governments agreed that the amendments were the best way to deliver the Plan with positive outcomes for communities, the environment and regional economies across the Basin.

Two disallowance motions currently before the Senate would undo the amendments, despite the SDL projects being agreed to by the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council and the Northern Basin Amendments being underpinned by an expert scientific assessment.

Murray Darling Association National President Cr David Thurley said the amendments were crucial to avoiding further water buybacks, which would be devastating for regional communities.

"Local government across the Basin is united in the view that there must not be further buybacks, and that these amendments are the best way to balance social, economic and environmental interests," he said.

This unity was on display last month at a meeting of the chairing councils of the MDA, when a motion to support the Northern Basin Amendment received unanimous support.

The Basin Plan would be in serious jeopardy if the 605GL was disallowed in the Senate, with Victoria and NSW signalling their intention to consider alternatives, including the option of negotiating a tripartite agreement with the Commonwealth.

Cr Thurley said the best Basin Plan outcomes would be delivered by all states and political parties standing together, starting by Senators voting down the disallowance motions.

MDA CEO Emma Bradbury said the Basin Plan, agreed by all Basin States and signed into law by the Commonwealth in 2012, was written to be adaptive and open to amendment.

“These amendments are the result of an established process, so to vote them down would undermine the Basin Plan in its entirety,” she said.

“Our communities must have confidence that governments of all persuasions will stick to the agreed process to achieve the best outcomes.”

[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 for comment.

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