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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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[Murray Darling Association National Conference 2015 held in Barooga, NSW a great success]

The Murray Darling Association held their 71st Annual National Conference in Barooga last week. With attendance numbers over 150, an excellent line-up of presenters and guests ensured that delegates from across the Basin participated in important discussions relating to water and land management and policy.

The Hon. Bob Baldwin, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment, opened the Conference, praising the innovation of Australian farmers and affirmed his support the water act amendment to cap buybacks at 1500GL. The MDA has advocated strongly over the past year to ensure this commitment is confirmed in legislation.

Keynote speaker, Senator John Madigan, also supported the cap stating that it is important to ensure Australia is left in a better condition for future generations.

MDBA Chair Neil Andrew then reiterated the importance of continuity of the Basin Plan before introducing Dr Rhondda Dickson, outgoing MDBA Chief Executive, who made a farewell address after four years in the position. Dr Dickson's courage and commitment in steering the Authority through the challenging course of introducing an often contentious Plan was widely acknowledged. Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder David Papps addressed the Conference, again demonstrating his commitment to active engagement with stakeholders across the Basin.

For conservation and sustainable development

The attendance at the Conference by the nation's senior politicians and bureaucrats on Basin related matters provided a great opportunity for local government and other stakeholders to engage, interact and share ideas with those making the decisions that affect our local communities.

Murray Darling Association members then took the opportunity to consider and debate a range of motions, before voting on them at the Annual General Meeting.

In debating a motion regarding the approval of a licence to mine coal in the Gunnedah Shire, Mayor Cr Owen Hasler spoke strongly in favour of the mine, outlining the process by which the local and state governments had satisfied themselves as to the safety of the water and other natural resources, and emphasising the need to create employment opportunities and economic development in the region. Representatives from Shenhua Watermark Coal also attended, providing a detailed presentation and fielding numerous questions from delegates regarding the project.

Day two of the conference saw the focus shift to innovation and solutions to the environmental and social challenges farmers face and the future of farming worldwide, with a thought provoking presentation by author and futurist, Julian Cribb on the Future of Food.

Finley High School Students impressed the delegates with a presentation on the excellent agriculture program on the theme 'Cows Create Careers'.

Dominic Peel, PhD candidate at The University of Canberra presented the results of a 2014 Regional Wellbeing Survey which examined the social and economic wellbeing of rural and regional Australian communities. The survey showed that attitudes (Australia wide) are changing to be more accepting of the Basin Plan generally.

Several presenters participated in a Q&A Panel, taking questions and provoking wide ranging constructive debate. Interactive opportunities like this with policy makers and community leaders highlights the MDA National Conference remains a valuable forum through which to collaborate and generate better outcomes for basin communities.

Berrigan Shire, as host region pulled out all the stops, from the warm welcome, exceptional hospitality and exquisite weather to ensure that the 71st National Conference of the MDA was deemed 'the best ever'.

If you would like more information on the conference or the Murray Darling Association in general, please contact them at admin@mda.asn.au or on 03 5480 3805.

Registrations for next year's conference in Dubbo, NSW will be open soon.

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