MEDIA RELEASE

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Data shows social and economic impacts of water recovery

Local government's peak body in the Murray-Darling Basin welcomes the release of data by the MDBA showing the profound social and economic impacts of water recovery on Southern Basin communities.

The data has been released by the MDBA in the form of 45 Southern Basin community profiles. It was collated as part of the MDBA's 2017 Basin Plan Evaluation and will form the basis of the Authority's analysis of the social and economic impacts of the Basin Plan on Southern Basin communities, due to be released in April this year.

The Murray Darling Association says the new data shows unequivocally what Basin councils have long been saying – that water recovery is having a significant impact on local economies and communities.

The data shows that there has been a significant reduction in the agricultural workforce across Southern Basin communities over the past 15 years, and that there is a clear correlation between the loss of water and loss of jobs.

MDA National President Cr David Thurley said local government was concerned the significance of the data may be diluted by an over-emphasis on other factors impacting farming economies.

"Local government recognises that other factors cause change to our rural economic indicators, and these must be distinguished. However, any analysis of the social and economic impacts of the Basin Plan must clearly acknowledge the direct and the flow-on social and economic impact of water loss on our rural communities," he said.

"We are pleased to see that the data presented by the MDBA clearly affirms what we have been saying for years – that the social and economic impact of the Basin Plan on towns and communities is significant.

"We cannot afford to diminish the recognition of the impacts of water recovery, as this will only cause greater community angst about the Basin Plan and increase opposition to the 450GL."

Cr Thurley said the job loss figures came as no surprise to local government, which has been bearing the social and economic impacts of water recovery since the commencement of buybacks, now widely acknowledged to be adverse to community interest.

MDA CEO Emma Bradbury said there needed to be full recognition of how water recovery affects communities and regional economies so that these impacts can be offset.

"All governments - local, state and federal - need to work together to ensure that any further water recovery meets a fair and rigorous social and economic neutrality test," Ms Bradbury said.

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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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