



MEDIA RELEASE

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AWA comment on the Guide to the Murray-Darling Basin Plan

The Australian Water Association has welcomed the release of the Guide to the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

According to Tom Mollenkopf, CEO of the Australian Water Association, the Plan presents one of the most significant opportunities to redress the problems associated with over allocation of water, environmental degradation and uncoordinated development in Australia's food bowl. Adoption of a Basin wide plan also creates certainty for irrigators, communities and investors.

He said, "Governments must seize this once in a lifetime opportunity to take a considered and holistic approach to water planning in the Basin. Now is the time for each jurisdiction to think outside its own patch and consider the legitimate needs of their neighbours."

AWA is highly supportive of the additional consultation processes implemented by the Authority.

Mr Mollenkopf said, "There are some significant impacts arising from the Plan and it is essential that all stakeholders have the opportunity to provide input and comment. The Authority has done the right thing by maximising the consultation opportunities", he said.

"AWA acknowledges that while consultation continues, uncertainty remains. Getting the outcomes right is essential."

Mr Mollenkopf said AWA is particularly concerned that the socio-economic impacts of proposed sustainable diversion limits be understood by all communities.

"There is a very fine balance to be struck between improving environmental quality and reduction in economic output from the Basin. Above the proposed 3,000GL reduction in diversion limit, environmental quality improves, mainly at the local level, but socio-economic impacts also increase.

“The community will need to understand what trade-offs will exist at both the basin and local scales. This is core to proper understanding of the Plan.”

AWA also welcomes the Authority’s recommendation that water trading be made more robust and transparent, and that barriers to trade be reduced or eliminated.

He said, “Correct market signals will enable more efficient and rational decisions to be made by users of water.”

AWA believes that the effectiveness of the water market will play a major part in the success of the Plan. Consumptive users are rational and will respond according to market parameters.

Mr. Mollenkopf also called on Governments to renew their commitment to the National Water Initiative (NWI), which includes expansion of water markets and the development of water plans for catchments across the nation among other things.

He said, “The NWI sets out a significant program of reform to which all governments have previously made a commitment. Regrettably, the pace of reform has been slower than hoped for. AWA therefore calls on all governments to renew their commitment to the NWI.”

AWA will be consulting with its members to encourage water practitioners and other interested parties to provide formal comments on the draft Plan.

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For further information, images or interview requests please contact Helen Ketton, AWA Communications Manager, on 02 9467 8416 / 0401 806 277

NOTES TO EDITORS

- The Australian Water Association (AWA) is Australia’s leading water sector body, representing over 10,000 water professionals around the country and across all water disciplines
- AWA provides leadership in the water sector on a wide range of issues, including skills shortages, climate change and water reuse and recycling
- AWA works to enhance the skills and knowledge of water professionals and promote and disseminate best practice through an extensive range of technical seminars, courses and events