



Australian Dairy Industry Council Inc.

Media Release

28 May 2012

Revised Basin Plan misleads us all with spin over substance

For immediate release

The Murray Darling Basin Authority has shown its utter contempt for regional communities with the release of a Basin Plan little different from its damaging 2010 Guide, the Australian Dairy Industry Council said today.

“The new MDBA chair Craig Knowles last year assured regional communities that he wanted to work with them to come up with a Basin Plan that genuinely balanced environmental, social and economic needs,” ADIC chair Chris Griffin said.

“It is just plain insulting for the Authority now to dismiss thousands of regional Australians as having nothing worthwhile to contribute to a Plan that directly affects their economic and social wellbeing.”

Mr Griffin urged Federal Water Minister Tony Burke and State Water Ministers to address the fundamental flaws identified in the draft Plan, and not abandon regional communities.

ADIC Basin Taskforce chairman Daryl Hoey said the Basin Plan released today would remove slightly more water from the southern Basin than was proposed in the Guide 18 months ago – 2289 gigalitres compared with 2274 gigalitres.

“Today’s outcome is a betrayal of the community’s goodwill to give the MDBA another chance to work with regional communities and get this right, after the debacle of the Guide,” Mr Hoey said.

“A cut of this size is as unacceptable now as it was 18 months ago – especially in the face of the authority’s own evidence that similar or better environmental outcomes could be achieved with less water by investing in environmental works and other measures instead of buybacks.

“It is also shocking that the authority has conveniently dismissed the integrity of all socio-economic studies – even its own commissioned studies – that do not support its fanciful claims that regional communities will not suffer any serious or lasting impacts.”

Mr Hoey said he was particularly concerned about misleading information in the socio-economic summary report delivered to the State and Federal water ministers.

He said an example was the claim that irrigators only face a 19% reduction in water, after accounting for infrastructure savings. However, this is a proportion of all water diverted in the Basin, including for Adelaide, other towns, manufacturing and mining, as well as agriculture.

“In truth, the reduction will be about 30%, based on ABS data of actual irrigation water use – and the Government is only targeting irrigators’ water for purchase for the environment,” Mr Hoey said.

“Further, the Authority has failed to tell Australians the whole story by including colour-coded maps showing that the environmental benefits of recovering 2400GL would be little different to 2750GL, according to its own studies.

“The Authority is trying to palm off the hard decisions to the 2015 review, when it knows full well that it is legally locking the Federal Government into buybacks as the investment priority in the meantime. So by the time we get to 2015, the socio-economic damage will have been done.”

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