

Media Release

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Dairy industry rejects Guide to Basin Plan

The dairy industry has slammed the credibility of the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) Guide and wants it to be withdrawn and replaced with factual and better-balanced proposals.

Australian Dairy Industry Council (ADIC) Chair Wes Judd said the Guide had created confusion and increased the uncertainty surrounding water security and availability for the Basin's dairy farmers and their communities.

"We call on the Australian Government to direct the Authority to do the necessary work required to provide fair outcomes for farmers, communities and the environment. We also expect the Parliamentary Inquiry to support this," Mr Judd said.

"Job losses have been grossly underestimated and the Authority has already conceded at their community meetings they cannot support the data in the Guide.

"I would also suggest the scientific analysis and theoretical computer modelling is inadequate. Why weren't more scenarios examined to get some real scientific rigour into this debate?"

Mr Judd condemned the Guide for its comments about the dairy industry in the Basin.

"The fact it says the 3,000 to 4,000 GL a year reductions may result in dairy actually expanding from current levels of production compared with the recent drought is ridiculous," he said.

"We have experienced the proposed cuts during the recent drought and the region lost well in excess of a billion litres of milk during that period. Not to mention the big increase in debt that farmers have taken on to actually survive those drought years."

Mr Judd warned the proposed cuts had widespread implications that could be catastrophic for families, towns, communities and all industries.

"The dairy industry is here for the long term, however dramatic cuts to water entitlements will inevitably reduce the size of the industry, which means fewer farming families and smaller Basin communities," he said.

"A population decrease within Basin communities will snowball to a loss of local services such as education and health. And we're already seeing the impact on investment confidence with the Australian Bankers Association saying it would be difficult for communities dependent on irrigation to plan for their future with uncertainty hanging over them.

"It is a no win situation because those dairy farmers who do remain in the Basin will have to cope with reduced reliability and higher water charges."

The MDBA Guide states a reduction in current diversion limits is likely to affect food industries.

"Food processing is an important activity in many Basin communities. The dramatic water cuts will limit the production of one of Australia's largest food sources and reduce Australia's export income."

Mr Judd is urging all dairy farmers in the Basin and everyone within the Basin communities to voice their concerns to the MDBA through the Basin Plan online forum at www.thebasinplan.mdba.gov.au

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