Australian Dairy Industry Council Inc.

Media Release

12 April 2012

Draft Basin Plan fails to make the case for 2750GL

For immediate release

Water recovery targets should be set lower and environmental objectives met by investing in infrastructure and environmental works and measures, the Australian Dairy Industry Council has urged in its submission on the draft Murray Darling Basin Plan.

ADIC chair Chris Griffin warned that the draft Basin Plan imposes unnecessary hardship on irrigation dependent communities, when the MDBA itself recognises that similar or better environmental outcomes can be achieved with less than the proposed 2750GL.

“The draft Plan does not pass the test of being achievable, practical or cost-effective. Furthermore, the plan does not optimise social, economic and environmental outcomes,” Mr Griffin said.

“The Government’s Water Recovery Program, with its heavy reliance on buyback for most of the environmental water, will not deliver communities that are better adapted to reduced water availability.”

The ADIC wants the water recovery target set at the proposed catchment Sustainable Diversion Limits, while downstream objectives are met using the available environmental water in conjunction with improved river operations, environmental works and other efficiency measures.

“The MDBA itself recognises similar or better environmental outcomes could be achieved with less water if these other options are factored in,” said Mr Griffin.

“But the draft Plan as it now stands doesn’t have the flexibility for less than 2750GL in entitlements to be recovered, regardless. Without this flexibility, there is no incentive for government to invest in programs other than buybacks when it is needed for infrastructure and environmental works.”

ADIC Basin Taskforce chair Daryl Hoey said water availability and affordability are the dairy industry’s key issues, along with the Plan’s effects on the viability and vibrancy of country communities.

“The draft Basin Plan will result in a 30% reduction in water diversions for agriculture, and drive up prices for trade in temporary water,” Mr Hoey said.

“Less water delivered through shared irrigation districts will also put water companies under intense pressure to increase charges to cover the costs of maintaining and operating the system.

“The Basin dairy industry will struggle to sustain its current size, much less grow and prosper in future, in the face of this double whammy in cost pressures. And when family dairy businesses close down, that means fewer local jobs in processing, transport and service industries.”

Mr Hoey said the environmental water holders must demonstrate they can use the water already recovered without unacceptable third-party impacts such as flooding properties, before any more water is removed from productive use.

In the meantime, the ADIC want the remaining buyback and infrastructure funding (~$2 billion in Water for the Future Fund + $1.4 billion committed for further buyback 2015-2019) pooled and reprioritised. The ADIC has identified a range of projects (outlined in the ADIC submission) utilising this government funding such as on-farm efficiency, irrigation infrastructure upgrades, environmental works and supplementary licences.

-ends-

For further information contact:

Chris Griffin
Chair
Telephone (03) 8621 4200
Mobile 0402 846 239

Daryl Hoey
Chair
ADIC Basin Response Taskforce
Mobile 0407 582 982

Note: the Australian Dairy Industry Council submission responding to the MDBA draft Basin plan is available for downloading on the Dairy Australia website at http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/