



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Flaws in Murray Darling Basin Plan have resulted in an over-recovery of water**

The Ricegrowers' Association of Australia (RGA) reiterates NSW Irrigators Council's (NSWIC) call to the Federal Government for all further buybacks to be suspended until the full impact of the Murray Darling Basin Plan on the Southern Basin is known.

RGA president Jeremy Morton said "The RGA strongly believes there should be no further water recovery in the Murray and Murrumbidgee valleys. The significant recovery that has occurred to date has transpired without any clear understanding of the social and economic impacts of this recovery. This level of negligence is unacceptable and cannot continue".

RGA further feels that unachievable flow targets in the Murray Darling Basin Plan, which underpin the water recovery target of 2750GL, have resulted in an over-recovery of water.

"This over-recovery has resulted in unnecessary economic harm to communities in the Basin and leaves the Commonwealth with a portfolio of water it doesn't need and can't use as envisaged when the Basin Plan was developed. It's a case of maximum pain with minimum gain" said Mr Morton.

Current flooding throughout the Basin clearly demonstrates that more water is not the answer. When the Basin Plan was first developed during the millennium drought, policymakers believed they would need to create floods into the future. However it is now clear that natural events will continue to meet the environmental needs of the Basin.

"Furthermore it is becoming obvious that relaxing the constraints within the Basin to the extent that would allow the flow targets to be achieved will not be possible. This is highlighted by the fact that the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder cannot currently legally utilise the water it holds due to the potential third party impacts of flooding" Mr Morton said.

A change of government thinking regarding how to achieve environmental objectives is required. Opportunities exist to leverage the Commonwealth water to improve environmental outcomes while minimising third party impacts and boosting productive water use.

"The worst possible outcome is that the government finds themselves in a position where they cannot fully and effectively utilise the water they hold. It is critical that resources now be directed to measures that achieve the best possible environmental outcomes using the existing water portfolio. RGA stands ready to assist the Commonwealth and State Governments in achieving practical sensible outcomes" Mr Morton said.

RGA's position is supported by the NSW Minister for Water, Niall Blair, who in May this year provided public comment that "There should be no more productive water purchased out of NSW. The (remaining) recovery can be found from infrastructure projects or from other means like non flow related projects, for example the carp herpes virus" said Minister Blair.

"The RGA therefore calls for the Federal Government to echo the comments of the State Government and provide a clear signal to our growers that there will be no further buybacks. By providing certainty our growers will be reassured of the future for their communities and their industry" said Mr Morton.

**Ends**

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