



MEDIA RELEASE

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Murray-Darling Basin – Burke’s Backyard

The Inland Rivers Network welcomes Water Minister, Tony Burke’s recent assurance that the Murray Darling Basin Plan will achieve important environmental outcomes. However, returning one of the world’s largest river systems back to health is more complex than simply watering your backyard.

In his address to the Sydney Institute on Wednesday night, the Federal Minister for Water likened the Murray Darling Basin to a large garden that just needs the hosed turned in the right direction. Ensuring that the Basin Plan is able to achieve ecological outcomes, as emphasised by Minister Tony Burke, is important. However, the solution to returning the mighty Murray-Darling Basin to health has a little more to it than simply watering your backyard, the Inland Rivers Network says.

“Watering our Basin backyard is more complex than just improving the hose system enough so you can reach just some of your favourite bits of the garden, what you wet along the way is important too” Inland Rivers Network spokesperson Bev Smiles said.

“River health relies on enough water in the system to flow out over the floodplains and give all the little wetlands a drink along the way” said Bev Smiles. “In order to do that, and to achieve environmental outcomes for riverine ecosystems, there is a minimum amount of water that the best-available science says needs to be returned to the rivers.”

Precious environmental assets, such as the Macquarie Marshes, the Central Murray Forests and the Coorong, Lower Lakes and the Murray-Mouth, require certain volumes of water at certain times in order to keep performing their valuable ecosystem services. Both our inland environment and communities are dependent on a healthy river system

The best available science – something the Commonwealth *Water Act 2007* requires and Minister Tony Burke has emphasised in the development of the Basin Plan – says that 4,000 GL is a minimum amount of water needed to be returned to the inland river system.

The Basin backyard relies on a variety of different flooding and drying regimes from natural flows. It is critical that the right amount of water is available at the right time. The Basin Plan is the best opportunity in our lifetime to restore the world’s third largest river system back to health.

For comment:

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