

MEDIA RELEASE

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Murray-Darling Basin Plan must create healthy, sustainable rivers and communities

The Murray-Darling Basin Plan is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to make our rivers and wetlands healthy and take a step towards a sustainable Basin future.

"The mighty Murray Darling river system on which so many depend is at a tipping point after decades of increasing water extraction and infrastructure development" said Anne Reeves, President of the Inland Rivers Network an organization part of the new alliance *Voices for the Murray-Darling*.

"Getting it right with water was never going to be easy, but is a challenge we must face up to for the long term viability of the system on which so many depend" said Anne Reeves.

Voices for the Murray-Darling – an alliance representing diverse groups from across rural and metropolitan Australia - has stepped up the call to Basin Authority Chair Craig Knowles and Federal Water Minister Tony Burke to make the most of this opportunity.

Within a few weeks, the draft version of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan will be released for public review.

Voices for the Murray-Darling urge the Murray-Darling Basin Authority to ensure that the Basin Plan delivers the following seven key outcomes:

- be based on credible, peer-reviewed science and the processes used to develop and implement the Basin Plan must be robust and transparent;
- return at least a minimum of 4000GL of water to environmental flows or limit extraction to one third of natural flows in order to restore the ecological health and resilience of the Basin's river systems;
- provide sufficient water to enable the Basin's two million tonnes of salt and other pollutants to be flushed out through the Murray Mouth to the sea;
- provide optimal flows so that essential ecosystem services are maintained throughout the Murray-Darling Basin including;
 - nutrient cycling and other river forming processes;
 - over bank flows to maintain wetlands and other floodplain habitats; and
 - recharge of groundwater systems and alluvial aquifers;
- acknowledge Indigenous rights in cultural flows as integral to the Plan;
- represent value for the \$10 billion of Australian taxpayers' money allocated to help communities adjust to the change by ensuring that policies, management frameworks and evaluation methods deliver tangible environmental outcomes, now and into the future; and
- The Basin Plan must have clear and transparent targets that trigger the revision of management frameworks, evaluation methods and adoption of improved scientific understanding.

For more information about *Voices for the Murray-Darling* visit <http://lifeblood.org.au>

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