

Media Release



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Murray Darling Basin – What now?

The last week has been filled with commentary and vitriol regarding the Murray Darling Basin Plan and its fate. South Australian dairy farmers are the last productive users of Murray River water before it heads into the Coorong. The water is important environmentally as it passes the lower lakes dairy farms, but in many ways these dairy businesses are the canaries for the river. If there is a problem, our farmers are the first to wear it.

The future of the river is always in sharp focus for our dairy farmers. For this reason, the political maneuvering displayed in the Senate have greatly troubled them. The behaviour is indicative of an intemperate political carelessness that just demonstrates how reckless some politicians are prepared to be with regional communities in South Australia and the people who work in those regions.

The Murray Darling Basin Plan was written in 2012 to allow adaptive management, with enough flexibility to utilise new knowledge and to adjust operational management of our rivers to get better ecological outcomes while providing a level of certainty for the river and river communities. While not everyone in the Basin likes the Plan, everyone has been working towards achieving it and delivering a balanced plan.

“Neither New South Wales or Victoria have to be bound to the Murray Darling Basin Plan.” South Australian Dairyfarmers President, John Hunt said with exasperation today. “The plan has secured water for the Murray River and those who live and work along it all the way to the mouth.”

“The comments by NSW Water Minister Niall Blair that the ongoing participation in the plan is untenable is an awful response which we dreaded would result from the Greens’ ill-considered motion.”

“We have seen an escalation in brinkmanship from all parties that has now entered the domain of stupid. Labor and the Greens with their intransigence have undermined jobs and the future of many regional South Australians in one motion.”

“Little, if anything, legally binds New South Wales or Victoria to the plan. It will be to their advantage to abandon it and the Greens have given them the trigger to walk.”

“It is simply time for everyone playing games to stop, get back to the table and sort this mess out.”

“Otherwise, the losers will be South Australian dairy farmers and the Coorong itself.”

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