

Toowoomba meeting highlights Basin-wide water planning

A meeting of the Murray-Darling Basin Authority board members at Toowoomba in Queensland on 4 and 5 November has served to emphasise the new Basin-wide approach being taken on water resource planning.

The establishment of the Authority means that, for the first time, a single agency is now responsible for planning integrated management of the water resources of the entire Basin.

Chair Mike Taylor said the Authority was holding meetings in regional areas as it was crucial to understand the issues faced by communities in the field.

“Having a meeting in the northern part of the Basin highlights the importance we place on an integrated, Basin-wide approach to the sustainable management of water resources,” he said.

The Authority’s centrepiece task is to develop a major Basin-wide plan to implement this. A draft plan will be issued for public comment and consultation in mid 2010 and the final will go to the Commonwealth Minister in 2011.

“Our priority is to ensure that effective community feedback is blended with the best science to develop a Basin Plan which will put the Basin’s water resources on a truly sustainable footing.”

At their Toowoomba meeting, Board members considered a wide range of Basin resource issues related to the new Basin Plan and reviewed progress on its development.

They discussed sustainable diversion limits (SDLs) which will be at the heart of the Basin Plan.

The SDLs will limit the amount of surface water and groundwater that can be taken from the water resources of the Basin as a whole, individual water resource plan areas and from particular parts of water resource plan areas within the Basin.

In Toowoomba the MDBA board conducted a public information session and met with members of the community, local, State and federal government representatives, Indigenous community representatives, growers, water managers, industry and business representatives and water managers from local catchment management authorities.

They inspected the Wetalla Water Treatment Works and Cooby Dam.

The members of the Murray-Darling Basin Authority are: Mike Taylor (Chair); Professor Barry Hart; Dr Diana Day; David Green; Dianne Davidson; and Rob Freeman (Chief Executive).

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