

As members of the Basin Community Committee (BCC) we represent the voices of the Basin. We bring knowledge, diversity and above all, direct and personal experience of the Basin Plan. We live in the Basin and, like our communities, our lives have been changed and will continue to change because of the Basin Plan. It is time for the community voices to be heard and they say – do not put politics above people – stick with the Plan.

Basin communities, and indeed the nation, deserve a healthy working Basin which means a Plan that delivers long term positive outcomes. Tangible outcomes like reliable water supply, resilient environmental systems, strong adaptive communities and respect for Cultural Values.

Basin communities deserve a Plan that supports us into the future. This means a Plan that adapts to new knowledge and new needs. The Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism (SDLAM) that is currently before the Senate was built into the Plan to enable sensible adjustments to better support environmental outcomes and reduce community impacts.

The recent disallowance of the Northern Basin Review amendments has put at risk the future implementation of the Basin Plan. Years of scientific review and community engagement and months of political negotiation appear to have been disregarded. Our communities and the nation deserve better – they deserve the certainty and security that an adaptable Basin Plan brings. They do not deserve the confusion and dislocation brought about by ignoring a major adjustment mechanism which was written into the Basin Plan with bipartisan support of all jurisdictions.

We need the Basin Plan to work and reject the political game playing that has recently hijacked this important piece of legislation. We call on Senators to respect the process that allows the Plan to change to better meet the needs of the environment and the community (in reality they are the one and the same) – in short to support the SDLAM amendment on the 8th of May.

The Basin Plan was introduced with Bipartisan support and it should continue that way for the ‘common wealth’ of all our communities.

The BCC is an independent advisory committee to the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) and the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council (MINCO). It is established under the Water Act 2007 to ensure that the voices of the diverse communities across the Basin are heard at the highest level. The Water Act thereby acknowledged that any Plan no matter how scientifically credible or politically popular, would fail unless it met the needs of the communities it is designed to serve.