



# Basin Community Committee

*Bringing a community perspective to the Murray–Darling Basin*

9 April 2019

## COMMUNIQUE: Basin Community Committee

The Basin Community Committee met in Moree recently and reaffirmed its “responsibility to ensure for future generations that our resource (the Murray–Darling Basin) is still there and as healthy as it can be”.

At its meeting, the Committee advised the Murray–Darling Basin Authority that while each community across the Murray–Darling Basin is experiencing different pressures, many communities are struggling due to **drought** and other issues.

“My community is being stretched in being able to adapt quickly enough to the effects of the prevailing and ongoing seasonal conditions” – *Adrian Weston, Goulburn–Broken*

“Overall, confidence is low. As always, there is a large spectrum of adaptive capacity, with some businesses and communities implementing plans to deal with ongoing dry conditions, and many others being forced to evaluate their circumstances” – *Amy Fay, Goulburn–Murray*

“Our adaptive capacity is tracking low at this time. The challenges seem unrelenting, and there is a rising anxiety in our community around elections and potential impacts they may have” – *Samantha O’Toole, Lower Balonne*

The Committee noted that there is a need to **boost confidence** through improving understanding of how the river is run; be more transparent when making decisions; and respect the circumstances individuals and communities are facing.

“My community has been adapting to most challenges thrown at them over time. What they need in particular along the Lower Darling is meaningful dialogue, which has been sadly lacking” – *Howard Jones, Lower Darling*

“Everyone is feeling very stressed and angry. I am noticing that people who haven’t previously been involved in water at all are now getting involved. The knowledge gaps are very large and there is so much distrust of everything” – *Katrina Myers, mid-Murray*

“Some people find that just having a yarn about the current situation and having someone just listening, helps relieve some of the hopelessness with current drought conditions” – *Sandra Peckham, Dandaloo/Bogan*

**The Basin Community Committee is an independent advisory committee to the Murray–Darling Basin Authority and the Murray–Darling Basin Ministerial Council. Established under the Water Act 2007, the Committee ensures the voices of diverse communities in the Basin are heard.**

For more information on the Basin Community Committee

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The Committee also called for stronger **Indigenous involvement** and consultation.

“Indigenous Communities are adaptive and innovative, and have survived on the driest inhabited continent on the planet, but the fact their rivers have next to no water is extremely concerning. The best thing about the Basin Plan is it provides a strategic approach to recovery, but probably needs to hasten implementation of initiatives and the recovery process” – *Phil Duncan, Gwydir*

“It is clear that connection with rivers and the land is a very important issue with our First Nations people and the drought and conditions of the Barwon–Darling have highlighted how much we have taken from them” – *David Thurley, Upper Murray*

The Committee also reflected on how well the Basin Plan can work – in the northern Basin and in other parts of the Basin. It recognised how important **water for the environment** is, and on its tour of the internationally-recognised Gwydir Wetlands, saw how environmental water is keeping the wetlands alive in times of struggle. They were joined on country by Mungindi Local Aboriginal Land Council.

“My community is very focussed on the current dry period, but also appreciates the significant benefit already being achieved by a key part of the Basin Plan – water for the environment” – *Jo Pfeiffer, Lower Lakes*.

Maintaining their resolve to keep people at the centre of the Basin Plan, the Committee is also looking at how to support people to understand how rivers are managed and the overall health of the Basin.

“Ignorance still impacts drastically and gets in the way of rational debate. We are in the position where we can point people to the right information” – *Rory Treweeke (Chair), Lower Balonne*

“The low storage levels are concerning irrigators and community members alike – with little rain to date and the expectation that the drought and dry climate will continue, many are concerned that allocations will be reduced next year” – *Sue Rudd, Sunraysia*

“Success of the Basin Plan requires compromise to one’s own self-interest. Because the Basin will only survive if we do this together” – *Emily Jenke, Lower Lakes*

Find out more at [mdba.gov.au/BCC](http://mdba.gov.au/BCC) or contact your local Basin Community Committee member via [engagement@mdba.gov.au](mailto:engagement@mdba.gov.au) Members include: Rory Treweeke, Phil Duncan, Amy Fay, Karen Hutchinson (Murrumbidgee), Emily Jenke, Howard Jones, Susan Madden, Neil Martinson (Riverland), Katrina Myers, Samantha O’Toole, Sandra Peckham, Jo Pfeiffer, Floyd Robinson (Warrego), Sue Rudd, David Thurley, Adrian Weston.

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