



# Basin Community Committee

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

## COMMUNIQUE

19 September 2019

The Basin Community Committee met in Canberra last week and met with the Minister for Water Resources, Drought, Rural Finance, Natural Disaster and Emergency Management the Hon David Littleproud MP to discuss the importance of managing the Murray–Darling Basin as a whole.

The Committee welcomed the legislation enabling the appointment of an **Indigenous member of the Murray–Darling Basin Authority**. This is an historic achievement for First Nations and indeed all Australians in implementing ongoing significant water reform.

The Committee recognises the Basin Plan is not a drought-proofing plan. It's a plan for a healthy working Basin for all water users that protects our environmental assets and supports our communities.

The Committee is aware of the impact of the drought on our communities. It understands the severity of the drought is currently adding to the impact on communities, some of which are currently experiencing unprecedented levels of pain and economic loss. The Committee urged the Australian Government to double efforts to respond to these impacts and support communities in coping with these impacts.

Drought conditions in the Northern Basin are catastrophic. Water shortages are impacting the health and wellbeing of communities. Water shortages and are expected to become more severe in many communities in coming months. The Committee believes that this is an emerging national disaster.

Given this, and the magnitude of impacts occurring in the Southern Basin the Committee urged all Governments to **explore all options to support communities** through this time including broader drought and natural resources responses.

**Drought support programs** for communities, the agriculture workforce and small business should be widened immediately. Specifically, the Committee urges funding announced in March for the Murray–Darling Basin Economic Development Program and currently held up in the Grants Hub be delivered to communities urgently.

The Committee noted that unrest in the NSW Mid Murray and Goulburn Murray Irrigation District in Victoria about the Plan's implementation is escalating. Local governments in northern Victoria are wavering in their support of Basin Plan implementation. Sentiment against the Basin Plan is

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For more information on the Basin Community Committee

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becoming more widespread. Basin governments need to **respond to this situation in an immediate, coordinated and extensive way.**

Leadership is needed. On this front the Committee called for the immediate appointment of a permanent Chair to the Murray-Darling Basin Authority who has the presence and knowledge to embrace all spheres of politics, operations and community.

The Committee commends the appointment of Mick Keelty as the interim Inspector General and is confident he will perform the duties with integrity.

Government ministers have a responsibility to engage communities across the Basin. The Committee commits to helping and planning future visits through communities if required.

This is a time of significant and increasing hardship amongst our communities. The Committee implores governments regardless of persuasion to collaborate to provide the support that the people of the Murray–Darling Basin need going forward.

### **BACKGROUND**

Members include: Rory Treweek – Chair (Lower Balonne), Phil Duncan (Gwydir), Amy Fay (Goulburn–Murray), Karen Hutchinson (Murrumbidgee), Emily Jenke (Lower Lakes), Howard Jones (Lower Darling), Susan Madden – Authority member (Dubbo), Neil Martinson (Riverland), Katrina Myers (Mid-Murray), Samantha O'Toole (Lower Balonne), Sandra Peckham (Bogan), Jo Pfeiffer (Lower Lakes), Sue Rudd (Sunraysia), David Thurley (Upper Murray), Adrian Weston (Goulburn–Broken).

Members of the Committee were appointed by the Authority after an extensive selection process involving all Basin governments. They reflect the diverse perspectives of towns and communities across the Basin, as well as the diversity of experiences around water reform.

Contact your local Basin Community Committee member via [engagement@mdba.gov.au](mailto:engagement@mdba.gov.au) to share your views on how the Basin Plan is being implemented. See more at [mdba.gov.au/BCC](http://mdba.gov.au/BCC)

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