

Special Talking Water

Thursday 22 November 2012



Murray Irrigation

Murray Darling Basin Plan

The Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, Tony Burke, today signed the final Murray-Darling Basin Plan into law.

The Basin Plan must now be tabled in Parliament as a disallowable instrument and members of either chamber have 15 parliamentary sitting days to move a motion to have the Plan disallowed. If no motion is forthcoming, the Basin Plan remains law. If however, a disallowance is moved and is successful, the Minister cannot bring the Basin Plan back to Parliament for a minimum of six months.

The Basin Plan outlined earlier today by the Minister calls for a water recovery target of 2,750GL. This includes the 971GL southern zone shared recovery target that has been apportioned between the states as agreed by the Basin Ministers. For the NSW Murray, the local recovery target is 262GL and a portion (estimated to be 192GL) of the NSW shared recovery target of 458GL.

The Basin Plan includes a sustainable diversion limit (SDL) adjustment mechanism that allows the 2,750GL recovery target to be adjusted upwards (through new efficiency programs and constraints removal) or downwards (through offsets from non-entitlement initiatives, such as environmental works and measures).

The adjustment mechanism also includes a requirement for the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) to conduct public consultation before finalising the proposed adjustment amounts.

The Minister also outlined his vision of water recovery thus:

2,100GL	Current recovery programs including PIIOP, OFIEP, State priority projects and buyback
650GL	Equivalent recovery through works and measures and better use of water (non-entitlement)
450GL	New efficiency programs, primarily on-farm, to be rolled out from 2017-2024 after constraints removal.

The Minister said he hopes to minimise buyback but that it remains an option if the States fail to put forward the full 650GL worth of water savings projects.

Reaction to the Basin Plan has been varied with the National Farmers' Federation, National Irrigators' Council and NSW Irrigators' Council all saying it is an improvement on previous versions of the Plan, but there remain many issues unresolved.

Environmental groups say that it is a disappointing compromise that won't guarantee the health of the river.

Murray Irrigation will carefully consider the 645 pages of documents relating to the Basin Plan to assess the likely impact on our business and our customers.

For links to the Basin Plan and latest media releases, see the Murray Irrigation website.

Anthony Couroupis
General Manager