

Media release

Monday 15 August 2016



Murray Irrigation

MDBA regional officers welcomed

Murray Irrigation Chairman, Mark Robertson welcomed the announcement by the MDBA that they would employ Regional Engagement Officers throughout the Murray Darling Basin.

“We have been calling for the MDBA to get into the regions for a long time and we see the appointment of the Regional Engagement Officers as an important first step,” Mr Robertson said.

“The development of the Basin Plan has been seen as politically motivated and there is a strong perception that the MDBA is isolated from what is actually happening on the ground.

“Regional Engagement Officers will get to see firsthand the impacts of the decisions that are being made – both positive and negative.

“For example, the consequences of how the river is being managed to meet downstream environmental needs can have negative environmental impacts on the way, such as has been seen with the reducing capacity of the Barmah Choke and bank slumping on the Goulburn River.”

“The MDBA have other options available, including the use of Murray Irrigation infrastructure, for commercial returns, that offer an efficient means of getting water downstream without the losses or the environmental degradation experienced through pushing the river system to capacity.

“By considering these options, the MDBA is more likely to achieve holistic outcomes to deliver on the triple bottom line objectives of environmental outcomes and providing a secure return to the irrigation sector that has been so negatively impacted from the Basin Plan water recovery targets.”

Mr Robertson said a Regional Engagement Officer based in Deniliquin would develop a much greater understanding of the local environment and local issues such as constraints.

“The MDBA hasn’t announced where these Officers are going to be based but we think Deniliquin must be a consideration due to our strategic location at the centre of the hydrologically significant Edward-Wakool Rivers System and surrounded by three red gum forests,” he said.

“There is already an active representative unit in the Murray Group which includes members from irrigation, industry and landholder bodies that has the structure in place for constructive consultation.

“Further, Murray Irrigation already has an established role in delivering local environmental water programs in conjunction with the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder and the Office of Environment.”

MDBA CEO Phillip Glyde also announced he is investigating locations for a southern satellite office for the organisation, which Mr Robertson says should be based on the Murray River at Echuca-Moama where there is adequate infrastructure and accessibility.

“The Murray River is the water source for three states. It is the most significant river system as far as jurisdictional complexity.

“Given the fact that the majority of the water recovery for the Basin Plan is coming out of the Murray system (NSW and Victoria), the economic boost provided by new jobs attached to an MDBA southern office would go some way to mitigating the negative social and economic impacts that have been felt in these regions,” Mr Robertson said.

Mr Robertson said Murray Irrigation is ready to work with regional MDBA staff to ensure issues specific to the area and the whole river system are understood and considered in the decision making process.

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