



16 August 2016

Mr Neil Andrew
Chair
Murray-Darling Basin Authority
GPO Box 1801
CANBERRA ACT 2001

Dear Mr Andrew

Re: Northern Basin Review

We write to you regarding the work currently underway within the Northern Basin Review, the issues under examination by the MDBA and preparation of advice and recommendations to go to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, the Hon Barnaby Joyce as part of the Basin Ministerial Council process.

Our message to you as the body with oversight of the Northern Basin Review, is, enough is enough! This is against the backdrop of the recent MDBA forums where stakeholders had an opportunity to see the analysis of the social and economic impacts of the Basin Plan specific to the Northern Basin Review. Concern is palpable about the current and potential future impacts on Northern Basin communities dependent on irrigated agriculture, as a result of the implementation of the Plan.

Early results of MDBA research show that the number of environmental indicators realised from increased water recovery in the Northern Basin are limited, and that the social and economic impacts in many communities are very real. We also request the release of the comprehensive social and economic data underpinning the Review, including the detailed analysis on the twenty-one towns where the MDBA work has been completed.

The findings to which we have had access, are unacceptable where communities are expected to wear agricultural job losses of up to thirty-five per cent Collarenebri, and similar losses of around thirty-five per cent in Dirranbandi, when to date there is only forty per cent of water recovered in that community.

Given these unacceptable impacts, we request that the Authority, when providing advice to Ministers, reflect their recent directive (as a result of the decision of Commonwealth and State Ministers at the April 2016 Basin Ministers meeting) that greater consideration be given to complementary projects to achieve triple bottom line benefits from the Plan. We therefore urge the Authority to direct maximum effort to this task, including developing the appropriate mechanisms to achieve these measures, with a focus on:

- Carp control through the release of the Carp Herpes virus
- Appropriate management of cold water pollution
- Feral animal control in wetlands such as the Narran Lakes, Gwydir Wetlands and Macquarie Marshes
- Restoration of native fish habitat
- Improvement of fish migration through fishways along the Barwon-Darling

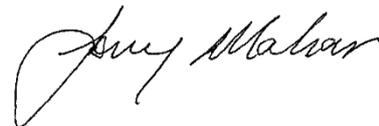
In addition, all possible environmental works and measures should be considered to more effectively manage the efficient delivery and use of environmental water.

We submit that the focus on 'adding more water' as the singular management tool, under the Basin Plan, must cease. Instead, a dedicated effort must focus on a range of measures that provide an equal balance to food and fibre production, the social and economic outcomes for communities and the environment. The promised 'triple bottom line' principle must truly underpin the long term sustainability guiding the Plan and its implementation.

Yours sincerely



Tom Chesson
National Irrigators' Council



Tony Mahar
National Farmers Federation



Mark McKenzie
NSW Irrigators' Council



Michael Murray
Cotton Australia



Travis Tobin
Queensland Farmers' Federation