



National Conference 2015

Motion 1

POSITION STATEMENT

The Murray Darling Association believes that legislation to cap the volume of buyback water within the Murray Darling system must be passed to give certainty to our basin-communities.

MOTION

That the Murray Darling Association continues to advocate strongly for legislation for a 1500 gegalitre cap on water purchases in the Basin to be passed in the Parliament.

PROPOSED:	CR PETER CONNELL	SECONDED:	CR TERRY HOGAN
PROPOSER	MOBILE:	EMAIL:	
CONTACT:			
MEMBER :	DENILQUIN SHIRE	REGION:	REGION 2

BACKGROUND

- The Coalition government went to the 2013 federal election promising to restrict Basin Plan buybacks, by law, to 1,500 gegalitres.
- On 28 May 2015 legislation for a 1500 gegalitre cap on water purchases in the Basin was introduced in the parliament.
- Minister for the Environment Greg Hunt said the *Water Amendment Bill 2015* would ensure certainty for Murray Darling Basin communities.
- The Government needs the support of Labor, and the cross bench Senators, to get any legislation through the Senate.
- Caution should be noted that the cap is an interim step only, a guarantee and is not the solution to providing security for irrigators.
- The “cap on buyback” is a maximum amount of water that may be purchased by direct tender from water owners. It is a cap, not a target.
- Buyback is the worst form of water recovery because it takes water out of the consumptive pool and reduces productive capacity.
- Buyback can create a ‘Swiss cheese effect’ in irrigation districts where operational costs remain fixed yet opportunity to recover those costs is negatively impacted through reduced delivery. Fees for remaining irrigators must go up to cover costs.
- In supporting the cap on buybacks, we acknowledge the importance of local

knowledge contributing to local solutions, and that solutions may sometimes look a bit different to meet the different needs across the basin.

- The cap on buybacks does not constrain the Authority to deliver on its environmental obligations under the plan, but will drive water efficiencies through innovation and collaboration

SUPPORTING MATERIAL

References

- [Water Amendment Bill 2015](#)
- [Water Amendment Bill 2015 – Explanatory Memorandum](#)
- [Murray Darling Association - submission](#)



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Motion 2

POSITION STATEMENT

The Murray Darling Association believes that the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder requires greater flexibility in water trade to facilitate investment in water efficiency infrastructure and to provide greater balanced availability of water for the production of food and producers in order to meet the requirements established under the *Water Act 2007 (Cth)*.

MOTION

That the Murray Darling Association continues to advocate strongly for the Water Act 2007 (Cth) to be amended to

- a) give greater flexibility in the trade of water to deliver stronger environmental, social and economic benefits to basin communities by allowing for re-investment in works and measures, and other options to enhance water efficiencies, and*
- b) require that at the end of each season, independent monitoring, evaluation and audit of the activities of the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder are undertaken and reported back to both the federal government and the basin community.*

PROPOSED:	MR JOE BURNS	SECONDED:	CR JIM HOWARD - NERANDERRA
PROPOSER:	MOBILE:	EMAIL:	
MEMBER :	LEETON SHIRE	REGION:	9 - MURRUMBIDGEE

BACKGROUND

Current Status

- Currently the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder is restricted in both how and when he may trade allocation and what he can do with the proceeds of any sale.
- The independent expert panel tasked to review the Water Act 2007 (Cth) recently recommended (Recommendations 15 & 16) that section 106(2) of the Act be amended to allow trade revenue to be used for other environmental activities in addition to water acquisitions to maximise environmental outcomes.
- Investing in infrastructure projects assists in economic activity and the efficient use of water both on and off farms as well as in the environment.
- Investing in water saving infrastructure measures realizes more sustainable and equitable water savings than water buyback – maximizing the value of every drop.



National Conference 2015

Motion 3

POSITION STATEMENT

The Murray Darling Association believes that all decisions taken in regard to the *Water Act 2007 (Cth)* and the Murray Darling Basin Plan 2012 **must** be determined and evaluated for a triple bottom line outcome.

MOTION

That the Murray Darling Association continues to advocate strongly and lobby the Federal and State Ministers responsible for Water within the Murray Darling Basin to amend the Basin Plan to require consideration of and reporting against social, economic and environmental impacts of decisions taken and implementation strategies under the plan.

PROPOSED:	CR TERRY HOGAN - JERILDERIE	SECONDED:	CR GREG TOLL - CAMPASPE
PROPOSER	MOBILE:	EMAIL:	
CONTACT:		REGION:	REGION 2
MEMBER :	JERILDERIE SHIRE		

BACKGROUND

Current status

- Decision makers - governments, their agencies and water managers - need to more transparently demonstrate how economic, social and environmental considerations are taken into account in decision-making under the Act and the Basin Plan. This point is recognized by the independent expert panel into reporting on the review of the *Water Act 2007 (Cth)*
- An assessment is required on the impacts of the implementation of the Basin Plan on the water market and costs for remaining irrigators.
- Section 3 of The Water Act 2007 (the Act) has a requirement :
 - (c) ...to promote the use and management of the Basin water resources in a way that optimises economic, social and environmental outcomes.
 - However
 - **Section 21 of the Act provides the basis on which Basin Plan was developed.**
 - Section 21 makes only 2 references to social (4) (b) and (4) (c) (v), and

one to economic (4) (b) considerations.

- There is no specific requirement to consider social or economic benefit, or to avoid social or economic harm
- Independent, evidence based monitoring, evaluation and review (MER) is required to assess the effectiveness of achieving the social, economic and environmental objectives of the plan.
- Sustainable and resilient communities are imperative to maintaining a healthy working basin, the future of rural and regional Australia and our nation's food and fiber production.



National Conference 2015

Motion 4

POSITION STATEMENT

The Murray Darling Association believes that the Murray Darling Basin Authority must ensure that water recovered in accordance with the Basin Plan can be delivered to achieve planned outcomes.

MOTION

That the Murray Darling Association continues to advocate strongly that the Murray Darling Basin Authority must ensure that the proposed 2,750GL of environmental water to be recovered, under the plan, can be efficiently, effectively and safely delivered in order to achieve the intended outcomes.

PROPOSED:	JAN BEER	SECONDED:	CR GREG TOLL
PROPOSER	MOBILE:	EMAIL:	
CONTACT:			
MEMBER :	INDIVIDUAL MEMBER	REGION:	REGION 2

BACKGROUND

Current Status

- The Constraints Management Strategy has been criticised by many stakeholders as not reflective of the community consultations and concerns held about the ability to safely deliver larger volumes of water.
- Private property and business impacts including elevated risks of flooding caused by the proposed high level environmental flows must be assessed as part of the constraints management strategy.
- Investments in environmental efficiencies achieved through Sustainable Diversion Limits (SDL*) offset projects can help reduce the social and economic impacts on affected landholders and tourism. Such projects would allow 650GL of the Basin Plan's 2,750GL recovery volumes to be achieved through creating efficiencies in river operations and environmental water use.
- Supply measures are works, river operations or rule changes that enable the use of less water but still achieve the Plan's environmental outcomes. Ensuring

that these measures are devised and delivered in consultation with community to ensure efficiency and effectiveness will benefit the environment and reduce the social and economic impact of water recovery to achieve the Basin Plan's goal.

- The benefits and impacts of water used for environmental purposes must be identifiable and transparent and measured via agreed monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms.

Future Action

- A list of actions that the proposer/seconded anticipate will constitute the strategies to address the motion's desired outcomes.

Time Line

- An assessment of the length of the project implementation and time milestones to be achieved.



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Motion 5

POSITION STATEMENT

The Murray Darling Association is concerned that current entitlement provisions on the trade of water have an adverse impact on sustainable agricultural productivity, create inequity for farmers in the market place and encouraging speculation by non-agricultural interests in the trading of water rights.

MOTION

That the Murray Darling Association seek a formal investigation into

- a) the effects of speculation by non-productive holders of water licences in the Murray Darling Basin.*
- b) suggested methodologies that could inhibit the purchase of water licences solely for speculative purposes as opposed to productive use.*
- c) the costs and benefits of re-bundling water licences with land ownership*

PROPOSED:	CR DENNIS PATTERSON	SECONDED:	CR BERNARD CURTAIN
PROPOSER	MOBILE:	EMAIL:	
CONTACT:			
MEMBER :	GREATER SHEPPARTON CITY	REGION:	REGION 2

BACKGROUND

Current Status

- Separation of water from land, and unbundling has led to speculators and superannuation funds entering the market.
- Price of water is unsustainable, impacting farmers and food producers



National Conference 2015

Motion 6

POSITION STATEMENT

The Murray Darling Association believes that there is an urgent need to establish a national water plan to ensure a consistent and unified approach to the management of water across all states.

MOTION

That the MDA supports the development of a National Water Plan

PROPOSED:	CR TERRY HOGAN	SECONDED:	VIV MCGEE
PROPOSER	MOBILE:	EMAIL:	
CONTACT:			
MEMBER :	RAMROC	REGION:	REGION 2

BACKGROUND

Current Status

- A water plan is a legally enforceable that defines the allowable level of diversion or take of water from a defined water resource that is environmentally sustainable, and sets out the arrangements for sharing the water available for consumptive use among competing users.
- Water planning is essentially the vehicle for the setting of sustainable environmental, social and economic objectives for the management of water resources.
- Currently states are responsible for completing their own plans, with all state plans due for completion by 2014. The following website shows the current status of incomplete plans <http://www.environment.gov.au/topics/water/australian-government-water-leadership/national-water-initiative/status-incomplete>
- This approach is fractured and fails to meet the need for a national approach to what is a universal resource requiring management at the local level
- The National Water Commission Act of 2004 has been repealed, and the National Water Commission has now been abolished. The National Water Commission played an important role in the monitoring and auditing of water reform policy implementation

and management nationally since the National Water Initiative was agreed to a decade ago.

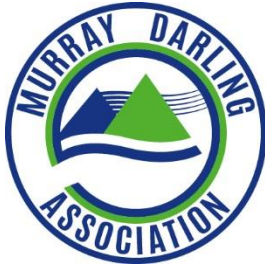
- There is now effectively no National Water Plan

Future Action

- A list of actions that the proposer/seconded anticipate will constitute the strategies to address the motion's desired outcomes.

Time Line

- An assessment of the length of the project implementation and time milestones to be achieved.



National Conference 2015

Motion 7

POSITION STATEMENT

Murray Darling Association believes that social and economic wellbeing of our communities is a shared responsibility, and that positive, collaborative projects are well placed to yield balanced outcomes and benefits to both individual communities and the Basin as a whole. The MDA acknowledges and supports the work done by the Water Impacted Communities Alliance, and the Wakool Shire.

MOTION

Murray Darling Association pursue a regional economic structural adjustment and resolve to:

- Adopt a social wellbeing and economic development focus, working with communities through engagement and consultation;
- Promote water 'education'; and
- Provide strong regional advocacy and leadership.

PROPOSED:	CR NEIL GOREY	SECONDED:	CR OSCAR AERTSSEN
PROPOSER	MOBILE:	EMAIL:	
CONTACT:			
MEMBER :	WAKOOL SHIRE	REGION:	REGION 3

BACKGROUND

Current Status

- Wakool Shire Council on behalf of the Water Impacted Communities Alliance (WICA) requests that the Murray Darling Association pursue a regional economic structural adjustment and resolve to:
 - Adopt a social wellbeing and economic development focus, working with communities through engagement and consultation;
 - Promote water 'education'; and
 - Provide strong regional advocacy and leadership.
- Wakool Shire Council initiated the Water Impacted Communities Alliance in late 2014 by facilitating a round table discussion with representatives from a wide range

of organisations active in the Wakool Shire and neighbouring communities. All participants acknowledged that Wakool Shire and the surrounding region has experienced significant impacts from Murray Darling Basin Plan implementation along with a number of other impacts including the millennium drought, the National Parks (River Red Gum) Act 2010 and changing farming practices.

- Wakool Local Government Area (LGA) has a high level of dependence upon the agriculture and forestry sector and sees effects on these sectors amplified when compared to other areas with more diverse economies. ABS Census data shows that in the period 2001 – 2011 employment fell by 40% in this sector in Wakool LGA¹.
- The Water Impacted Communities Alliance is of the view that structural adjustment is required beyond the Murray-Darling Basin Regional Economic Diversification Programme.
- The rationale is for a structural adjustment process that is not so much about the amount of change, but the rate of change. Fast change, which is driven by government policy, and slow change, which is driven by the potential impacts of climate change are central to this notion
- The Water Impacted Communities Alliance is a collaborative initiative formed to advocate for the region on the ongoing impacts from the Murray Darling Basin Plan, National Parks (River Red Gum) Act 2010, climate change and changing farming practices.
- The Water Impacted Communities Alliance will help drive the development of a Structural Adjustment Process and seek Federal, State and Local Government, Industry and Community support.

Future Action

The Water Impacted Communities Alliance has developed key strategies to guide its activities;

- Strengthen the irrigated farming sector
- Provide certainty and support for other key agriculture sectors such as grains, alternative crops and sheep
- Facilitate and support the development of value-adding food processing and related manufacturing
- Encourage research and development to support industry innovation and efficiency
- Build connected liveable urban centres
- Promote Wakool Shire, and other water impacted communities as a great place to live, work and invest
- Strengthen Regional leadership.

SUPPORTING MATERIAL

- References
Summary Report: Economic Impact Assessment of the Murray Darling Basin Plan on Wakool Shire, October 2014. Michael Connell & Assocs.



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Motion 8

POSITION STATEMENT

The Murray Darling Association believes that the boundaries of the Murray Darling Basin should be formally defined in order to raise the awareness for tourists, farmers, residents and commuters travelling through the Basin.

MOTION

That the Murray Darling Association negotiates directly with the responsible authority in each of Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Victoria to develop a project to have signs installed on all highways and main roads entering the Murray Darling Basin in order to give effect to the concept that "You are now entering the Murray Darling Basin".

PROPOSED:	CR PETER MANSFIELD	SECONDED:	DON MCPHEE
PROPOSER	MOBILE:	EMAIL:	
CONTACT:			
MEMBER :	MOIRA SHIRE COUNCIL	REGION:	REGION 2

BACKGROUND

Current Status

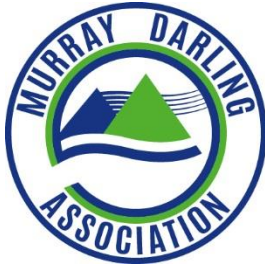
The Murray Darling Association believes that the boundaries of the Murray Darling Basin should be formally defined in order to raise the awareness for tourists, farmers, residents and commuters travelling through the Basin.

Future Action

- The executive of the MDA will pursue funding opportunities to fund delivery of this project.

Time Line

- An assessment of the length of the project implementation and time milestones to be achieved.



National Conference 2015

Motion 9

POSITION STATEMENT

The Murray Darling Association supports the preservation of productive agricultural land.

MOTION

That the Murray Darling Association

- a) oppose, and advocate strongly against the approval granted for an open cut coal mine on the Liverpool Plains in the Murray Darling Basin, and*
- b) demand that urgent consideration be given to the withdrawal of such approval, and*
- c) Call on government, both State and Federal to develop a policy to protect food producing lands from mining and resource development in the Murray Darling Basin.*

PROPOSED:		SECONDED:
PROPOSER	BOB STEWART	EMAIL:
CONTACT:		
MEMBER :	TUMUT SHIRE COUNCIL	REGION:

BACKGROUND

The recent approval of the Shenhua open cut coal mine on the Liverpool Plains places at risk one of Australia's great food producing areas. The self-mulching black soils of the Liverpool Plains are renowned for their inherent capacity for cropping.

The plains are underlain with a network of high productivity aquifers that provide a valuable and sustainable water resource.

Australia's agricultural land is a finite resource, with approximately only 10% of its landmass suitable for soil based agriculture and livestock production as much is marginal with respect to water and nutrients.

Future Action

The MDA must develop a clear policy position that Food producing lands are protected from resource development.