

Have your say on setting new water extraction limits from Basin rivers and waterways

The Murray-Darling Basin Authority today released a major discussion paper on the issues involved in setting new Basin-wide limits to the amount of water that can be taken from the Basin's rivers, waterways and groundwater.

Authority chair Mr Mike Taylor said the new limits will form an essential part of the Basin Plan the Authority is developing to put the management of water resources throughout the Basin on a sustainable footing.

The new limits are known as "sustainable diversion limits" or "SDLs" and will be set using the best available scientific knowledge and extensive consideration of social and economic impacts.

"The SDLs will also, for the first time, set limits on the use of groundwater, which has grown significantly since the Cap was introduced in 1995.

"The discussion paper will be a major opportunity for interested individuals, communities and organisations to input and provide feedback on the preparation of the Basin Plan.

"The document is a technical issues paper and does not take any position on appropriate levels for SDLs," Mr Taylor said. "Actual SDLs will be put forward when the proposed Basin Plan is released for a four month public comment period in mid 2010.

In line with the *Water Act 2007*, the SDLs will reflect an environmentally sustainable level of water take that does not compromise key environmental assets, key ecosystem functions, key environmental outcomes or the productive base of the water resource.

The paper explores some of the key issues the MDBA will need to consider in setting SDLs for the Basin Plan, including:

- environmental considerations;
- the interaction with state water management arrangements;
- the types of take and interception activities that should be limited by the SDL;
- optimisation of economic, social and environmental outcomes;
- connectivity between surface water and groundwater; and
- how SDLs will be set and expressed.

How to send us your feedback – Submissions need to reach the Authority by 18 December 2009. There is no specified format for a submission. They can range from a short letter on a particular topic to a substantial document covering a range of issues.

Submissions can be in any form - email, fax, audio cassette or mail. Submissions will be posted on the MDBA website's home page as soon as they can be processed.

For more information download the SDLs issue paper from www.mdba.gov.au or contact engagement@mdba.gov.au for a printed copy.

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