

MEDIA RELEASE – combined

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Critical water forum to discuss Basin Plan's potential impacts

All community members from across the Murrumbidgee Valley are urged to attend a Water Forum on Wednesday April 21 in Griffith to discuss the impacts of the soon to be released draft Murray-Darling Basin Plan. The forum will be held from 5pm to 7.30pm at the Yoogali Club, Mackay Avenue, Griffith.

The Plan, due for release in July, is being developed by the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) and stands to have the largest single impact on water availability in the Murrumbidgee Valley in the history of water reform. Irrigation representative groups, local councils and Chamber of Commerce throughout the Murrumbidgee Valley (Griffith, Leeton, Coleambally, Carrathool, Jerilderie, Hay and all towns in between) are hosting the information forum, rather than holding individual member group meetings.

Murrumbidgee Irrigation's Chairman, Mrs Gillian Kirkup, said "regional irrigation businesses, peak bodies and local government groups have been active on this issue for some time and with the draft Basin Plan soon to be released, it is time our communities had the opportunity to learn more and be aware of potential impacts."

"The key area of risk presented by the Basin Plan lies in the setting of Sustainable Diversion Limits (SDLs) for the Murrumbidgee and across the Basin. The most likely outcome is that these new limits will be lower than those currently in place, which will mean less water availability in the area," added Trent Gardiner, Chairman of Coleambally Irrigation.

Industry representatives from Murrumbidgee Irrigation, Coleambally Irrigation, Murrumbidgee High Security Irrigators, Murrumbidgee Groundwater Inc, Murrumbidgee Private Irrigators, RAMROC, Chamber of Commerce as well as the peak irrigation bodies of NSWIC Irrigators' Council and the National Irrigators' Council will form a panel on the evening to run a hypothetical session responding to questions raised by the audience. Although details of the Draft Plan are yet to be released, the joint convenors of the forum believe it is essential that our communities are made aware of the impending Plan.

Riverina and Murray Regional Organisation of Councils (RAMROC) Chairman, Terry Hogan commented that "the implications are potentially enormous for irrigation-dependent regions such as the MIA, Coleambally and Murray regions where water is the lifeblood and runs the economies."

The forum is open to anyone throughout the Murrumbidgee Valley whose livelihood is dependent on irrigation water. Local businesses, community groups, legal and banking representatives are encouraged to attend the forum as the impact of the Basin Plan will potentially impact right across communities and not just irrigators.

Entry to the forum is free. For further information, please visit Murrumbidgee Irrigation's website www.mirrigation.com.au, contact MI on 6962 0200 or email info@mirrigation.com.au.

Ends - For further information regarding this media release, please contact Matthew Linnegar, General Manager Corporate & Customers, Murrumbidgee Irrigation on 02 6962 0200.

