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For immediate release

MI REJECTS WENTWORTH GROUP REPORT

The opening page of the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists website begins with the quote “Committed and knowledgeable scientists can make a valuable contribution to public policy.” With the release today of the Wentworth Group’s ‘Sustainable Diversion Limits in the Murray-Darling Basin’ report, the question all Australians should be asking is whether this group of scientists should be influencing public policy, providing social engineering solutions or sticking to their area of expertise – science.

The report recommends reductions in diversions required within each of the Murray-Darling Basin Catchments to restore environmental health across the Basin. The recommended reduction for the Murrumbidgee is an astounding 65% which is significantly greater than most catchments in the Basin, where the recommended reduction is less than 10%. Further, the report claims that in the Murrumbidgee catchment, the reduction in profits would only be 26%.

Murrumbidgee Irrigation’s (MI) Chairman, Gillian Kirkup said “You don’t need to be a Rhodes Scholar to figure out that a 65% reduction in water availability in an area doesn’t equate to only a 26% reduction in regional profits, especially in the MIA, which adds enormous value to agricultural production. It just doesn’t add up.”

“The assertion that in order to restore the Murray-Darling Basin to health you simply target one or two catchment communities and drain them of their livelihood in the national interest is dangerous in the extreme and well beyond the remit or expertise of the Wentworth Group as scientists.”

“This report has the capacity to set communities against each other and is clearly designed as a political stunt to soften the blow for our community should the MDBA come up with some lesser figure.”

“If the Wentworth Group truly believe that it is within their power to unilaterally redistribute people’s rights and displace whole communities, then I invite them to the Murrumbidgee Valley so that they can identify who is to stay and who is to go,” she said.

Mrs Kirkup added that MI’s preferred position is to recover water for the environment through continuation of its buyback program from willing sellers and investment in infrastructure programs.

“Further, water recovery/buybacks shouldn’t target one catchment over another.”

MI rejects the Wentworth Group report and urges the Commonwealth and the MDBA to do the same.

Ends

For further information regarding this media release, please contact Gillian Kirkup, Chairman, Murrumbidgee Irrigation on 02 6962 0247.