



## Campaign Media Release

# PRIME MINISTER MINISTER FOR WATER

### BUYING BACK THE WATER OUR RIVERS NEED

The Gillard Labor Government will build on its strong record of making our rivers sustainable and will provide certainty for farmers reliant on the Murray Darling Basin.

Since the Government started buy backs in February 2008, Federal Labor has bought back one out of every twenty litres of the Murray Darling Basin's irrigation water and returned it to the rivers - some 900 billion litres of water entitlement.

This is nearly five times Adelaide's yearly water supply.

By the time the Murray Darling Basin Plan comes into effect in 2014, a re-elected Gillard Labor Government will have returned one out of every seven litres of irrigation water to the rivers, through a combination of buy backs and more efficient irrigation.

We anticipate that by the time the Plan comes into effect, Federal Labor's buy backs and infrastructure investment will have already delivered much of what the rivers will require to be sustainable.

If re-elected, we will bridge any remaining gap between what has been returned and what is required to be returned by the independent Murray Darling Basin Authority.

The Gillard Labor Government will do this by continuing to buy back water each year beyond 2014, until we have returned all the water the Authority determines our rivers need in the final Basin plan next year. We will do this consistent with the historical rate of purchase under this Government.

Any buy backs will be subject to the availability of water for purchase from willing sellers.

The Gillard Labor Government is determined to provide the rivers with the water they need, and to provide certainty for farmers using water from the rivers.

Now farmers can move forward with confidence knowing they will have options to sell their entitlements when the Basin Plan comes into force.

Federal Labor established the independent Authority to take the management of our rivers out of the hands of bickering politicians.

The Authority is required by law to prepare a long term Plan for the Murray Darling Basin, which sets out Sustainable Diversion Limits - how much water can be taken from the rivers while maintaining their health, at the same time as balancing social and economic impacts.

The Authority has said it will release a Guide to the Basin Plan after the election, and will release a Draft Plan by the end of the year, before finalising it next year.

Until the Plan comes into effect, the Gillard Labor Government will continue to roll out \$4.4 billion in new, efficient irrigation systems under the Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure Program. This is upgrading leaky, old infrastructure in the Basin – so farmers can keep growing food with less water.

And we will continue to buy back water, under our \$3.1 billion Restoring the Balance in the Murray Darling Basin plan, with new tenders to commence following the release of the consultation Guide to the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

For too long, too much water has been taken out of our rivers, leaving them parched.

The Liberal-National Coalition under Tony Abbott has said that returning water to the rivers is nothing more than “theft” from farmers.

Over nearly 12 years in government, the Coalition did not buy a single drop of water for the Murray.

We will deliver this commitment in a manner consistent with our strict fiscal rules, which will see the Budget returned to surplus in three years, three years early and which will keep the Budget in surplus over the medium term.

**ADELAIDE**  
**10 AUGUST 2010**

**COMMUNICATIONS UNIT: Phone: (02) 9384 2220 | Fax: (02) 9264 2213**  
[www.alp.org.au](http://www.alp.org.au)

**AUTHORISED N.MARTIN for the ALP, 5/ 9 Sydney Ave. Barton ACT.**