

10 August 2010 - For immediate release

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BUY-BACK ONLY PART OF SOLUTION

- **ALP commits to buying back water gap**
- **No detail on Plan but ALP appear to know the water cut number (SDL)**
- **Basin Plan potentially Australia's biggest 'de-population policy' of inland Australia**

Murrumbidgee Irrigation (MI) has welcomed today's announcement by the Prime Minister to provide certainty for farmers reliant on the Murray-Darling Basin (MDB). The ALP if re-elected will purchase any 'gap' between current water use caps and new Sustainable Diversion Limits (SDLs) through the market.

MI Chairman Gillian Kirkup says that while the further recognition of water users' property rights by recovering water for the environment through the market is welcomed, this has been overshadowed by other comments made today by the ALP.

Mrs Kirkup said "MI are extremely concerned that the ALP appear to know the size of the water cut before the Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) have even released the draft Basin Plan."

In today's joint media release from Prime Minister Gillard and Minister Wong, the ALP state that they have already purchased one in every twenty litres of the Murray-Darling's irrigation water equalling 900 billion litres and further say that by 2014, this number will become one in every seven litres.

"Communities right across the Basin would be in complete shock if this were true.

"Is the ALP saying that by 2014 over 2,500 billion litres will be removed from productive use for the environment? If this statement is correct then the promised community consultation process is a complete sham. The ALP must come clean on this and let the voting public know what their intentions are before August 21," said Mrs Kirkup

MI also warns that getting the Basin Plan right in terms of balance is the crucial step for Basin communities and the nation.

"If the proposed cuts from the Basin Plan are anything like the ALP numbers, communities will be decimated and Australians will pay more for their food.

"The Basin Plan is potentially Australia's biggest 'de-population policy' of regional Australia. The government seems currently more focused and concerned about Immigration Policy than it does about the livelihoods of nearly 2 million Australians who live in the Basin and grow 60% of Australia's food requirements.

"What we have repeatedly called for is a Basin Plan that balances the needs of the environment with people. What we look likely to end up with is a Plan that focuses solely on the environment and this will result in thousands of job losses across the Basin and affect all Australians from the family farm to the supermarket checkout.

"MI believes that a balanced Basin Plan must be achieved and calls on all political parties to commit to a review of the Water Act 2007 to achieve this," concluded Mrs Kirkup.

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