

The Hon. Murray Water

Minister for the Environment and Water

Parliament House

Canberra, ACT

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April 20, 2026

Dear Minister Watts,

REQUEST FOR URGENT AND IMMEDIATE ACTION ON EXISTING MDBA ADVICE

We hope you enjoyed your trip to northern Victoria last week. It's unfortunate you didn't have some extra time available to visit Deniliquin.

I'm writing to you in my capacity as Chair of the Murray Regional Strategy Group (MRSRG), a coalition of industry, community, and irrigation groups across the NSW Murray Valley.

We met with the Chair of the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) last week. We had a very fruitful and robust discussion about the Basin Plan Review that the MDBA is currently undertaking. We'll be providing a submission, and we'll be strongly encouraging the communities we represent to do the same.

As you'd appreciate, we've spent a couple of months now interrogating the *Discussion Paper* the MDBA has prepared to support the Review of the Basin Plan. We have engaged a water policy expert (Claire Miller) to assist us in this task.

We're deeply troubled by the data-sets and analysis that the MDBA is using to evaluate whether Sustainable Diversion Limits (SDLs) are currently performing as they should. This matters to us because we are right in the firing line if the MDBA advises you that more water recovery is needed in the southern Basin.

Based on our collective expertise, we believe the data-sets and analysis provided by the MDBA in its *Discussion Paper* already make the case that no more water recovery is needed anywhere in the southern Basin. Critically, the MDBA also makes it clear that there will be limited funding available to support all aspects of future Basin Plan implementation.

As such, we would like to understand why you are not acting on the expert advice of the MDBA and stopping all environmental water recovery immediately? Given the constrained fiscal conditions we're all being warned about, it seems that more (and

better) Basin Plan outcomes would be achieved if that investment was directed elsewhere.

We strongly encourage you to act urgently on the MDBA's existing advice, and stop Commonwealth investment in activities that no longer provide value for money when it comes to Basin Plan implementation. Instead, we ask you to begin immediate consultation with Basin communities to co-design a fit-for-purpose approach to utilising all remaining Commonwealth funds.

Yours sincerely,

Geoff Moar

Chair - 0412 193 799

Murray Regional Strategy Group

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cc Daryl Quinlivan, Andrew McConville