



Australian Dairy Industry Council Inc.

14 December 2010

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Rural Affairs and Transport
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

ADIC SUBMISSION TO THE SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON RURAL AFFAIRS AND TRANSPORT – inquiry into the management of the Murray-Darling Basin

On behalf of our industry stakeholders the Australian Dairy Industry Council (ADIC) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Rural Affairs and Transport's inquiry into the management of the Murray-Darling Basin.

The submission attached outlines the dairy industry concerns with the Murray-Darling Basin Authority's (the Authority) *Guide and Technical Background to the Proposed Basin Plan*.

The dairy industry is integral to the Murray-Darling Basin and we highlight the importance of working with government to build a better Basin that can sustainably support farming families, regional communities and key environmental assets into the future. We understand that this will require further reform of water use within the Basin.

However successful reform cannot be unilaterally imposed. It requires close cooperation between all parties to develop a common understanding of the need for (and likely impact of) change, the alternative pathways to reform and the trade-offs associated with different options.

The Basin Plan will be an important element in this process of change and reform. However, the ADIC does not see that the Guide, as currently drafted, provides a base from which the Authority can develop a balanced plan that will help build a better, more sustainable Basin.

Instead, the Guide has created confusion and increased uncertainty among dairy farmers and their communities about the future availability and security of access to water in their regions.

The scientific analyses underpinning the Guides analysis are not fully developed. As presented, they inadequately explain what specific environmental outcomes (and non-flow outcomes) are intended to be achieved in key environmental assets throughout the Basin.

The use of end of system flows does not provide clear environmental outcomes nor explain what will be achieved in different catchments. This makes it difficult to comprehend what environmental benefits will be generated from specific Sustainable Diversion Limits (SDLs). It also makes it difficult to assess what options are available to optimise environmental water delivery in order to achieve desired outcomes with the least impact on communities.

Whatever the case, the ADIC urges the Australian Government and the Authority to develop a comprehensive planning process that aims for sustainability for all stakeholders and examines practical measures for achieving well-defined environmental outcomes.

Achieving a sustainable basin requires a clear understanding and consensus on the Basin's environmental water requirements and careful consideration of all options for achieving this. This will only occur if the Plan is developed through an open, inclusive process that engages and values all partners in the Basin's future – government (Federal, State and Local), industry, service provider, experts in science and the environment and local communities. Given our record of successfully managing change and our position within the Basin, the dairy industry believes we can add significant value to this process.

Therefore, the ADIC calls on the Authority and the Federal Government to involve the dairy industry in the development of the draft Basin Plan and any associated reports that support the decision making process.

Yours sincerely,

Wes Judd
Chairman