



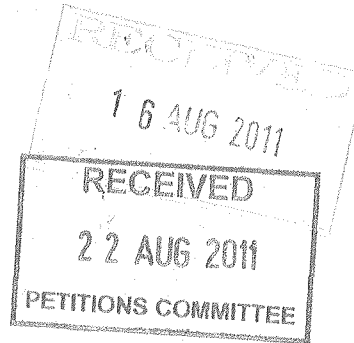
504-830

The Hon Tony Burke MP

Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities

C11/6716

The Hon John Murphy MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Petitions
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600



15 AUG 2011

Dear Mr Murphy

Thank you for your letter of 7 July 2011, regarding a petition for consideration by the Standing Committee concerning the Basin Plan being prepared by the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (the Authority). I note the petition asking the House of Representatives to ensure the Basin Plan returns enough water to Murray-Darling Basin.

The Australian Government is committed to delivering a healthy river system, strong regional communities and sustainable food production in the Murray-Darling Basin. This will be achieved through the development of the Basin Plan by the Authority and through key investments under the government's *Water for the Future* program.

The Chair of the Authority, the Hon Craig Knowles, has indicated that he expects work on the draft Basin Plan to be finalised by mid October for exhibition in November. Once the draft Plan is released there will be a minimum 20 week public consultation period, followed by a further opportunity for state governments to provide input. The Chair said he will work closely with communities and stakeholders throughout the process.

The government has committed significant funding to reduce possible impacts of the Basin Plan, including a commitment to bridge the gap between current diversion limits and those allowed under the Plan. Water will only be recovered from irrigators who choose to participate in the government's programs - there will be no compulsory acquisition by the Commonwealth. Furthermore, our investments in more efficient irrigation infrastructure will help place irrigators, irrigation industries and communities on a better footing to deal with reduced water availability.

I remain committed to delivering a final plan for the Murray-Darling Basin to the Parliament in 2012. Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention.

Yours sincerely

Tony Burke