

Tabled by Senator Joyce

Attachment A

18/10/11

Murray-Darling authority criticises some states

Sam Burgess

Updated September 08, 2011 13:03:33

The chairman of the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) has criticised some states for their attitude to the reform of the ailing river system at a conference on Queensland's Western Downs.

MDBA chairman Craig Knowles addressed the Murray-Darling Association conference at Dalby this morning, also saying the authority's revised draft plan will be released in November.

Although he did not name specific states, Mr Knowles says a lack of cooperation has hindered the drafting of the plan for the management of the Murray-Darling.

"The people of Australia expect a partnership," he said.

"The people of Australia expect their governments to do better on something as fundamentally important as the strength and survival of some communities in regional Australia because of water availability."

Mr Knowles says the draft plan has been delayed to November to give the states and communities a greater say in its development.

"This plan had to involve the states, their knowledge, their history, and their capacity to be partners," he said.

Mr Knowles also assured farmers that reductions to water entitlements will occur gradually.

Geoff Penton, from the Queensland Murray-Darling Committee, also addressed the conference today.

Mr Penton urged the MDBA to find other ways of restoring the river system's health than just cuts to water entitlements.

He says the MDBA's plan to reform water use is another challenge the committee faces in the management of the river system.

Mr Penton says the problem of salinity from coal seam gas (CSG) operations and the threat of drought are also major concerns for landholders.

He has asked the MDBA to consider all the issues.

"There's certainly some opportunity to do a lot better job with the water we have," he said.

Nationals Senator Barnaby Joyce will speak later today about the effects of Queensland floodwaters on the Murray River.

Delegates will also hear from the coal seam gas industry.

Topics: murray-darling-basin, rivers, rural, mining-rural, irrigation, agricultural-policy, federal-state-issues, activism-and-lobbying, oil-and-gas, mining-industry, coal, industrial, environmental-issues, dalby-4405, toowoomba-4350, nsw, qld, sa, vic

First posted September 08, 2011 12:32:40

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PHOTO: The Murray-Darling Basin Authority's revised plan for the river system will be released in November. (Sarah Clarke: ABC News)

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