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**Murray River Group of Council's
Briefing note: Tony Windsor MP
Wednesday 30 March 2011**

The Murray Group of Councils are extremely concerned about:

- The need for the Plan to be developed in the context of a vision for the Murray-Darling Basin as a whole.

Core issues include:

- Environmental Issues have been placed ahead of people;
- The 'Guide to the Murray –Darling Basin Plan' has placed little consideration on the drastic effects proposed cuts to water allocations would have on communities
- The social and economic impact assessments have been based on large scale, unrealistic models, not on small rural communities;
- Water savings already achieved through improved infrastructure, innovation and sustainable farming practices have not been adequately recognised;
- All of the above have placed additional stress on communities already vulnerable from years of drought;
- An announcement of additional research into social and economic impacts commissioned by the Authority is welcomed, however should have been addressed prior to the development and issue of the Guide; and
- While the Authority has urged that the 'science' be challenged, the community and even the local government are not well positioned to do this.

The Group asks that;

- The Authority acknowledges the impact the Plan will have on communities;
- Social and economic impacts on the community relating to the proposed Sustainable Diversion Limits (SDLs) are clearly identified and included in the proposed draft Murray Darling Basin Plan;
- Water savings already achieved through improved Infrastructure, innovation and sustainable farming practices are recognised as contributing to improved environmental flows and included in the calculation of any sustainable diversion limits;
- Innovative Infrastructure and practises are used to manage environmental assets and deliver environmental flows, aimed at achieving the required outcomes for the environment with the least amount of water necessary thus minimising the need for the buy-back scheme.
- The Authority recommend to Government that water buybacks schemes are strategically planned and conducted so as not to disadvantage remaining farmers. This requires strategic coordination with local government planning schemes, irrigation system investment and water buyback programs;
- The Authority commits to establishing a consultation process that rebuilds community involvement and ownership of the outcome through the process; and
- A process that affirms the science be established that involves State Government departments and Catchment Management Authorities in particular. This should leverage and integrate work done to date, such as the Northern Victoria Sustainable Water Strategy.

