



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

MEDIA ALERT

Issued: 26 May 2003

Murray-Darling Basin Commission to appear at inquiry into future water supplies for Australia's rural industries and communities

Public hearing in Canberra, Wednesday 28 May 2003

The House of Representatives Agriculture Committee is examining the role of the Commonwealth in ensuring adequate and sustainable future water supplies for communities and industries in rural and regional Australia.

This Wednesday (28 May) the committee will conduct the thirteenth public hearing of its inquiry. Appearing will be the Murray Darling Basin Commission.

The Murray Darling Basin Commission (submission 144, available on the inquiry website) contends that the Murray–Darling Basin Initiative has been successful in putting in place policies and strategies that have improved water security, slowed environmental degradation, mitigated the impact of salinity, and improved water use efficiency.

The submission suggests that the most critical challenge now is to improve environmental management of the Basin's rivers in order to prevent further degradation and improve the health of the river system. It contends that a healthier river system and continued agricultural growth can only be achieved by substantially improving water use efficiency.

The Committee Chair, Mrs Kay Elson MP, says the inquiry has generated considerable interest around Australia, with more than 150 submissions received from concerned organisations and individuals. All submissions appear on the inquiry website at:

www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/primind/watering/subs.htm

"Getting water management right, which includes the balance of allocations between different users, is crucial not only for the prosperity of rural Australia, but the nation as a whole," Mrs Elson said.

Media and the public are most welcome to attend the public hearing, details of which appear below.

PUBLIC HEARING: 5pm, Wednesday 28 May 2003
WHERE: Committee Room 1R3, Parliament House, Canberra
Scheduled Witness: Murray Darling Basin Commission

A transcript of the hearing will appear on the inquiry website a few days after the hearing.

For media comment, please contact:

Mrs Kay Elson MP, Chair, House Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Committee, on (02) 6277 4274

For background information, including the full terms of reference and copies of submissions, please contact the Committee secretariat on (02) 6277 4500 or visit the Inquiry website at

www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/primind/watering/index.htm