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18 June 2012

Regional Australia Committee  
Chairperson  
Mr Tony Windsor MP

Dear Mr Windsor MP

**Re: Regional Australia Committee inquiry to environmental works and measures.**

I write to you in relation to the Regional Australia Committee seeking submissions addressing:

*'the potential role that new environmental works and measures projects could play in partially offsetting SDL reductions under the Basin Plan, focussing particularly on prospective project proposals identified by state government and community interests.'*

Business SA welcomes the commitment by the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, The Hon Tony Burke MP, in asking the Regional Australia Committee to undertake a limited inquiry into the Murray Darling Basin Authority's proposed Basin Plan. This plan is a once in a lifetime opportunity to provide long term health and sustainability to the life blood of Australia's prime food producing regions.

Business SA is South Australia's leading business membership organisation, representing thousands of businesses through direct membership and affiliated industry associations. We represent businesses across all industry sectors, ranging in size from micro-business to multi-national companies. Business SA advocates on behalf of business to propose legislative, regulatory and policy reforms and programs for sustainable economic growth in South Australia.

Business SA supports a long standing Environment Committee featuring a diverse group of industry leaders. The Environment Committee has a clear mission to promote and contribute to environmentally sustainable development in South Australia through influencing legislation, regulations, policies and programs to achieve best practice in the business community.

The Environment Committee meets regularly to consider all matters relevant to environmental sustainability, including, energy, water security, climate change, waste management and compliance to assist Business SA to develop environmental policy in order to inform and influence Governments and other decision makers.

Business SA recently provided comment to the Murray Darling Basin Authority in relation to the Draft Basin Plan and to the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities in relation to the Commonwealth Environmental Water terms of trade.

In submissions to the Murray Darling Basin Authority Business SA has consistently advocated that best technologies in works and measures are essential in environmental asset management. Business SA has consistently advocated that such infrastructure upgrades will provide water savings that must be socialised prior to any water returns from irrigation licences are negotiated.



Business SA identified within the submission to the Murray Darling Basin Authority on the Draft Plan that a full audit of possible works and measures should be commissioned. Business SA believes that a whole of system approach includes applying the same rigour to that of environmental assets as well as irrigation infrastructure.

Business SA continues to recommend a whole of system infrastructure audit and appropriate investment in works and measures, returning water lost through inefficient systems back to the environment, in effect reducing the take from irrigator licences.

The full extent of water savings remains unclear, if infrastructure along the Basin was at a best practice level; the cost of these upgrades also remains unclear. Ensuring all irrigation delivery systems are modernised, efficiencies calculated and gained prior to any further buy backs provides an equitable option; one that provides greater long term sustainability of irrigation based industries and a maximum return to the environment.

Business SA recommends the same vigour be applied to environmental infrastructure opportunities as irrigation delivery infrastructure. It is apparent that controlled management of environmental watering can provide events that depict flood and drought. Technology and infrastructure spend must occur at significant sites to ensure the best management model is implemented. While water returns may be limited in the design and build of such infrastructure, long term management of greater areas of environmental asset may be realised with less water, thereby providing a potential return to irrigators.

Business SA calls for a NO borders approach to Murray Darling Basin water management, an approach that must not be limited to establishing sustainable diversion limits, but must instead apply to the management of all water sources.

In conclusion the socialising of all environmental water savings through a full audit and infrastructure upgrade is fundamental. This one, individual act of dealing with environmental water and assets in the same way as irrigation water and assets will provide security to river users as promised of a plan that is holistic.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this comment on such an important issue for South Australian business.

Yours sincerely

**Peter Vaughan**  
Chief Executive Office