



*Bringing a community perspective to the Murray–Darling Basin*

# BASIN COMMUNITY COMMITTEE COMMUNIQUE

6 March 2025

The Basin Community Committee (the Committee) met on 11 and 12 February 2025 in Canberra on Ngunnawal Country.

Murray–Darling Basin Authority (the MDBA) Chief Executive, Andrew McConville, opened the meeting by outlining the key priorities for the year ahead. These include:

- delivering the Sustainable Rivers Audit and the 2025 Basin Plan Evaluation
- developing the Discussion Paper for the Basin Plan Review
- reviewing River Murray assets that will require significant maintenance and/or replacement
- completing the Integrated River Modelling Uplift Project by mid-year
- and further engagement and participation in forums to prepare for drought conditions, including the *Regional Drought Resilience Planning Program*<sup>1</sup> that is moving to its implementation phase.

Members congratulated Mr McConville on the positive outcomes and feedback arising from his recent visit to Toorale National Park, bringing community stakeholders together with government agencies to answer questions and address misconceptions about how it is managed. The Committee also commended Mr McConville's efforts in late 2024 to engage with young people living in the Basin community.

Significant matters discussed at the Committee's meeting included:

- The importance of incorporating First Nations' knowledge and authority, as key themes through the Basin Leadership Summit: *Science and knowledge* event being held later this year. Science aligning with the 'lived experience' is also considered important.
- The need to maintain momentum of the Constraints Relaxation Implementation Roadmap with informative tributary flows when the Integrated River Modelling Uplift Project is complete.
- Encourage the use by environmental water holders, managers and river operators of the *Basin Wide Environmental Watering Strategy* to guide the planning and delivery of water for the environment.
- Acknowledgement of the importance of vertical and horizontal connectivity to maintain groundwater ecosystems.
- First Nations peoples' interests and rights to own and manage cultural water and flows.
- How the allocation of the \$100 million under the *Murray–Darling Basin Aboriginal Water Entitlements Program*<sup>2</sup> will be managed in a fair and transparent manner.

<sup>1</sup> The Regional Drought Resilience Planning Program is administered by the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

<sup>2</sup> The *Murray–Darling Basin Aboriginal Water Entitlements Program* is administered by the Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.

**The Basin Community Committee is an independent advisory committee to the Murray–Darling Basin Authority and the Murray–Darling Basin Ministerial Council. Established under the Water Act 2007, the Committee ensures the voices of diverse communities in the Basin are heard.**

**For more information on the Basin Community Committee**

 [www.mdba.gov.au/BCC](http://www.mdba.gov.au/BCC)  1800 630 114



## Basin Community Committee

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- The need for transparency and ongoing community engagement, education and awareness regarding river operating rules and local impacts at both the state and federal level.

Members reported on the key sentiments they have heard in their respective communities, which revealed the following common concerns:

- overwhelm and fatigue due to the significant number of water-related reforms being conducted simultaneously or following closely
- the prevailing dry conditions across much of the Basin, water quality management and responses, water security (particularly town water supplies during drought) and a looming food farming crisis
- significant water licence<sup>3</sup> charge increases in some states are likely to affect the livelihood of smaller farms and the ability for them to invest in new, or replacement infrastructure
- anxiety about water recovery, with proposed rule changes in the northern Basin causing communities to be concerned this may result in compulsory and uncompensated reductions to the reliability of existing water entitlements. In the southern Basin, communities want assurance that water recovery does not reduce the ongoing viability of intensive irrigation networks which would result in negative third-party impacts.

The Committee extended their gratitude to Lynn O’Connell PSM, Deputy Secretary, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, and her accompanying senior officials, for their attendance at the meeting, providing an opportunity to engage on a range of important matters to their respective communities.

On day two the Committee met with the Authority Board and extended a warm welcome to the new Murray–Darling Basin Authority Board Chair, Daryl Quinlivan AO, and new member Allison Mudford.

Members farewelled retiring members Alice Williams, Mike Gilby and Warren Jacobs, expressing their thanks and appreciation for their insights, knowledge and contributions during their time as Committee members.

The Committee will next meet online on 9 April 2025.

### **BACKGROUND**

Members of the Committee are appointed by the Murray–Darling Basin Authority Board and reflect the diverse perspectives of Basin communities. Members are committed to providing frank and genuine advice, and consider the varying community views through respectful, constructive and collaborative discussions.

Contact your local Basin Community Committee member via [engagement@mdba.gov.au](mailto:engagement@mdba.gov.au) to share your views on how the Basin Plan is being implemented.

A full list of members and their Basin locations can be found at [www.mdba.gov.au/BCC](http://www.mdba.gov.au/BCC)

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<sup>3</sup> State governments are responsible for issuing water licences.

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