

Media Release

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Murray Irrigation wary of Coalition's water reform

Murray Irrigation General Manager Anthony Couroupis yesterday welcomed the Coalition's commitment to assess the social and economic impacts of the proposed Murray-Darling Basin Plan but expressed significant concern about the proposed entry of the Commonwealth Government into the temporary water market.

"We welcome the Coalition's commitment to continue to acquire water through investments in infrastructure and the purchase of water entitlements from direct market purchases to bridge any gap between the current cap and the new Sustainable Diversion Limits.

"There is now bi-partisan support for this policy which is a good outcome for those who wish to continue farming," he said.

Mr Couroupis said the Coalition's policy placed a significant focus on the concerns of Murray Irrigation customers and communities in the Murray-Darling Basin, but however said he could not fully endorse the reform.

"We commend the Coalition for their recognition that balance needs to be achieved in the upcoming Basin Plan. The needs of the environment have to be matched with the needs of agriculture and food production.

"However Murray Irrigation has significant concerns about the Coalition's approach to buy 150,000 megalitres on the temporary market in the coming water year. The annual water market has been severely distorted by the actions of the South Australian Government in recent times and this is now going to shift to the influence of the Commonwealth government, if the Coalition is elected.

"This would provide unnecessary competition for water and push up water prices for the nation's food and fibre farmers.

"The Lower Lakes must also be considered along with other priorities for the water already available to the Commonwealth and also through the Living Murray," Mr Couroupis said.

Mr Couroupis said the Prime Minister and the Labor Party should also commit to support an independent social and economic review of the draft Basin Plan through the Productivity Commission.

Ends.

For more information contact Murray Irrigation General Manager Anthony Couroupis T. 03 5898 3300.